

Essentials of Sociology



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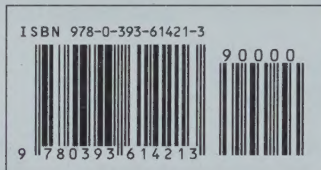
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Preface



We believe that sociology plays an essential role in modern intellectual culture and occupies a central place within the social sciences. We have aimed to write a book that merges classic sociological theories with up-to-the-minute social issues that interest sociologists today. We also believe that sociologists must use rigorous research methods in order to study and understand human behavior. We highlight findings from ethnographic studies to document the hows and whys of social behavior, and also present current statistical data to document important social trends. We aim to present material in a “fair and balanced” way. Although each of the authors has his or her own perspective on social theories, methods, and social policy, we have worked hard to ensure that our treatment is unbiased and non-partisan. We strive to present the most complete picture of sociology possible. Given the vast array of topics encompassed by sociology, however, we made difficult choices about what the most essential topics in sociology are today. We hope readers are engaged, intrigued, and occasionally inspired by the ideas presented in this book.

About the Essentials Edition

The Sixth Edition of *Essentials of Sociology* is based on the Tenth Edition of our best-selling text *Introduction to Sociology*. We created the Essentials Edition for instructors and students who are looking for a briefer book that can fit into a compressed academic schedule. We have reduced the length of the book by roughly one-third, and we reduced the number of chapters from twenty to sixteen. We cut selected topics to focus the chapters on the core ideas of sociology, while still retaining the themes that have made the text a successful teaching tool.

Major Themes

The book is constructed around four basic themes that provide its character. The newest theme is applying sociology to everyday life. Sociological thinking enables self-understanding, which in turn can be focused back on an improved understanding of

the social world. Studying sociology can be a liberating experience: It expands our sympathies and imagination, opens up new perspectives on the sources of our own behavior, and creates an awareness of cultural settings different from our own. Sociological ideas challenge dogma, teach appreciation of cultural variety, and allow us insight into the working of social institutions. At a more practical level, the text shows how technology affects our daily experiences (new “Digital Life” sections) and how countries across the globe compare on key metrics such as incarceration rate, maternity leave benefits, and gender inequality (full-page “Globalization by the Numbers” infographics).

Our second theme is inequalities. Throughout the text, we highlight that important resources—whether education, health, income, or social support—are not fairly or evenly distributed to all individuals. We highlight the ways that gender, race, social class, and age shape our daily lives in the United States. We also pay keen attention to global inequalities, and reveal how differences in economic and natural resources throughout the world powerfully influence even very personal experiences—including health, religion, and relationships.

A third theme of the book is that of social and historical context. Sociology was born of the transformations that wrenched the industrializing social order of the West away from the lifestyles characteristic of earlier societies. The pace of social change has continued to accelerate, and it is possible that we now stand on the threshold of transitions as significant as those that occurred in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sociology has the prime responsibility for charting the transformations of our past and for grasping the major lines of development taking place today. Our understanding of the past also contributes to our understanding of institutions in the present and future.

The fourth fundamental theme of the book is globalization. For far too long, sociology has been dominated by the view that societies can be studied as independent entities. But even in the past, societies never really existed in isolation. Today we can see a clear acceleration in processes of global integration. This is obvious, for example, in the expansion of international trade across the world. The emphasis on globalization also connects closely with the weight given to the interdependence of the industrialized and developing worlds today.

Despite these interconnections, however, societies have their own distinctive attributes, traditions, and experiences. Sociology cannot be taught solely by understanding the institutions of any one particular society. While we have slanted our discussion toward the United States, we have also balanced it with a rich variety of materials drawn from other regions—especially those undergoing rapid social change, such as the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe. The book also includes much more material on developing countries than has been usual in introductory texts.

All of the chapters in the book have been updated and revised to reflect the most recent available data. Each chapter opens with a contemporary news event or social trend—ranging from the most local and seemingly trivial (like an email from Yale University administrators about Halloween costumes) to the most global and profound (such as the catastrophic earthquakes in Haiti and Japan). These events are used to motivate and explain the key sociological concepts, themes, and studies that are elaborated throughout the text. Other substantive changes include:

Chapter 1 Sociology: Theory and Method

The chapter opener has been updated with more current data on cyberbullying and also includes the findings of a new school climate study focused on the experiences of LGBT students. The Digital Life box, “Bullying Goes Viral,” has been reworked to reflect the recent use of anonymous messenger apps like Yik Yak as a medium for cyberbullying, highlighting the controversies the app has caused on multiple college campuses. The chapter also features a new discussion of the work of Herbert Spencer. The discussion of conflict theories in sociology has been expanded. A new full-page Globalization by the Numbers infographic, titled “Opinion of the United States,” captures the considerable differences among nations in the proportion of the population that holds favorable attitudes toward the United States—and how these attitudes have changed over time. This data is also now presented in a new table.

Chapter 2 Culture and Society

A new chapter opener takes readers through a recent controversy at Yale University over a series of emails written by administrators about Halloween costumes that ultimately led to two faculty members stepping down from their posts in early 2015. The authors use this series of events to introduce readers to the concept of cultural appropriation, which has been added as a key term. Data on current rates of cigarette smoking have been updated. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic on Internet connectivity throughout the world has been updated with the most recent data. The section titled “Does the Internet Promote a Global Culture?” now considers how ISIS rose to power through the Internet.

Chapter 3 Socialization, the Life Course, and Aging

A new chapter opener uses two recent events—Caitlyn Jenner receiving the Arthur Ashe Courage Award and transgender first-grader Coy Mathis successfully suing her Colorado school district for the right to use the girls’ restroom—to explore the importance and complexities of socialization in everyday life. Data on media consumption have been updated. The section on gender socialization highlights how stores like Target are starting to move away from dividing sections by gender. A new discussion of race socialization, and the messages that are transmitted regarding the meaning and significance of race, has been added. A new graph looks at how the transition to adulthood is being delayed today by comparing the proportion of young adults who had hit certain benchmarks in 1975 versus 2015. A new Digital Life box, titled “Apps for Successful Aging,” discusses how app developers are adapting their programs to the needs and capacities of older adults. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic, “Life Course Transitions,” has been updated with the most current data, and a new data point on life expectancy has been added. Data related to the graying of U.S. society, including the size and growth of the elderly population and the sex ratio among older adults, have been updated. Data on the proportion of older adults who live alone and the proportion who are married have also been updated.

Chapter 4 Social Interaction and Everyday Life in the Age of the Internet

A new discussion of Internet “trolling” has been added in the section on interactional vandalism. The section on race in the public sphere has been expanded with a new discussion

of Elijah Anderson's recent work *The Cosmopolitan Canopy*. A new Digital Life box, titled "Turning Away from Face-to-face Interaction," explores how technology is changing the nature of face-to-face communication by making it possible to hold simultaneous conversations online and in real life. The box draws on a 2015 Pew Research Center study on how often people use their phones during social activities as well as MIT researcher Sherry Turkle's recent work on how smartphone usage has detrimental effects on our ability to experience empathy. A new full-page Globalization by the Numbers infographic compares the rates of smartphone ownership in different countries across the globe to provide a picture of this new digital divide. The section on women and men in public now includes a discussion of a recent video demonstration conducted on the streets of New York City that brought attention to the issue of street harassment.

Chapter 5 Groups, Networks, and Organizations

The chapter opener on the hazing case that rocked Florida A&M University has been updated to account for recent developments in the case. The Digital Life Box, retitled "Crowdfunding and the Strength of Weak Ties," has been updated with more recent data on crowdfunding and also highlights new examples of projects funded via platforms like Indigogo and Medstartr. Data related to the digital divide and telecommuting have been updated. The graph depicting the proportion of women CEOs at Fortune 500 companies has also been updated. A more current survey on trust in government has been added.

Chapter 6 Conformity, Deviance, and Crime

A brand new chapter opener discusses the 2014 shooting of eighteen-year-old Michael Brown by police officer Darren Wilson and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. The chapter has been updated with the most current data on incarceration rates and prison populations; hate crimes; crime rates by gender, age, and race; cost of imprisonment; and numbers and rates of violent crime and property crime in the United States. The discussion of trends in drug use now considers the results of the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. The authors have added a discussion of the use of capital punishment in the United States and a new graph that illustrates how support for the death penalty has changed over time. The section on policing includes a new discussion of Victor Rios's book *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, which documents the strain that policies like stop and frisk place on heavily policed communities. There is also a new discussion of legal scholar Michelle Alexander's work *The New Jim Crow*. A new Digital Life Box, "Using Cameras to Police the Police," explores how the proliferation of smartphones is enabling people to document police-civilian interactions and call attention to police brutality in new ways. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic has been updated with the most recent data on global incarceration rates.

Chapter 7 Stratification, Class, and Inequality

A new chapter opener tells the story of Viviana Andazola Marquez, a young woman who was able to beat the odds and rise out of poverty and homelessness to become a student at Yale University. Drawing on an excerpt from her college essay, the authors use Viviana's inspiring story to introduce the concepts of social stratification and social mobility. The discussion of interracial marriage has been updated with the most recent data. Data on income

distribution, mean household income by income group and race, and racial disparities in wealth have all been updated. The discussion of poverty in the United States has been updated with more current statistics, including poverty rates by age and race. The figure on the relative social prestige of U.S. occupations has been updated. The new edition explores how the 2008 recession and slow economic recovery have affected Americans' perceptions of whether they consider themselves to be middle class or lower class, whether poverty is a result of circumstances beyond one's control or the fault of individuals, and feelings regarding the U.S. economic climate. A new Digital Life box, titled "Does the Digital Divide Still Matter?" provides an up-to-date look at the state of the digital divide in 2015. The box looks at gaps in smartphone ownership and highlights a new Pew Research Center report on how people of varying socioeconomic backgrounds use technology to search and apply for jobs. The full-page Globalization by the Numbers infographic on income inequality now reflects the most recent data. The discussion of homelessness has been updated with more current statistics, including the number of homeless, the demographic breakdown of the homeless population, and the proportion of renters who spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent.

Chapter 8 Global Inequality

The chapter opener, which compares the global responses to the disasters that devastated Haiti and Japan in recent years, has been updated with more current data on key quality-of-life indicators in the respective countries. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic, now titled "An Unequal World," has been completely revamped with the most recent data on gross national income per capita, population, population growth, life expectancy, fertility rate, and infant mortality rate. Global Map 8.1, "Rich and Poor Countries: The World by Income in 2015," has been updated to reflect the new World Bank country classifications. The chapter's section on health now includes a discussion of the 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa. The section on hunger and malnutrition further explores the link between conflict and hunger, highlighting the current situation in Syria. Data on global literacy rates and participation in secondary education have been updated. The discussion of child labor has been expanded. The Digital Life box in this chapter, which asks, "Can Apps Heal Global Inequalities?" now details how smartphones apps are helping to reduce maternal mortality rates and bring vision care to developing nations.

Chapter 9 Gender Inequality

The chapter opener now introduces the concept of intersectionality, a theme that is further developed throughout the chapter. A discussion of Sandra Lipsitz Bem's classic *The Lenses of Gender* has been added, along with the key term *biological essentialism*. The discussion of West and Zimmerman's classic theory "doing gender" has been expanded to include the example of Nikki Jones's study of young inner-city African American women. A new section on blurring the boundaries between the genders discusses how growing numbers of young adults are challenging the male-female dichotomy and embracing both genders. The authors introduce the term *intersex* and provides examples of countries that are officially sanctioning diverse genders through their censuses and birth records. Data on women's participation in the labor force and the gender pay gap have been updated. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic on gender inequality shows countries' most up-to-date ratings on the Gender Inequality Index as well as current statistics on women's labor force

participation; representation in government, and participation in secondary school. A new section on gender inequalities in entrepreneurship provides statistics on women-owned business firms and discusses Sarah Thébaud's 2015 experimental research on perceptions of female business owners. Global data on women's labor force participation have been updated. The section on balancing work and child care now includes the term *motherhood penalty*, introduces the topic of public policies that can be effective in counteracting employers' stereotypical views of mothers in the workplace, and references Michelle Budig's 2012 cross-cultural study of public attitudes toward working mothers in twenty-two countries. The section on housework and the second shift now includes a discussion of a 2015 study of young adults and how they would like to share earning and household/caregiving responsibilities as well as a 2015 study on how same-sex couples share household responsibilities. The data in the section on gender inequality in politics have been updated. Data on intimate partner violence have been updated. The section on rape now discusses recent protests against sexual assault on college campuses, highlighting Emma Sulkowicz's 2015 protest at Columbia University. A new "Theories of Intersectionality" section includes a discussion of transnational feminism, which has been added as a key term.

Chapter 10 Ethnicity and Race

The chapter opener on the controversial Cheerios commercial that featured a mixed-race family now includes a reference to shows like *Blackish* and *Fresh Off the Boat* and features up-to-date statistics on the multiracial population in the United States and rates of interracial marriage. The discussion of institutional racism now references recent police killings of unarmed black men in cities across the United States. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic has been updated to reflect the most up-to-date racial and ethnic populations in a number of countries. Data in the section on Hispanics and Latinos in the United States, including data on Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans, have been updated. The discussion of Puerto Ricans has been updated in light of the island's decade-long recession. Data on racial differences in educational attainment, occupational attainment, income, health, residential segregation, and political power have been updated. The section on health now documents how the racial gap in infant mortality and life expectancy has actually decreased in recent years. Data on gender and race, including the wage gap between black women and white women, have been updated. The section on Asian Americans has been broadened to discuss how the idea of the "model minority" is problematic as it often-times masks discrepancies within different Asian groups, and also discusses Jennifer Lee's 2012 study on the experience of "stereotype promise."

Chapter 11 Families and Intimate Relationships

The chapter opener has been updated to reflect the June 2015 Supreme Court ruling that guaranteed individuals the right to same-sex marriage nationwide. Discussions of polygamy, child-free families, single-parent households, and nonmarital childbearing have all been updated with the most recent research, as have data on age at first marriage, patterns of childbearing, remarriage rates, the number of Americans living in multigenerational households, and living situations of black and white children. In the "Race, Ethnicity, and American Families" section, birth rates by racial group, nonmarital fertility, and black and white family patterns have all been updated, and the section on social class and American families has been augmented with a discussion of new research on middle-class black

families and the rise of single-person households. The discussion of divorce has been reworked and now includes coverage of recent research. The section on child abuse has been updated with more current research. The section on intimate partner violence now includes a discussion of the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. The discussion of cohabitation now includes coverage of research into men's and women's differing reasons for cohabitating as well as cohabitation as a "stage in the process." The section on same-sex-parent families has been updated with the most recent data and now introduces the terms *second-parent adoption* and *joint adoption*. The discussion of same-sex-parent families now discusses the controversial Regnerus study of children of same-sex parents. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic for this chapter, titled "Maternity Leave," has been updated with new data on countries' current leave policies. The Digital Life box, titled "Dating and Mating Online," has been updated with references to new dating apps and now discusses Kevin Lewis's research on the preferences of dating site users.

Chapter 12 Education and Religion

The chapter opener on Malala Yousafzai has been updated, along with the data about girls' education in Pakistan. This chapter's treatment of sociological theories of education has been broadened and now includes a discussion of the differences between functionalist theory and conflict theory. Additionally, survey data on parents' reasons for home schooling and statistics on global literacy have been updated. The discussion of school funding now includes 2013 data on school funding from two different districts in Chicago. The section on between-school effects features research and statistics from a new report on the growing resegregation of schools. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic, titled "Educational Attainment," now shows the proportion of school-age populations enrolled in secondary schools in ten countries, along with mean years of schooling. The section on the global rise of religious nationalism now considers recent developments in Iran, including the election of Rouhani. The discussion of trends in religious affiliation has been bolstered by statistics from a 2015 Pew Research Center study on the "rise of the nones"—Millennials who are religiously unaffiliated. The discussion of Protestantism has been updated to reflect the recent growth of evangelical and conservative Protestant churches. The section on Catholicism includes current data on Mass attendance and now references a more recent poll on Church members' beliefs. The discussion of Judaism and Islam has been updated with more current data. Data on global religious populations as well as religious affiliation in the United States have all been updated. A new table looks at how religious affiliation in the United States changed between 2007 and 2014.

Chapter 13 Politics and Economic Life

A new chapter opener examines the recent "Fight for 15" strikes orchestrated by minimum wage laborers across the United States and highlights employers and states that have raised their minimum wages in response. A new figure in the opener provides demographic data on Americans who currently earn less than \$15 per hour. The discussion of the welfare state now considers the refugee crisis and the subsequent anti-immigrant backlash. The number of democratic nations across the globe has been updated according to data from Freedom House. In the section on the Internet and democratization, data

on where Americans receive their news have been updated. In the section on voting, the authors have added more current data on party identification. The discussion of interest groups now highlights a statistical analysis of nearly 1,800 policy issues and the role of money in politics. Data on incumbents was updated to consider the 2014 elections, and data on women's participation in politics were updated. The discussion of military spending, as well as the accompanying figure, were updated with 2015 data. A new discussion of terrorism considers ISIS and Boko Haram as well as hate groups in the United States. The section on labor unions includes updated statistics on labor union membership and public opinion of unions as well as a new discussion of why labor unions have confronted difficulties in the past few decades. The figure showing work stoppages has been updated. The coverage of types of corporate capitalism now features a new discussion of global capitalism, whereby giant transnational entities are becoming increasingly stateless. The new Digital Life box, titled "Will a Robot Take Your Job?" looks at how American companies are employing fewer workers thanks to advances in technology and how rapid advances in software hold the promise of automating occupations that currently require college degrees. It also discusses strides in additive manufacturing, or 3D printing. Data on unemployment, as well as the number of people who have given up looking for work, have been updated.

Chapter 14 The Sociology of the Body: Health, Illness, and Sexuality

The discussion of obesity now considers new research on eating disorders in boys and includes updated statistics on obesity rates in the United States. A new Globalization by the Numbers infographic compares obesity rates worldwide. The section on complementary and alternative medicine has been updated with more current statistics on usage and a new figure looks at the use of CAM by educational attainment. The discussions of race-based and gender-based inequalities in health have been revamped with more current data on life expectancy, rates of hypertension, and cigarette smoking. The section on malaria has been updated with more current data on malaria cases and deaths. Figures related to global HIV/AIDS diagnoses and deaths, as well as data on HIV/AIDS in the United States, have all been updated with more current data. A new discussion in the sexuality section explores recent trends in sexual behavior among high school-age students, referencing a 2016 National Center for Health Statistics study, and also provides overviews of Hamilton and Armstrong's and Paula England's recent studies of hookup culture on college campuses. Additionally, the section on homophobia references an extensive study by the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network on the prevalence of bullying and harassment faced by LGBT students. The Digital Life box, titled "Can Wearable Tech Keep You Healthy?" now discusses popular fitness trackers like Fitbit and Jawbone, and how individuals can use apps to monitor sleep patterns and health habits such as caffeine consumption.

Chapter 15 Urbanization, Population, and the Environment

The chapter opener has been broadened to include not only a close look at China's population growth, economic growth, and pollution issues but also details and compares these trends in India as well. A new graph detailing the proportions of countries whose populations live in urban areas by income group has been added, and the Globalization by the Numbers infographic on urbanization has been updated with new data. Data on

urbanization have been updated and the discussion of the environmental challenges of urbanization now considers climate-related problems in Pakistan, including the country's water woes. The discussion of possible consequences of demographic changes has been expanded to include a discussion of widespread migration, referencing the Syrian civil war and Syrian refugee crisis. A new table detailing the five countries with the oldest and youngest populations in 2015 has been added. Data on birth rates, death rates, and infant mortality rates across the globe have been updated. The global map detailing population growth rates around the world has been updated with new data, and a new figure on the demographic transition has been added. The section on the demographic transition now includes a discussion of what the United Nations have deemed the "least developed countries." The discussion of global warming and climate change now includes a comparison of China and the United States, summaries of recent IPCC reports on global warming, and a discussion of the 2015 Paris agreement. A new section, titled "A New Ecological Paradigm?" has been added that details the historical treatment of environmental issues within the field of sociology, introducing the terms *human exceptionalism paradigm*, *new ecological paradigm* and *Anthropocene*. The new Digital Life box, titled "Tracking Your Ecological Footprint," encourages readers to think critically about their current energy consumption and to visit a site whereby they can learn how many Earths would be required if every person were to achieve that same lifestyle.

Chapter 16 Globalization in a Changing World

The chapter opener now discusses the Syrian civil war as well as the outcomes of the Arab Spring protests. This chapter includes contemporary examples of social unrest, movements, and protests, including new discussions of Black Lives Matter, the Fight for 15, the countermovement against transgender equality in the form of "bathroom bills," terror attacks in Paris and Brussels, and the growing awareness of global warming. The discussion of technology and social movements now considers the Chinese government's "Great Firewall." The Digital Life Box, titled "Online Activism Trends Upwards," now points to Black Lives Matter as an example of a social movement that has effectively used technology to spread its message and garner support. The section on political changes driving globalization now explores the recent challenges the United Nations and European Union have faced, including new discussions of the refugee crisis and Brexit. New examples of IGOs have been added. Data on transnational corporations and the revenues of the top 500 corporations have been updated. Data on global poverty and global trade have also been updated. The section on the campaign for global justice now considers recent criticism against free trade agreements levied by Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump. The section on manufactured risk now references a 2014 report on the recovery of the ozone layer. Data on farm subsidies in the United States have been updated. A new Globalization by the Numbers infographic paints a picture of wealth inequality around the world.

Organization

There is very little abstract discussion of basic sociological concepts at the beginning of this book. Instead, concepts are explained when they are introduced in the relevant chapters, and we have sought throughout to illustrate them by means of concrete examples.

While these are usually taken from sociological research, we have also used material from other sources (such as newspaper or popular magazine articles). We have tried to keep the writing style as simple and direct as possible, while endeavoring to make the book lively and full of surprises.

The chapters follow a sequence designed to help achieve a progressive mastery of the different fields of sociology, but we have taken care to ensure that the book can be used flexibly and is easy to adapt to the needs of individual courses. Chapters can be skipped or studied in a different order without much loss. Each has been written as a fairly autonomous unit, with cross-referencing to other chapters at relevant points.

Study Aids

Every chapter in the Sixth Edition of *Essentials of Sociology* features:

- **“Digital Life” boxes** in every chapter get students thinking critically about how the Internet and smartphones are transforming the way we date, manage our health, and even practice religion.
- **“Globalization by the Numbers” infographics** transform raw numbers into visually interesting displays that put the United States in a global context. Interactive versions in the ebook make the data dynamic and include integrated assignments that engage students with the data.
- **“Big Picture” Concept Maps** at the end of every chapter, which integrate the “Big Questions,” key terms, and “Concept Checks” into a handy and visually interesting study tool, serve as both a pre-reading guide to the chapter as well as a post-reading review.
- **“Concept Checks”** throughout each chapter help students assess their understanding of the major topics in the chapter. Each “Concept Check” has at least three questions that range from reading comprehension to more advanced critical thinking skills.
- **Learning Goals** are outlined at the start of the chapter and then recur throughout the chapter in marginal notations at the beginning of the relevant sections to promote active learning.

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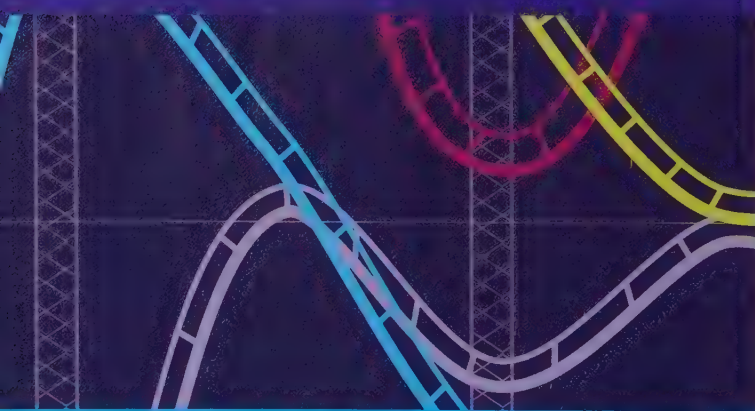
SIXTH EDITION



Essentials of Sociology

1

Sociology: Theory and Method



Opinion of the United States

p. 9

THE BIG QUESTIONS

What is the “sociological imagination”?

Learn what sociology covers as a field and how everyday topics like love and romance are shaped by social and historical forces. Recognize that sociology involves developing a sociological imagination and a global perspective, and understanding social change.

What theories do sociologists use?

Learn about the development of sociology as a field. Be able to name some of the leading social theorists and the concepts they contributed to sociology. Learn the different theoretical approaches modern sociologists bring to the field.

What kinds of questions can sociologists answer?

Be able to describe the different types of questions sociologists address in their research.

What are the steps of the research process?

Learn the steps of the research process and be able to complete the process yourself.

What research methods do sociologists use?

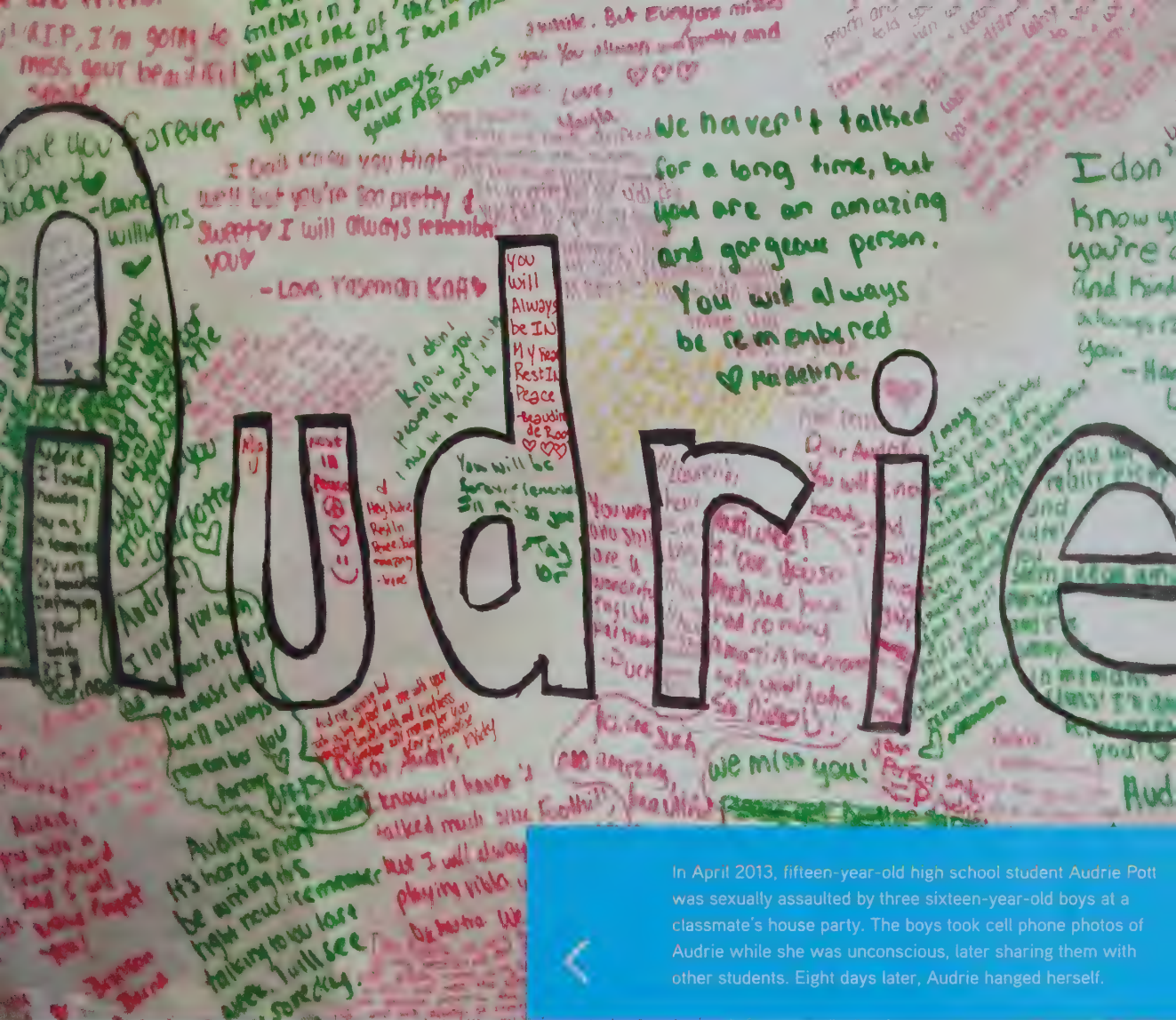
Familiarize yourself with the methods available to sociological researchers, and know the advantages and disadvantages of each. See how researchers use multiple methods in a real study.

What ethical dilemmas do sociologists face?

Recognize the ethical problems researchers may face, and identify possible solutions to these dilemmas.

How does the sociological imagination affect your life?

Understand how adopting a sociological perspective allows us to develop a richer understanding of ourselves, our significant others, and the world.



In April 2013, fifteen-year-old high school student Audrie Pott was sexually assaulted by three sixteen-year-old boys at a classmate's house party. The boys took cell phone photos of Audrie while she was unconscious, later sharing them with other students. Eight days later, Audrie hanged herself.

Sociology is the scientific study of human social life, groups, and societies. It is a dazzling and compelling enterprise, as its subject matter is our own behavior as social beings. The scope of sociological study is extremely wide, ranging from the analysis of how people establish social connections with one another to the investigation of global social processes such as the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.

Sociology teaches us that what we regard as natural, inevitable, good, or true may not be such and that the “givens” of our life—including things we assume to be genetic or biological—are strongly influenced by historical, cultural, social, and even technological forces. Understanding the subtle yet complex and profound ways in which our individual lives reflect the contexts of our social experience is central to the sociological outlook. A brief example will provide a taste of the nature and objectives of sociology.

Anyone who has attended middle school or high school knows that bullying is a common occurrence. Through much of history, teachers, principals, and parents turned a blind eye, often

sociology

The study of human groups and societies, giving particular emphasis to analysis of the industrialized world. Sociology is one of a group of social sciences, which include anthropology, economics, political science, and human geography. The divisions among the various social sciences are not clear-cut, and all share a certain range of common interests, concepts, and methods.

believing that “boys will be boys.” In recent years this cavalier attitude toward bullying has been called into question by students, teachers, and policymakers alike. A recent spate of suicides by teenagers subjected to merciless bullying has raised awareness that bullying is no longer “kid stuff” and in nearly all states is grounds for suspension, expulsion, or even more serious punishment. Over the past decade, bullying-related tragedies have been documented throughout the United States, involving teenagers of all backgrounds—male and female, black and white, Asian and Latino, gay and straight, cisgender and transgender, rich and poor, rural and suburban.

For Devin Brown, the bullying began shortly after he started at Rothschild Middle School. Things escalated after he reported another student for carrying a knife and threatening a teacher. Rather than being regarded as a hero by his classmates, he was derided as a “snitch” and was regularly threatened and beaten up at school. In April 2013, after months of relentless harassment, Brown hanged himself at home in his closet.

That same month, fifteen-year-old high school student Audrie Pott hanged herself in her San Jose, California, home. Eight days earlier, Pott had been sexually assaulted at a classmate’s house party by three sixteen-year-old boys. She woke up to find her clothes pulled off and her body covered in lewd markings. The trauma didn’t end there, though. The boys took pictures of Pott while she was unconscious and shared them with other students. Just days before she took her life, a devastated Pott posted messages on Facebook that read, “My life is over” and “The whole school knows.”

It’s not just American teens who are killing themselves as a desperate reaction to intolerable bullying. In Japan, teen suicide rates spike each year on September 1, the nation’s first day of school; experts say the specter of going back to school and facing mistreatment by their peers (along with intense academic pressure) is enough to trigger suicide among depressed teens (Wright 2015).

Brown and Pott are just two of hundreds of teenagers who have committed suicide after being bullied and humiliated by their classmates. Today, anti-bullying laws exist in all 50 states; Montana was the last state to enact such laws in 2015 (Baumann 2015). In 2011, New Jersey passed the nation’s toughest anti-bullying legislation, triggered in part by the high-profile suicide of Tyler Clementi. In 2010, the eighteen-year-old Rutgers University freshman committed suicide by jumping off the George Washington Bridge, just two weeks after he started his first semester in college. The suicide came days after his roommate used a webcam to spy on Clementi during an intimate encounter with a man in his dorm room and then posted on social media about it.

Sociology helps us to understand and analyze scientifically social phenomena like bullying and suicide. American sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) observed that social sciences enable people to “translate private troubles into public issues.” What Mills meant is that individuals often believe that the problems that they (and others) face are personal, perhaps resulting from their own traits or decisions. But social scientists recognize that these seemingly “**personal**” troubles, if occurring in patterned ways to large numbers of individuals, reflect important “**public issues**,” or consequences of social structures.

For example, Devin Brown, Audrie Pott, and Tyler Clementi all committed suicide shortly after being tormented by their peers. Some observers might think that the suicides were an isolated problem, perhaps the reaction of three teens who were depressed or emotionally unstable. However, a sociologist would look at the social context and try to understand just how common such events are and to understand whether some subgroups are particularly vulnerable to such problems. Sociologists might look at historical data to track the timing of

personal troubles

Difficulties that are located in individual biographies and their immediate milieu, a seemingly private experience.

public issues

Difficulties or problems that are linked to the institutional and historical possibilities of social structure.

these suicides, as researchers did in Japan. This analysis showed that teen suicides weren't spread evenly across the year but rather clustered in early September (Wright 2015).

Sociologists might also consult data from national surveys, such as a 2014 survey by the Pew Research Center, which found that four in ten Internet users have experienced online harassment. Young Internet users are the most likely to be harassed online: Fully 65 percent of Internet users between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine have been the target of online harassment; the proportion rises to 70 percent for users between eighteen and twenty-four. The study also detected strong gender differences: Young women (like Audie Pott) are much more likely than their male counterparts to experience certain forms of online harassment, including stalking (26 percent vs. 7 percent) and sexual harassment (25 percent vs. 13 percent) (Duggan 2014).

Other sociologists have studied bullying "off-line" and found that gay and lesbian teens are far more likely than their straight peers to be harassed at school. One survey of more than 7,500 high school students found that nearly 44 percent of gay and 40 percent of lesbian teens said they had been bullied in the previous year, compared with just 26 and 15 percent of heterosexual boys and girls, respectively (Berlan et al. 2010). A 2013 study of LGBT students found that nearly three-quarters of LGBT students had been verbally harassed and more than a third (36 percent) had been physically harassed within the past year (Kosciw et al. 2014). Studies such as these help us recognize that the anguish experienced by Clementi, Pott, and Brown is hardly an isolated incident and instead reflects pervasive social problems that require far-reaching solutions. Sociology can help us understand the questions of what, why, and how public issues and personal troubles arise.

What Is the "Sociological Imagination"?

When we learn to think sociologically, we can also better understand the most personal aspects of our own lives. For instance, have you ever been in love? Almost certainly you have. Most people who are in their teens or older know what being in love is like. Love and romance provide some of the most intense feelings we ever experience. Why do people fall in love? The answer may seem obvious: Love expresses a mutual physical and personal attachment between two individuals. These days, we might not all think that love is "forever," but falling in love, we may agree, is an experience arising from universal human emotions. It seems natural for a couple in love to want personal and sexual fulfillment in their relationship, perhaps through marriage.

Yet this pattern whereby love leads to marriage is in fact very unusual. Romantic love is not an experience all people across the world have—and where it does happen, it is rarely connected to marriage. The idea of romantic love did not become widespread until fairly recently in our society, and it has never even existed in many other cultures.

Only in modern times have love and sexuality become closely connected. In the Middle Ages and for centuries afterward, men and women married mainly to keep property in the hands of the family or to raise children to work the family farm—or, in the case of royalty, to seal political alliances. Spouses may have become close companions after marriage, but not before. People sometimes had sexual affairs outside marriage, but these inspired few



Rutgers freshman Tyler Clementi committed suicide days after his roommate posted on social media about Clementi's intimate encounter with a man in his dorm room.



Learn what sociology covers as a field and how everyday topics like love and romance are shaped by social and historical forces. Recognize that sociology involves developing a sociological imagination and a global perspective, and understanding social change.



What is the origin of romantic love? Originally, romantic love was limited to affairs for medieval aristocrats such as Tristan and Isolde, the subjects of a thirteenth-century court romance that inspired poems, operas, and films.

sociological imagination

The application of imaginative thought to the asking and answering of sociological questions. Someone using the sociological imagination “thinks himself away” from the familiar routines of daily life.

of the emotions we associate with love today. Romantic love was regarded as a weakness at best and a kind of sickness at worst.

Romantic love developed in courtly circles as a characteristic of extramarital sexual adventures by members of the aristocracy. Until about two centuries ago, it was confined to such circles and kept separate from marriage. Relations between husband and wife among aristocratic groups were often cool and distant. Each spouse had his or her own bedroom and servants; they may have rarely seen each other in private. Sexual compatibility was not considered relevant to marriage. Among both rich and poor, the decision of whom to marry was made by one’s immediate and extended family; the individuals concerned had little or no say in the matter.

This remains true in many non-Western countries today. (Social scientists typically define “Western” countries as economically rich nations, including most in North America and Europe, as well as Japan and Australia.) For example, in Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban, men were prohibited from speaking to women they were not related or married to, and marriages were arranged by parents. The Taliban government saw romantic love as so offensive that it outlawed all nonreligious music and films. Like many in the non-Western world, the Taliban believed Afghanistan was being inundated by Hollywood movies and American pop music and videos, which are filled with sexual images.

Neither romantic love, then, nor its association with marriage can be understood as a natural or universal feature of human life. Rather, such love has been shaped by social and historical influences. These are the influences sociologists study.

Most of us see the world in terms of the familiar features of our own lives. Sociology demonstrates the need for a much broader view of our nature and our actions. It teaches that what we regard as “natural” in our lives is strongly influenced by historical and social forces. Understanding the subtle yet profoundly complex ways in which our individual lives reflect the contexts of our social experience is basic to the sociological outlook.

Learning to think sociologically means cultivating what sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959), in a famous phrase, called the **sociological imagination**. As sociologists, we need to imagine, for example, what the experience of sex and marriage is like for people who consider the ideals of romantic love to be unfamiliar or absurd. Sociology is not just a routine process of acquiring knowledge; it requires breaking free from the immediacy of personal circumstances and putting things in a wider context.

The sociological imagination requires us, above all, to “think ourselves away” from our daily routines in order to look at them anew. Consider the simple act of drinking a cup of coffee. What might the sociological point of view illuminate about such apparently uninteresting behavior? An enormous amount. First, coffee possesses symbolic value as part of our daily social activities. Often the ritual associated with coffee drinking is much more important than the act itself. Two people who arrange to meet for coffee are probably more interested in getting together and chatting than in what they actually drink. Drinking and eating in all societies, in fact, promote social interaction and the enactment of rituals—rich subject matter for sociological study.

Second, coffee contains caffeine, a drug that stimulates the brain. In Western culture, coffee addicts are not regarded as drug users. Like alcohol, coffee is a socially acceptable

drug, whereas cocaine and opium, for instance, are not. Yet some societies tolerate the recreational use of opium or even cocaine but frown on coffee and alcohol. Sociologists are interested in why these contrasts exist.

Third, an individual who drinks a cup of coffee is participating in a complicated set of social and economic relationships stretching across the world. The production and distribution of coffee require continuous transactions among people who may be thousands of miles away from the coffee drinker. Studying such global transactions is an important task of sociology because many aspects of our lives are now affected by worldwide social influences and communications.

Finally, the act of sipping a cup of coffee presumes a process of past social and economic development. Widespread consumption of coffee—along with other now-familiar items of Western diets like tea, bananas, potatoes, and white sugar—began only in the late 1800s under Western colonial expansion. Virtually all the coffee we drink today comes from areas (South America and Africa) that were colonized by Europeans; it is in no sense a “natural” part of the Western diet.

Studying Sociology

The sociological imagination allows us to see that many behaviors or feelings that we view as private and individualized actually reflect larger social issues. Try applying this sort of outlook to your own life. Consider, for instance, why you are attending college right now. You may think that you worked hard in high school, or that you have decided to go to college so that you have the academic credential required to find a good job; yet other, larger social forces may also have played a role. Many students who work hard in high school cannot attend college because their parents cannot afford to send them. Others have their schooling interrupted by large-scale events like wars or economic depressions. The notion that we need college to find a good job is also shaped by social context. In past eras, when most people worked in agricultural or manufacturing rather than professional jobs, college attendance was rare—rather than an expected rite of passage.

Although we are all influenced by the social contexts in which we find ourselves, none of us is simply determined in his or her behavior by those contexts. We possess and create our own individuality. It is the goal of sociology to investigate the connections between what society makes of us and what we make of ourselves. Our activities structure—give shape to—the social world around us and at the same time are structured by that social world.

Social structure is an important concept in sociology. It refers to the fact that the social contexts of our lives do not just consist of random assortments of events or actions; they are structured, or patterned, in distinct ways. There are regularities in the ways we behave and in the relationships we have with one another. But social structure is not like a physical structure, such as a building, which exists independently of human actions. Human societies are always in the process of **structuration**. They are reconstructed at every moment by the very “building blocks” that compose them—human beings like you.

Developing a Global Perspective

As we just saw in our discussion of the sociological dimensions of drinking a cup of coffee, all our local actions—the ways in which we relate to one another in face-to-face

structuration

The two-way process by which we shape our social world through our individual actions and by which we are reshaped by society.

globalization

The economic, political, and social interconnectedness of individuals throughout the world.

contexts—form part of larger social settings that extend around the globe. These connections between the local and the global are quite new in human history. They have accelerated over the past forty or fifty years as a result of dramatic advances in communications, information technology, and transportation. The development of jet planes; large, speedy container ships; and other means of rapid travel has meant that people and goods can be continuously transported across the world. And our worldwide system of satellite communication, established only some fifty years ago, has made it possible for people to get in touch with one another instantaneously.

U.S. society is influenced every moment of the day by **globalization**, the growth of world interdependence—a social phenomenon that will be discussed throughout this book. Globalization should not be thought of simply as the development of worldwide networks—social and economic systems that are remote from our individual concerns. It is a local phenomenon, too. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s, most Americans had few culinary choices when they dined out at restaurants. In many U.S. towns and cities today, a single street may feature Italian, Mexican, Japanese, Thai, Ethiopian, and other types of restaurants next door to one another. In turn, the dietary decisions we make can affect food producers who may live on the other side of the world.

Do college students today have a global perspective? By at least one measure, the answer is yes. According to a survey of 141,189 first-year college students in 2015, 82 percent reported that they had discussed politics “frequently” or “occasionally” in the last year. More than one-third (40 percent) of students also reported that keeping up with political issues is “very important” or “essential,” while nearly three in five students (59 percent) said “improving my understanding of other countries and cultures” was very important or essential. More than one-third (36 percent) of students said there was a “very good chance” that they would study abroad while in college (Eagan et al. 2015). These data reflect a pervasive awareness among college students today that globalization has a direct effect on our daily, private lives.

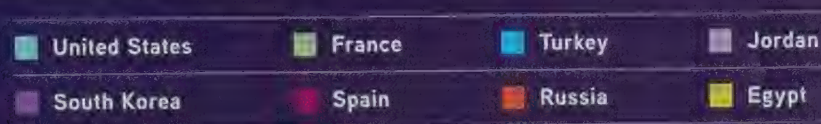
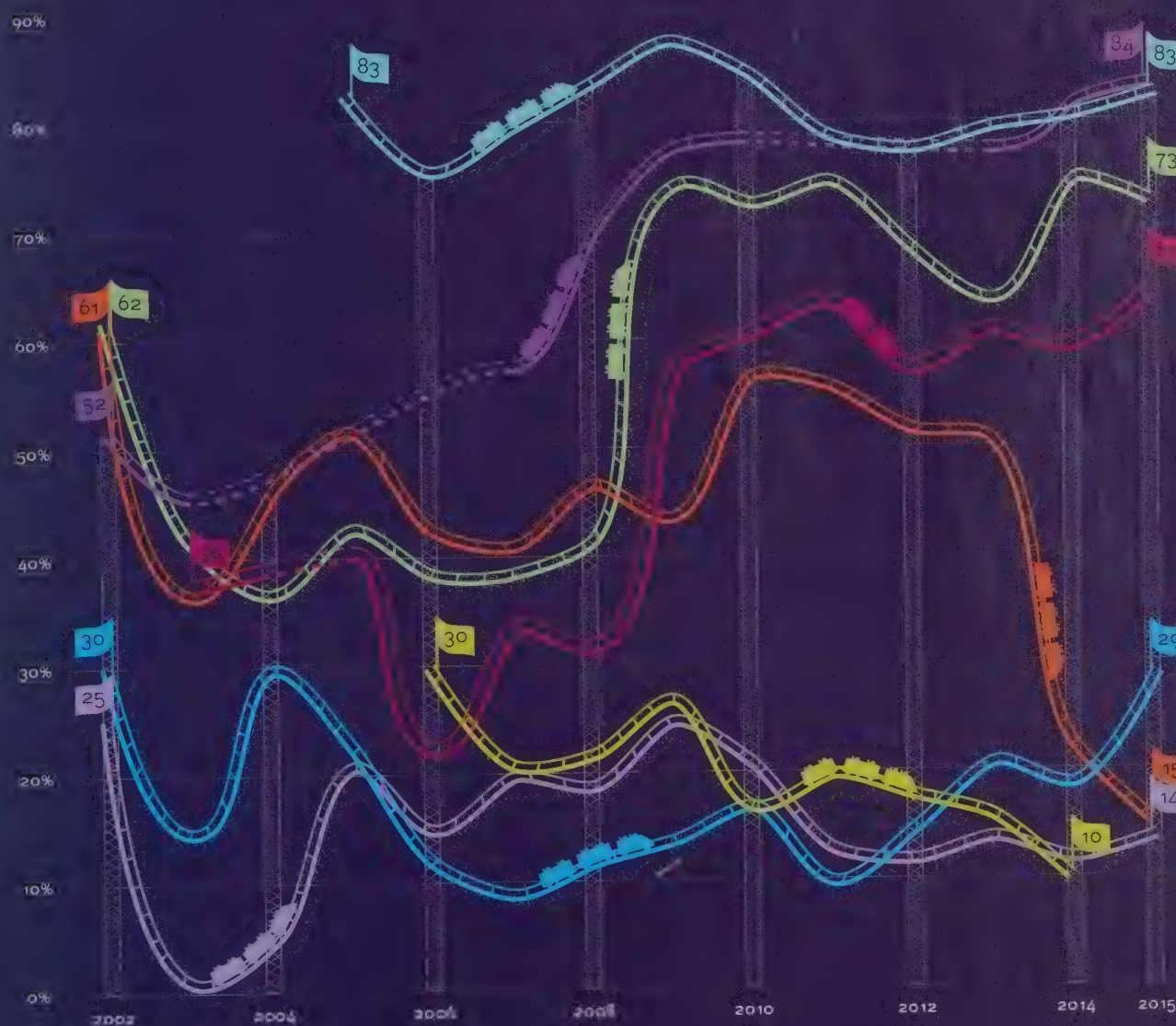
A global perspective not only allows us to become more aware of the ways that we are connected to people in other societies, it also makes us more aware of the many problems the world faces at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The global perspective opens our eyes to the fact that our interdependence with other societies means that our actions have consequences for others, and that the world’s problems have consequences for us.

Understanding Social Change

The changes in human ways of life in the last 200 years, such as globalization, have been far reaching. We have become accustomed, for example, to the fact that most of the population lives in towns and cities rather than in small agricultural communities. But this was not the case until the middle of the nineteenth century. For most of human history, the vast majority of people had to produce their own food and shelter and lived in tiny groups or in small village communities. Even at the height of the most developed traditional civilizations—such as ancient Rome or pre-industrial China—less than 10 percent of the population lived in urban areas; everyone else was engaged in food production in a rural setting. Today, in most industrialized societies, these proportions

The extent to which people hold favorable attitudes toward the United States varies considerably across nations, highlighting how macrosocial factors—migration patterns, economic factors, religion, history of military conflict—can shape individual-level attitudes. Although there are strong national and regional patterns of support for the United States, we also see considerable historical variation, with some countries, like Egypt, demonstrating a steady decline over time, and others, like Russia, showing a precipitous drop.

Population reporting favorable views of the United States (%), 2002–2015



CONCEPT CHECKS

- How does sociology help us understand the causes of bullying?
- Contrast public issues and personal troubles.
- What is the sociological imagination, according to C. Wright Mills?
- How does the concept of social structure help sociologists better understand social phenomena?
- What is globalization? How might it affect the lives of college students today?

have become almost completely reversed. By 2050, 66 percent of the world population is expected to live in urban areas. In more developed regions, including Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, an estimated 85 percent will live in urban areas (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015c).

These sweeping social transformations have radically altered, and continue to alter, the most personal and intimate side of our daily existence. To extend a previous example, the spread of ideals of romantic love was strongly conditioned by the transition from a rural to an urban, industrialized society. As people moved into urban areas and began to work in industrial production, marriage was no longer prompted mainly by economic motives—by the need to control the inheritance of land and to work the land as a family unit. “Arranged” marriages—fixed through the negotiations of parents and relatives—became less and less common. Individuals began to initiate marriage relationships on the bases of emotional attraction and personal fulfillment. The idea of “falling in love” as a precondition for marriage was formed in this context.

Sociology was founded by thinkers who sought to understand the initial impact of transformations that accompanied industrialization in the West. Although our world today is radically different from that of former ages, the original goal of sociologists remains: to understand our world and what future it is likely to hold for us.

What Theories Do Sociologists Use?

Sociologists do more than collect facts; they also want to know why things happen. For instance, we know that industrialization has had a major influence on the emergence of modern societies. But what are the origins and preconditions of industrialization? Why is industrialization associated with changes in methods of criminal punishment or in family and marriage systems? To respond to such questions, we must construct explanatory theories.

Theories involve constructing abstract interpretations that can be used to explain a wide variety of situations. Of course, factual research and theories can never be completely separated. Sociologists aiming to document facts must begin their studies with a theory that they will evaluate. Theory helps researchers identify and frame a factual question, yet facts are needed to evaluate the strength of a theory. Conversely, once facts have been obtained, sociologists must use theory to interpret and make sense of these facts.

Theoretical thinking also must respond to general problems posed by the study of human social life, including issues that are philosophical in nature. For example, based on their theoretical and methodological orientations, sociologists hold very different beliefs about whether sociology should be modeled on the natural sciences.

Early Theorists

Humans have always been curious about why we behave as we do, but for thousands of years our attempts to understand ourselves relied on ways of thinking passed down from

Learn about the development of sociology as a field. Be able to name some of the leading social theorists and the concepts they contributed to sociology. Learn the different theoretical approaches modern sociologists bring to the field.

generation to generation, often expressed in religious rather than scientific terms. The systematic scientific study of human behavior is a relatively recent development, dating back to the late 1700s and early 1800s. The sweeping changes ushered in by the French Revolution of 1789 and the emergence of the Industrial Revolution in Europe formed the backdrop for the development of sociology. These major historical events shattered traditional ways of life and forced thinkers to develop new understandings of both the social and natural worlds.

A key development was the use of science instead of religion to understand the world. The types of questions these nineteenth-century thinkers sought to answer are the very same questions sociologists try to answer today: What is human nature? How and why do societies change?

AUGUSTE COMTE

Many scholars contributed to early sociological thinking, yet particular credit is given to the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857), if only because he invented the word *sociology*. Comte originally used the term *social physics*, but some of his intellectual rivals at the time were also making use of that term. Comte wanted to distinguish his own views from theirs, so he introduced the term *sociology* to describe the subject he wished to establish.

Comte believed that this new field could produce a knowledge of society based on scientific evidence. He regarded sociology as the last science to be developed—following physics, chemistry, and biology—but as the most significant and complex of all the sciences. Sociology, he believed, should contribute to the welfare of humanity by using science to understand, predict, and control human behavior. Late in his career, Comte drew up ambitious plans for the reconstruction of both French society in particular and human societies in general, based on scientific knowledge.

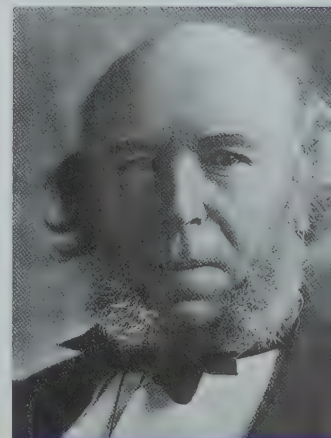
HERBERT SPENCER

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903)—a British philosopher, biologist, anthropologist, and political theorist—was both highly influenced by and highly critical of Comte's writing. Spencer held that development is a natural outcome of individual achievement. In *The Study of Sociology* (1873), he argued that society can change and improve the quality of life for all people only when everyone changes their behavior to maximize their individual potential. In other words, he believed privileged members of society enjoyed a high quality of life because they had earned this status. He further argued that the state should not assist in improving the life chances of individuals, as it interferes with the natural order: The best persons succeed and the rest fall behind due to their own lack of effort or ability.

While Spencer's writings are considered an important influence on functionalist perspectives, which we will learn about later in this chapter, his ideas have fallen out of favor with many contemporary sociologists. His ideas were roundly attacked by Lester Frank Ward, the first president of the American Sociological Association (Carneiro and Perrin 2002). However, Spencer's belief in the “survival of the fittest” had a profound influence on economics and political science, especially among scholars and policymakers endorsing a “laissez-faire” approach.



Auguste Comte (1798–1857)



Herbert Spencer (1820–1903)





ÉMILE DURKHEIM

Another French scholar, Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), has had a much more lasting and central impact on modern sociology than either Comte or Spencer. Although he drew on aspects of Comte's work, Durkheim thought that many of his predecessor's ideas were too speculative and vague and that Comte had not successfully established a scientific basis for studying human behavior. To become a science, according to Durkheim, sociology must study **social facts**, aspects of social life that shape our actions as individuals, such as the state of the economy or the influence of religion. Durkheim believed that we must study social life with the same objectivity as scientists who study the natural world. In fact, he viewed sociology as "the science of social facts." His famous first principle of sociology was "Study social facts as things!" By this he meant that social life can be analyzed as rigorously as objects or events in nature. The key task of the sociologist, according to Durkheim, was to search for correlations among social facts in order to reveal laws of social structure.

Like a biologist studying the human body, Durkheim saw society as a set of independent parts, each of which could be studied separately. These ideas drew on the writings of Spencer, who also likened society to a biological organism. A body consists of specialized parts, each of which contributes to sustaining the continuing life of the organism. These parts necessarily work in harmony with one another; if they do not, the life of the organism is under threat. So it is, according to Durkheim, with society. For a society to function and persist over time, its specialized institutions (such as the political system, religion, the family, and the educational system) must work in harmony with one another and function as an integrated whole. Durkheim referred to this social cohesion as "**organic solidarity**." He argued that the continuation of a society thus depends on cooperation, which in turn presumes a consensus, or agreement, among its members over basic values and customs.

Another major theme pursued by Durkheim, and by many others since, is that the society exerts **social constraint** over the actions of its members. Durkheim argued that society is far more than the sum of individual acts; when we analyze social structures, we are studying characteristics that have "solidity" comparable to structures in the physical world. Social structure, according to Durkheim, constrains our activities in a parallel way, setting limits on what we can do as individuals. It is "external" to us, just as the walls of a room are.

One of Durkheim's most influential studies was concerned with the analysis of suicide (Durkheim 1897). Suicide may appear to be a purely personal act, the outcome of extreme personal unhappiness. Durkheim showed, however, that social factors exert a fundamental influence on suicidal behavior—**anomie**, a feeling of aimlessness or despair provoked by modern social life, being one of these influences. Suicide rates show regular patterns from year to year, he argued, and these patterns must be explained sociologically. According to Durkheim, changes in the modern world are so rapid and intense that they give rise to major social difficulties, which he linked to anomie. Traditional moral controls and standards, which were supplied by religion in earlier times, are largely broken down by modern social development; this leaves individuals in many societies feeling that their daily lives lack meaning. Many criticisms of Durkheim's study can be raised, but it remains a classic work that is relevant to sociology today.

social facts

According to Émile Durkheim, the aspects of social life that shape our actions as individuals. Durkheim believed that social facts could be studied scientifically.

organic solidarity

According to Émile Durkheim, the social cohesion that results from the various parts of a society functioning as an integrated whole.

social constraint

The conditioning influence on our behavior by the groups and societies of which we are members. Social constraint was regarded by Émile Durkheim as one of the distinctive properties of social facts.

KARL MARX

The ideas of the German philosopher Karl Marx (1818–1883) contrast sharply with those of Comte and Durkheim, but like them, he sought to explain the societal changes that took place during the Industrial Revolution. When Marx was a young man, his political activities brought him into conflict with the German authorities; after a brief stay in France, he settled permanently in exile in Great Britain. Marx's viewpoint was founded on what he called the **materialist conception of history**. According to this view, it is not the ideas or values human beings hold that are the main sources of social change, as Durkheim claimed. Rather, social change is prompted primarily by economic influences. The conflicts between classes—the rich versus the poor—provide the motivation for historical development. In Marx's words, "All human history thus far is the history of class struggles."

Though he wrote about many historical periods, Marx concentrated on change in modern times. For him, the most important changes were bound up with the development of **capitalism**. Capitalism is a system of production that contrasts radically with previous economic systems in history. It involves the production of goods and services sold to a wide range of consumers. Those who own capital, or factories, machines, and large sums of money, form a ruling class. The mass of the population make up the working class, or wage workers who do not own the means of their livelihood but must find employment provided by the owners of capital. Marx saw capitalism as a class system in which conflict between classes is a common occurrence because it is in the interests of the ruling class to exploit the working class and in the interests of the workers to seek to overcome that exploitation.

Marx predicted that in the future capitalism will be supplanted by a society in which there are no classes—no divisions between rich and poor. He didn't mean that all inequalities would disappear; rather, societies will no longer be split into a small class that monopolizes economic and political power and the large mass of people who benefit little from the wealth their work creates. The economic system will come under communal ownership, and a more equal society than we know at present will be established.

Marx's work had a far-reaching effect in the twentieth century. Through most of the century, until the fall of Soviet communism in the early 1990s, more than a third of the world population lived in societies whose governments claimed to derive their inspiration from Marx's ideas. In addition, many sociologists have been influenced by Marx's ideas about class inequalities.

MAX WEBER

Like Marx, Max Weber (pronounced "VAY-ber"; 1864–1920) cannot be labeled simply a sociologist; his interests and concerns ranged across many areas. Born in Germany, where he spent most of his academic career, Weber was educated in a range of fields. Like other thinkers of his time, Weber sought to understand social change. He was influenced by Marx but was also strongly critical of some of Marx's views. He rejected the materialist conception of history and saw class conflict as less significant than Marx did. In Weber's view, economic factors are important, but ideas and values have just as much effect on social change.



anomie

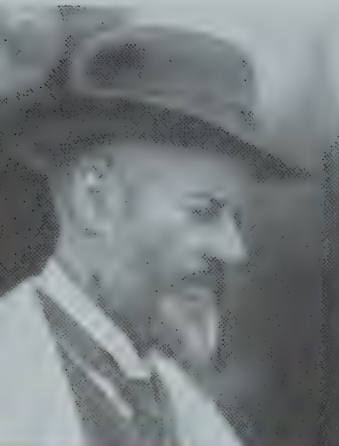
A concept first brought into wide usage in sociology by Durkheim, referring to a situation in which social norms lose their hold over individual behavior.

materialist conception of history

The view developed by Marx, according to which material, or economic, factors have a prime role in determining historical change.

capitalism

An economic system based on the private ownership of wealth, which is invested and reinvested in order to produce profit.



Max Weber (1864–1920)

Some of Weber's most influential writings compared the leading religious systems in China and India with those of the West. Weber concluded that certain aspects of Christian beliefs strongly influenced the rise of capitalism. He argued that the capitalist outlook of Western societies did not emerge only from economic changes, as Marx had argued. In Weber's view, cultural ideas and values help shape society and affect our individual actions.

One of the most influential aspects of Weber's work was his study of bureaucracy. A bureaucracy is a large organization that is divided into jobs based on specific functions and staffed by officials ranked according to a hierarchy. Industrial firms, government organizations, hospitals, and schools are examples of bureaucracies. Bureaucracy makes it possible for these large organizations to run efficiently, but at the same time it poses problems for effective democratic participation in modern societies. Bureaucracy involves the rule of experts, whose decisions are made without much consultation with those whose lives are affected by those decisions.

Weber's contributions range over many other areas, including the study of the development of cities, systems of law, types of economy, and the nature of classes. He also wrote about the overall character of sociology itself. According to Weber, humans are thinking, reasoning beings: We attach meaning and significance to most of what we do, and any discipline that deals with human behavior must acknowledge this.

Neglected Founders

Durkheim, Marx, and Weber are widely acknowledged as foundational figures in sociology, yet other important thinkers from the same period made valuable contributions to sociological thought as well. Very few women or members of racial minorities were given the opportunity to become professional sociologists during the “classical” period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their contributions deserve the attention of sociologists today.

HARRIET MARTINEAU

Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) was born and educated in England. She was the author of more than fifty books and numerous essays. Martineau is now credited with introducing sociology to England through her translation of Comte's founding treatise of the field, *Positive Philosophy* (Rossi 1973). She also conducted a firsthand systematic study of American society during her extensive travels throughout the United States in the 1830s, which is the subject of her book *Society in America*.

Martineau is significant to sociologists today for several reasons. First, she argued that when one studies a society, one must focus on all its aspects, including key political, religious, and social institutions. Second, she insisted that an analysis of a society must include an understanding of women's lives. Third, she was the first to turn a sociological eye on previously ignored issues such as marriage, children, domestic and religious life, and race relations. Finally, she argued that sociologists should do more than just observe; they should also act in ways that benefit society. Martineau herself was an active proponent of women's rights and the emancipation of slaves.

W. E. B. DU BOIS

W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) was the first African American to earn a doctorate at Harvard University. Du Bois made many contributions to sociology. Perhaps most important is the



Harriet Martineau
(1802–1876)

TABLE 1.1

Interpreting Modern Development

Durkheim	<div>1. The main dynamic of modern development is the division of labor as a basis for social cohesion and organic solidarity.</div> <div>2. Durkheim believed that sociology must study social facts as things, just as science would analyze the natural world. His study of suicide led him to stress the important influence of social factors, qualities of a society external to the individual, on a person's actions. Durkheim argued that society exerts social constraint over our actions.</div>
Marx	<div>1. The main dynamic of modern development is the expansion of capitalism. Rather than being cohesive, society is divided by class differences.</div> <div>2. Marx believed that we must study the divisions within a society that are derived from the economic inequalities of capitalism.</div>
Weber	<div>1. The main dynamic of modern development is the rationalization of social and economic life.</div> <div>2. Weber focused on why Western societies developed so differently from other societies. He also emphasized the importance of cultural ideas and values on social change.</div>

concept of “double consciousness,” which is a way of talking about identity through the lens of the particular experiences of African Americans (Morris 2015). He argued that American society lets African Americans see themselves only through the eyes of others: “It is a particular sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (1903). Du Bois made a persuasive claim that one’s sense of self and one’s identity are greatly influenced by historical experiences and social circumstances—in the case of African Americans, the effect of slavery and, after emancipation, segregation and prejudice.

Throughout his career, Du Bois focused on race relations in the United States. As he said in an often-repeated quote, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line.” His influence on sociology today is evidenced by continued interest in the questions that he raised, particularly his concern that sociology must explain “the contact of diverse races of men.” Du Bois was also the first social researcher to trace the problems faced by African Americans to their social and economic underpinnings, a connection that most sociologists now widely accept. Finally, Du Bois became known for connecting social analysis to social reform. He was one of the founding members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and a longtime advocate for the collective struggle of African Americans.

Later in his life, Du Bois became disenchanted by the lack of progress in American race relations. He moved to the African nation of Ghana in 1961 when he was invited by the nation’s president to direct the *Encyclopedia Africana*. He died in Ghana in 1963.



W. E. B. Du Bois
(1868–1963)

Although Du Bois receded from American life in his later years, his impact on American social thought and activism has been particularly profound, with many ideas of the Black Lives Matter movement informed by his writings (Morris 2015).

Modern Theoretical Approaches

The origins of sociology were mainly European, yet the subject is now firmly established worldwide—with some of the most important developments having taken place in the United States.

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

The work of George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), a philosopher teaching at the University of Chicago, had an important influence on the development of sociological thought, in particular through a perspective called **symbolic interactionism**. Mead placed great importance on the study of language in analyzing the social world. He reasoned that language allows us to become self-conscious beings—aware of our own individuality. The key element in this process is the **symbol**, something that stands for something else. For example, the word *tree* is a symbol that represents the object tree. Once we have mastered such a concept, Mead argued, we can think of a tree even if none is visible; we have learned to think of the object symbolically. Symbolic thought frees us from being limited in our experience to what we actually see, hear, or feel.

Unlike animals, according to Mead, human beings live in a richly symbolic universe. This applies even to our very sense of self. Each of us is a self-conscious being because we learn to look at ourselves as if from the outside—we see ourselves as others see us. When a child begins to use “I” to refer to that object (herself) whom others call “you,” she is exhibiting the beginnings of self-consciousness.

Virtually all interactions between individuals involve an exchange of symbols, according to symbolic interactionists. When we interact with others, we constantly look for clues to what type of behavior is appropriate in the context and how to interpret what others are doing and saying. Symbolic interactionism directs our attention to the detail of interpersonal interaction and how that detail is used to make sense of what others say and do. For instance, suppose two people are out on a date for the first time. Each is likely to spend a good part of the evening sizing the other up and assessing how the relationship is likely to develop, if at all. Both individuals are careful about their own behavior, making every effort to present themselves in a favorable light; but, knowing this, both are likely to be looking for aspects of the other’s behavior that would reveal his or her true beliefs and traits. A complex and subtle process of symbolic interpretation shapes the interaction between the two.

FUNCTIONALISM

Symbolic interactionism is open to the criticism that it concentrates too much on things that are small in scope. Symbolic interactionists have found difficulty in dealing with larger-scale structures and processes—the very thing that a rival tradition of thought, **functionalism**, tends to emphasize. Functionalist thinking in sociology was originally pioneered by Comte and by Spencer.

To study the function of a social activity is to analyze the contribution that the activity makes to the continuation of the society as a whole. The best way to understand this

symbolic interactionism

A theoretical approach in sociology developed by George Herbert Mead that emphasizes the role of symbols and language as core elements of all human interaction.

symbol

One item used to stand for or represent another—as in the case of a flag, which symbolizes a nation.

functionalism

A theoretical perspective based on the notion that social events can best be explained in terms of the functions they perform—that is, the contributions they make to the continuity of a society.

idea is by analogy to the human body, a comparison Comte, Durkheim, Spencer, and other functionalist authors made. To study an organ such as the heart, we need to show how it relates to other parts of the body. When we learn how the heart pumps blood around the body, we then understand that the heart plays a vital role in the continuation of the life of the organism. Similarly, analyzing the function of some aspect of society, such as religion, means showing the part it plays in the continued existence and health of a society. Functionalism emphasizes the importance of moral consensus in maintaining order and stability in society. Moral consensus exists when most people in a society share the same values. Functionalists regard order and balance as the normal state of society—a social equilibrium grounded in the existence of a moral consensus among the members of society.

Functionalism became prominent in sociology in the mid-twentieth century through the writings of Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton, each of whom saw functionalist analysis as providing the key to the development of sociological theory and research. Merton's version of functionalism has been particularly influential. Merton distinguished between manifest and latent functions. **Manifest functions** are those known to, and intended by, the participants in a specific type of social activity. **Latent functions** are consequences of that activity of which participants are unaware. To illustrate this distinction, Merton used the example of a rain dance performed by the Hopi tribe of Arizona and New Mexico. The Hopi believe that the ceremony will bring the rain they need for their crops (manifest function). This is why they organize and participate in it. But using Durkheim's theory of religion, Merton argued that the rain dance also has the effect of promoting the cohesion of the Hopi society (latent function). A major part of sociological explanation, according to Merton, consists in uncovering the latent functions of social activities and institutions.

For much of the twentieth century, functionalist thought was considered the leading theoretical tradition in sociology, particularly in the United States. In recent years, its popularity has declined as its limitations have become apparent. Many functionalist thinkers (Talcott Parsons is an example) unduly stressed factors leading to social cohesion at the expense of those producing division and conflict. In addition, many critics argue that functional analysis attributes to societies qualities they do not have. Functionalists often wrote as though societies have “needs” and “purposes,” even though these concepts make sense only when applied to individual human beings.

CONFLICT THEORIES

A third influential approach is conflict theory. In general, **conflict theories** underscore the role of coercion and power in producing social order. Social order is believed to be maintained by domination, with power in the hands of those with the greatest political, economic, and social resources; historically, this would include white men with ample economic and political resources. Two particular approaches typically classified under the broad heading of conflict theories are Marxism and feminist theories.

Marxism Marxists, of course, trace their views back to the writings of Karl Marx. But numerous interpretations of Marx's major ideas are possible, and today there are schools of Marxist thought that take very different theoretical positions. In all of its versions, **Marxism** differs from non-Marxist perspectives in that its adherents see it as a combination of sociological analysis and political reform. Marxism is supposed to generate a program of radical political change.

manifest functions

The functions of a particular social activity that are known to and intended by the individuals involved in the activity.

latent functions

Functional consequences that are not intended or recognized by the members of a social system in which they occur.

conflict theories

A sociological perspective that emphasizes the role of political and economic power and oppression as contributing to the existing social order.

Marxism

A body of thought deriving its main elements from Karl Marx's ideas.

power

The ability of individuals or the members of a group to achieve aims or further the interests they hold.

ideology

Shared ideas or beliefs that serve to justify the interests of dominant groups. Ideologies are found in all societies in which there are systematic and ingrained inequalities among groups. The concept of ideology connects closely with that of power.

feminism

Advocacy of the rights of women to be equal with men in all spheres of life. Feminism dates from the late eighteenth century in Europe.

feminist theory

A sociological perspective that emphasizes the centrality of gender in analyzing the social world and particularly the experiences of women. There are many strands of feminist theory, but they all share the intention to explain gender inequalities in society and to work to overcome them.

postmodernism

The belief that society is no longer governed by history or progress. Postmodern society is highly pluralistic and diverse, with no “grand narrative” guiding its development.

Moreover, Marxists place more emphasis on conflict, class divisions, power, and ideology than many non-Marxist sociologists, especially those influenced by functionalism. The concept of power and a closely associated notion, ideology, are of great importance to Marxist sociologists and to sociology in general. **Power** refers to the ability of individuals or groups to make their own concerns or interests count, even when others resist. Power sometimes involves the direct use of force but is almost always accompanied by the development of **ideology**: ideas that are used to justify the actions of the powerful. Power, ideology, and conflict are always closely connected. Many conflicts are about power, because of the rewards it can bring. Those who hold the most power may depend mainly on the influence of ideology to retain their dominance but are usually also able to use force if necessary.

Feminism and Feminist Theory Feminist theory is one of the most prominent areas of contemporary sociology. This is a notable development because issues of gender are nearly absent in the work of the major figures who established the discipline. The success of feminism’s entry into sociology required a fundamental—and often contested—shift in the discipline’s approach.

Many feminist theorists brought their experiences in the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s to their work as sociologists. Like Marxism, **feminism** makes a link between sociological theory and political reform. Feminist sociologists often have been advocates for political and social action to remedy the inequalities between women and men in both the public and private spheres.

Feminist sociologists argue that women’s lives and experiences are central to the study of society. Historically, sociology, like most academic disciplines, has presumed a male point of view. Driven by a concern with women’s subordination in American society, feminist sociologists highlight gender relations and gender inequality as important determinants of social life in terms of both social interaction and social institutions such as the family, the workplace, and the educational system. **Feminist theory** emphasizes that gender differences are not natural but socially constructed.

Today, feminist sociology often encompasses a focus on the intersection of gender, race, and class. A feminist approach to the study of inequality has influenced new academic fields, like LGBTQ studies. Taken together, these theoretical perspectives underscore power imbalances and draw attention to the ways that social change must entail shifts in the balance of power—consistent with the overarching themes of conflict theories.

POSTMODERN THEORY

Postmodernists claim that the very foundation upon which classic social thought is based has collapsed. Early thinkers were inspired by the idea that history unfolds sequentially and leads to progress. Adherents of **postmodernism** counter that there are no longer any “grand narratives,” or metanarratives—overall conceptions of history or society—that make any sense (Lyotard 1985). Some go so far as to argue there is no such thing as history.

The postmodern world is not destined, as Marx hoped, to be a socialist one. Instead, it is one dominated by the new media, which “take us out” of our past. Postmodern society is highly pluralistic and diverse. In countless films, videos, TV shows, and websites, images circulate around the world. We are exposed to many ideas and values, but these have little connection with the history of places where we live, or with our own personal histories. The world is constantly in flux.

Bullying Goes Viral

Social life in the twenty-first century has “gone digital”—for both good and bad. For you and your college classmates, bullying often occurs online. As we saw earlier in this chapter, teens like Audrie Pott and Tyler Clementi were tormented by tech-savvy classmates who shared images and videos of their victims with untold numbers of people. How did this happen? How did these incidents, which happened behind closed doors, “go viral” for all to see? Bullying, once considered the antics of a few “bad apples,” is now understood to be a more sweeping social problem—one that exemplifies the core themes of the sociological imagination.

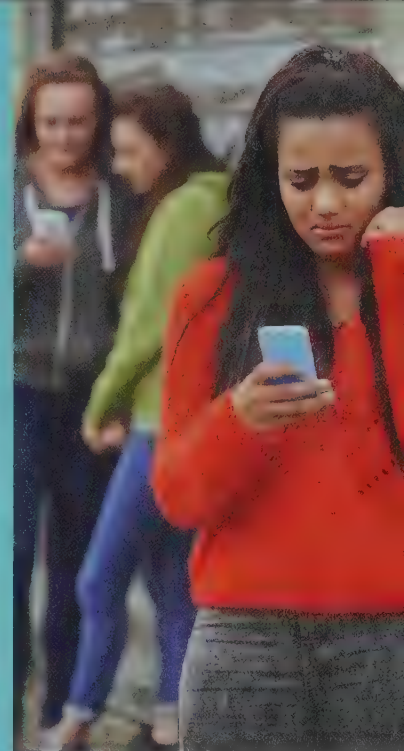
Countless websites and apps facilitate *cyberbullying*—the use of the Internet, smartphones, or other electronic devices to embarrass or hurt another person (Sagan 2013). The problem is particularly widespread today because hate-spewing bullies can hide behind the anonymity of the Internet; teens who would never dream of bullying a classmate face-to-face may get lured into the cruel behavior online (Hoffman 2010). Take Yik Yak, for example. An anonymous social networking app, Yik Yak has been described as a “Twitter without handles” (Haskell 2014). The app, which functions as a virtual bulletin board, sorts messages, or “yaks,” by geographic location. Users can then read and comment on messages posted within a 1.5-mile radius, the hyper-local aspect making it popular on college campuses and even high schools (Mahler 2015).

Since it launched in 2013, the app has been at the center of countless campus controversies. At Penn State, the University of North Carolina, and Cal State Fresno, among others, users have posted threats of mass shootings. Students at Eastern Michigan University used the app to post sexually explicit messages about female professors (Dewey 2015). At the University of Missouri, racist commentary and threats on the app played a role in the high-profile campus protests that ultimately led to the resignation of the university’s president in fall 2015 (Nelson 2015).

Supporters of Yik Yak will argue that the app is mostly used for positive purposes. It gives shy students a chance to reach out to others for advice about classes and get information on everything from embarrassing health problems to the address of the evening’s hottest party. Others argue that Yik Yak is a forum for marginalized voices, including LGBT students and students of color, as well as an outlet for students struggling with mental illness. For example, within hours of a Michigan student posting suicidal thoughts on the app, users had organized an impromptu campus rally to provide resources to those struggling with depression (Hess 2015).

The Internet has the potential to promote positive social action. Dozens of apps have been developed to combat online bullying. For example, STOPit and Stop Bullies allows users to record videos and take photos to send to campus police or school authorities, while Back Off Bully lets students book appointments with their school counselors. The “It Gets Better” project, created by columnist Dan Savage and his partner, has inspired more than 50,000 user-created videos that convey a message of hope to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth facing bullying.

Does the explosion of cyberbullying indicate that today’s youth are cruel and insensitive to others’ vulnerabilities? Or is there something about the current cyber culture that promotes cruelty and insensitivity? Revising Mills’s notions of “personal troubles” and “public issues,” how might you explain cyberbullying? Do you think anti-bullying apps can be effective, or are larger social changes needed?



Young people are at the highest risk of online harassment. Fully 70 percent of Internet users between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four have been harassed online.

New York City's Times Square serves as the backdrop for live television programs such as ESPN's *SportsCenter* and movies like *Midnight Cowboy* and *Captain America*. Covered with advertisements and constantly in flux, it epitomizes Baudrillard's theories of postmodern society.



One of the important theorists of postmodernism is the French philosopher and sociologist Jean Baudrillard, who believes that the electronic media have destroyed our relationship to our past and created a chaotic, empty world. Baudrillard was strongly influenced by Marxism in his early years. However, he argues that the spread of electronic communication and the mass media have reversed the Marxist theorem that economic forces shape society. Rather, social life is influenced above all by signs and images.

In a media-dominated age, Baudrillard says, meaning is created by the flow of images, as in TV programs. Much of our world has become a sort of make-believe universe in which we are responding to media images rather than to real persons or places. Is “reality” television a portrayal of social “reality,” or does it feature televised people who are perceived to be “real”? Do hunters in Louisiana really look and act like the Robertson family on *Duck Dynasty*, and do the tough guys in *Amish Mafia* resemble the peaceful Amish who live and work in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania? Baudrillard would say no and would describe such images as “the dissolution of life into TV.”

Theoretical Thinking in Sociology

We have described four overarching theoretical approaches, which refer to broad orientations to the subject matter of sociology. Yet theoretical approaches are distinct from theories. Theories are more narrowly focused and represent attempts to explain particular social conditions or events. They are usually formed as part of the research process and in turn suggest problems to be investigated by researchers. An example would be Durkheim's theory of suicide, referred to earlier in this chapter.

Sometimes theories are set out very precisely and are even occasionally expressed in mathematical form—although this is more common in other social sciences (especially economics) than in sociology. Some theories, by contrast, have a much broader scope. Sociologists do not share a unified position on whether theories should be specific, wide-ranging, or somewhere in between. Robert K. Merton (1957), for example, argues forcefully that sociologists should concentrate their attention on what he calls middle-range theories. Middle-range theories are specific enough to be tested directly by empirical research, yet are sufficiently general to cover a range of different phenomena.

Relative deprivation theory is an example of a middle-range theory. It holds that how people evaluate their circumstances depends on whom they compare themselves with. Feelings of deprivation do not necessarily correspond to the absolute level of material deprivation one experiences. A family living in a small home in a poor area where everyone is in more or less similar circumstances is likely to feel less deprived than a family living in a similar house in a neighborhood where the majority of the other homes are much larger and neighbors are wealthier.

Assessing theories, and especially theoretical approaches, in sociology is a challenging and formidable task. The fact that there is not a single theoretical approach that dominates the field of sociology might be viewed as a limitation. But this is not the case at all: The jostling of rival theoretical approaches and theories reveals the vitality of the sociological enterprise. This variety rescues us from dogma or narrow-mindedness. Human behavior is complex, and no single theoretical perspective could adequately cover all of its aspects. Diversity in theoretical thinking provides a rich source of ideas that can be drawn on in research, and stimulates the imaginative capacities so essential to progress in sociological work.

Levels of Analysis: Microsociology and Macrosociology

One important distinction among the different theoretical perspectives we have discussed in this chapter involves the level of analysis at which each is directed. The study of everyday behavior in situations of face-to-face interaction is usually called **microsociology**. **Macrosociology**, by contrast, is the analysis of large-scale social systems, like the political system or the economy. It also includes the analysis of long-term processes of change, such as industrialization. At first glance, it may seem as though micro and macro perspectives are distinct from each other. In fact, the two are closely connected (Giddens 1984; Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel 1981).

Macro analysis is essential if we are to understand the institutional background of daily life. The ways in which people live their everyday lives are shaped by the broader institutional framework. For example, because of societal-level technological developments, we have many ways of maintaining friendships today. We may choose to call, send an email or text message, or communicate via Facebook or Skype, yet we may also choose to fly thousands of miles to spend the weekend with a friend.

Micro studies, in turn, are necessary for illuminating broad institutional patterns. Face-to-face interaction is clearly the main basis of all forms of social organization, no matter how large scale. Suppose we are interested in understanding how business corporations function. We could analyze the face-to-face interactions of directors in the boardroom, staff working in their offices, or workers on the factory floor. We would not build up a picture of the whole corporation in this way, since some of its business is transacted through printed materials, letters, the telephone, and computers. Yet we would certainly gain a good understanding of how the organization works.

In later chapters, we will explore further examples of how interaction in micro contexts affects larger social processes, and how macro systems in turn influence more confined settings of social life.

microsociology

The study of human behavior in contexts of face-to-face interaction.

macrosociology

The study of large-scale groups, organizations, or social systems.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What role does theory play in sociological research?
2. According to Emile Durkheim, what makes sociology a social science? Why?
3. According to Karl Marx, what are the differences between the classes that make up a capitalist society?
4. What are the differences between symbolic interactionist and functionalist approaches to the analysis of society?
5. How are macro and micro analyses of society connected?

What Kinds of Questions Can Sociologists Answer?

Be able to describe the different types of questions sociologists address in their research.

science

The disciplined marshaling of empirical data, combined with theoretical approaches and theories that illuminate or explain those data.

empirical investigation

Factual inquiry carried out in any area of sociological study.

factual questions

Questions that raise issues concerning matters of fact (rather than theoretical or moral issues).

comparative questions

Questions concerned with drawing comparisons among different human societies.

developmental questions

Questions that sociologists pose when looking at the origins and path of development of social institutions.

Can we really study human social life in a scientific way? To answer this question, we must first define the word *science*.

Science is the use of systematic methods of **empirical investigation**, the analysis of data, theoretical thinking, and the logical assessment of arguments to develop a body of knowledge about a particular subject matter. Sociology is a scientific endeavor, according to this definition. It involves systematic methods of empirical investigation, the analysis of data, and the assessment of theories in the light of evidence and logical argument.

High-quality sociological research goes beyond surface-level descriptions of ordinary life; rather, it helps us understand our social lives in a new way. Sociologists are interested in the same questions that other people worry about and debate: Why do racism and sexism exist? How can mass starvation exist in a world that is far wealthier than it has ever been before? How does the Internet affect our lives? However, sociologists often develop answers that run counter to our commonsense beliefs—and that generate further questions. One major feature that helps distinguish science from other idea systems (such as religion) is the assumption that all scientific ideas are open to criticism and revision.

Good sociological work also tries to make the questions as precise as possible and seeks to gather factual evidence before coming to conclusions. Some of the questions that sociologists ask in their research studies are largely **factual**, or empirical, **questions**.

Factual information about one society, of course, will not always tell us whether we are dealing with an unusual case or a general set of influences. For this reason, sociologists often want to ask **comparative questions**, relating one social context within a society to another or contrasting examples drawn from different societies. A typical comparative question might be, How much do patterns of criminal behavior and law enforcement vary between the United States and Canada? Similarly, **developmental questions** ask whether patterns in a given society have shifted over time: How is the past different from the present?

Yet sociologists are interested in more than just answering factual questions, however important and interesting they may be. To obtain an understanding of human behavior, sociologists also pose broader **theoretical questions** that encompass a wide array of specific phenomena (Table 1.2). For example, a factual question may ask: To what extent do expected earnings affect one's choice of an occupation? By contrast, a theoretical question may ask: To what extent does the maximization of rewards affect human decision making?

Sociologists do not strive to attain theoretical or factual knowledge simply for its own sake. Social scientists agree that personal values should not be permitted to bias conclusions, but at the same time research should pose questions that are relevant

TABLE 1.2

A Sociologist’s Line of Questioning

Factual Question	What happened?	Did the proportion of women in their forties bearing children for the first time increase, decrease, or stay the same during the 2010s?
Comparative Question	Did this happen everywhere?	Was this a global phenomenon or did it occur just in the United States or only in a certain region of the United States?
Developmental Question	Has this happened over time?	What have been the patterns of childbearing over time?
Theoretical Question	What underlies this phenomenon?	Why are more women now waiting until their thirties and older to bear children? What factors would we look at to explain this change?

theoretical questions

Questions posed by sociologists when seeking to explain a particular range of observed events. The asking of theoretical questions is crucial to allowing us to generalize about the nature of social life.

to real-world concerns. In this chapter, we further explore such issues by asking whether it is possible to produce objective knowledge. First, we examine the steps involved in sociological research. We then compare the most widely used research methods as we consider some actual investigations. As we shall see, there are often significant differences between the way research should ideally be carried out and real-world studies.

What Are the Steps of the Research Process?

The research process begins with the definition of a research question and ends with the dissemination of the study findings (Figure 1.1). Although researchers do not necessarily follow all seven steps in the order set forth here, these steps serve as a model for how to conduct a sociological study. Conducting research is a bit like cooking. New researchers, like novice cooks, may follow the “recipe” to a tee. Experienced cooks often don’t work from recipes at all, instead relying on the skills and insights they’ve acquired through years of hands-on experience.

CONCEPT CHECKS

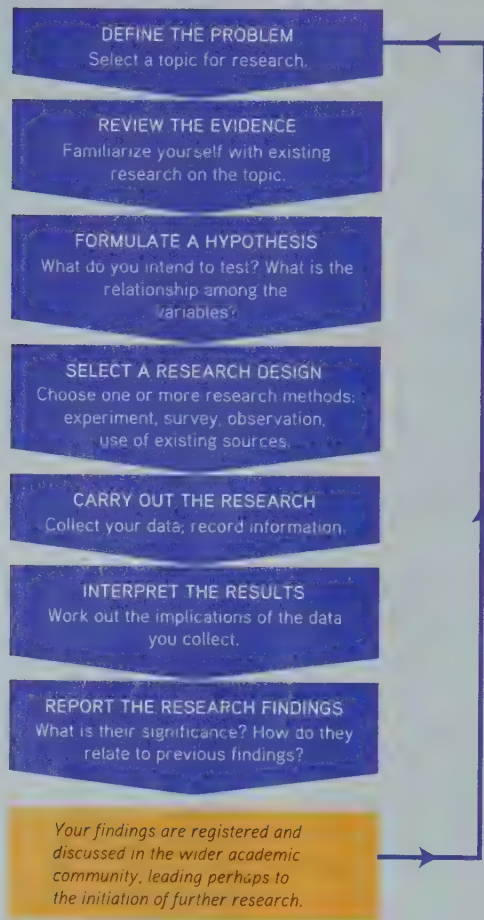
- 1 Why is sociology considered a science?
- 2 What are the differences between comparative and developmental questions?



Learn the steps of the research process and be able to complete the process yourself.

FIGURE 1.1

Steps in the Research Process



hypothesis

An idea or a guess about a given state of affairs, put forward as a basis for empirical testing.

1. Define the Research Problem

All research starts from a research problem. Often, researchers strive to uncover a fact: What proportion of the U.S. population attends weekly religious services? How far does the economic position of women lag behind that of men? Do LGBTQ and straight teens differ in their levels of self-esteem?

The best sociological research, however, begins with problems that are also puzzles. A puzzle is not just a lack of information but a gap in our understanding. The most intriguing and influential sociological research correctly identifies and solves important puzzles.

Rather than simply answering the question “What is happening?” skilled researchers contribute to our understanding by asking “Why is this phenomenon happening?” We might ask, for example, “Why are women underrepresented in science and technology jobs?” or “What are the characteristics of high schools with high levels of bullying?”

Research does not take place in a vacuum. A sociologist may discover puzzles by reading the work of other researchers in books and professional journals or by being aware of emerging trends in society.

2. Review the Evidence

Once a research problem is identified, the next step is to review the available evidence; it's possible that other researchers have already satisfactorily clarified the problem. If not, the sociologist will need to sift through whatever related research does exist to see how useful it is for his or her purposes. What have others found? If their findings conflict with one another, what accounts for

the conflict? What aspects of the problem has their research left unanalyzed? Have they looked only at small segments of the population, such as one age group, gender, or region? Drawing on others' ideas helps the sociologist clarify the issues that may be raised and the methods that could be used in the research.

3. Make the Problem Precise

A third stage involves working out a clear formulation of the research problem. If relevant literature already exists, the researcher may have a good idea of how to approach the problem. Hunches about the nature of the problem can sometimes be turned into a definite **hypothesis**—an educated guess about what is going on—at this stage. A hypothesis must be formulated in such a way that the factual material gathered will provide evidence either supporting or disproving it.



In looking at this painting by Brueghel, we can observe the number of people, what each is doing, the style of the buildings, or the colors the painter chose. But without the title, *Netherlandish Proverbs* (1559), these facts tell us nothing about the picture's meaning. In the same way, sociologists need theory as a context for their observations.

4. Work Out a Design

The researcher must then decide how to collect the research material, or **data**. Many different research methods exist, and researchers should choose the method (or methods) that are best suited to the study's overall objectives and topic. For some purposes, a survey (in which questionnaires are normally used) might be suitable. In other circumstances, interviews or an observational study may be appropriate.

5. Carry Out the Research

Researchers then proceed to carry out the plan developed in step 4. However, practical difficulties may arise, forcing the researcher to rethink his or her initial strategy. Potential subjects may not agree to answer questionnaires or participate in interviews. A business firm may not give a researcher access to its records. Yet omitting such persons or institutions from the study could bias the results, creating an inaccurate or incomplete picture of social reality. For example, it would be difficult for a researcher to answer questions about how corporations have complied with affirmative action programs if companies that have not complied do not want to be studied.

6. Interpret the Results

Once the information has been gathered, the researcher's work is not over—it is just beginning! The data must be analyzed, trends tracked, and hypotheses tested. Most important, researchers must interpret their results in such a way that they tell a clear story and directly address the research puzzle outlined in step 1.

data

Factual information used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation. Social science data often refer to individuals' responses to survey questions.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What are the seven steps of the research process?
2. What is a hypothesis?

Familiarize yourself with the methods available to sociological researchers, and know the advantages and disadvantages of each. See how researchers use multiple methods in a real study.

qualitative methods

Approaches to sociological research that often rely on personal and/or collective interviews, accounts, or observations of a person or situation.

quantitative methods

Approaches to sociological research that draw on objective and statistical data and often focuses on documenting trends, comparing subgroups, or exploring correlations.

7. Report the Findings

The research report, usually published as a book or an article in a scholarly journal, provides an account of the research question, methods, findings, and implications of the findings for social theory, public policy, or practice. This is a final stage only in terms of addressing the original research puzzle. In their written reports, most social scientists pose questions that remain unanswered and suggest new questions that might be explored in future studies. Each individual study contributes to the larger, collective process of understanding the human condition.

What Research Methods Do Sociologists Use?

Sociologists have a range of methods at their disposal. While methods are often classified as qualitative or quantitative, scholars today are increasingly interested in mixed methods, which combine the two. **Qualitative methods** can be broadly thought of as approaches that explore the deeper meaning of a particular setting. Sociologists using qualitative methods may rely on personal and collective accounts or observations of a person or situation. These observations are strictly subjective, suggesting an interpretive approach to describing actors and their social contexts. **Quantitative methods**, by contrast, use data that are objective and statistical. This type of research often focuses on documenting trends, comparing subgroups, or exploring correlations.

Ethnography

One widely used qualitative method is **ethnography**, or firsthand studies of people using observations, interviews, or both. Here, the investigator socializes, works, or lives with members of a group, organization, or community. In the case of **participant observation**, the researcher may participate directly in the activities he or she is studying. An ethnographer cannot secretly infiltrate the groups she studies but must explain and justify her presence to its members. She must gain the cooperation of the community and sustain it over a period of time if any worthwhile results are to be achieved. Other ethnographers, by contrast, may observe at a distance and may not participate directly in the activities under observation.

For a long while, research reports based on participant observation usually omitted any account of the hazards or problems that the researcher had to overcome, but more recently the published reminiscences and diaries of field-workers have been more honest and open. The researcher may be frustrated because the members of the group refuse to talk frankly about themselves; direct queries may be welcomed in some contexts but met with a chilly silence in others. Some types of fieldwork may be emotionally isolating or even physically dangerous; for instance, a researcher studying a street gang might be seen as a police informer or might become unwittingly embroiled in conflicts with rival gangs.

In traditional works of ethnography, accounts were presented without very much information about the observer. It was believed that ethnographers could present “objective” observations of the things they studied. More recently, ethnographers have been willing to



Harvard sociologist Matthew Desmond spent more than a year doing participant observation research of tenants and their landlords in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for his ethnography on eviction.

talk and write about themselves and the nature of their connection to the people under study, even acknowledging possible sources of bias in their observations. For example, a researcher might discuss how her race, class, gender, or sexual orientation affected the work, or how the status differences between observer and observed distorted the dialogue between them.

ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF FIELDWORK

Where it is successful, ethnography provides rich information on the behavior of people in real-world settings. We may develop a better understanding not only of the group but of social processes that transcend the situation under study.

But fieldwork also has serious limitations. Only fairly small groups or communities can be studied. And much depends on the skill of the researcher in gaining the confidence of the individuals involved; without this skill, the research is unlikely to get off the ground at all. The reverse is also possible. A researcher may begin to identify so closely with the group that she loses the perspective of an objective observer. Or she may reach conclusions that are more about her own effects on the situation than she or her readers ever realize. Finally, the findings of field studies are seldom generalizable, meaning that researchers' conclusions may not hold true for other groups or settings.

Surveys

Quantitative methodologists have a range of analytical tools and data resources at their disposal, but surveys are the most commonly used. When conducting a **survey**, researchers ask subjects to provide answers to structured questionnaires. The researcher may administer the survey in person or mail it to a study participant who

ethnography

The firsthand study of people using observation, in-depth interviewing, or both. Also called *fieldwork*.

participant observation

A method of research widely used in sociology and anthropology in which the researcher takes part in the activities of the group or community being studied.

survey

A method of sociological research in which questionnaires are administered to the population being studied.



"How would you like me to answer that question? As a member of my ethnic group, educational class, income group, or religious category?"



will then return it by mail. Survey results—especially those based on random samples of the larger population—can often be generalized to the population at large, yet this method provides less in-depth information than the highly descriptive, nuanced slices of life obtained in fieldwork.

STANDARDIZED AND OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Two types of questions are used in surveys. With *standardized*, or *fixed-choice* questions, only a fixed range of responses is possible—for instance, Yes/No/Don't Know or Very Likely/Likely/Unlikely/Very Unlikely. Such questions have the advantage that responses are easy to compare and count up because only a small number of categories are involved. However, the information they yield is limited because they do not allow for subtleties of opinion or verbal expression. For example, in a national survey of high school and middle school students' experiences with bullying, study participants answered Yes/No questions such as "Has someone ever sent you a threatening or aggressive email, instant message, or text message?" but this question does not tell how severe the threat was or how upset a student was by this event (Lenhart 2007; Lenhart et al. 2011).

Open-ended questions, by contrast, typically provide more detailed information because respondents may express their views in their own words. In fact, responses to open-ended survey questions are considered qualitative data, as they often convey thoughts, perceptions, and feelings. Open-ended questions allow researchers to probe more deeply into what the respondent thinks. However, the lack of standardization means that answers may be difficult to compare across respondents. For example, the national study of Internet bullying supplemented its survey with open-ended interviews. These data allowed researchers to understand more fully what bullying entailed.

In surveys, all the items must be readily understandable to interviewers and interviewees alike. Questions are usually asked in a set order. Large national surveys are conducted regularly by government agencies and research organizations, with interviews carried out more or less simultaneously across the whole country. Those who conduct the interviews and those who analyze the data could not do their work effectively if they constantly had to be checking with one another about ambiguities in the questions or answers.

Survey researchers take care to ensure that respondents can easily understand both the questions and the response categories posed. For instance, a seemingly simple question like "What is your relationship status?" might baffle some people. It would be more appropriate to ask "Are you single, married, separated, divorced, or widowed?" Many survey questions are tried-and-true measures that have been used successfully in numerous prior studies. Researchers developing new survey questions often conduct a pilot study to test out new items. A **pilot study** is a trial run in which a questionnaire is completed by a small number of people, and problematic questions are identified and revised.

Although surveys have been used primarily to obtain information on individuals, in recent years, social scientists have used surveys to learn about members of the respondent's social network and have developed techniques to link the survey reports of one individual to his or her friends, high school classmates, family members, or spouse. These complex data allow researchers to understand social networks; sociologists are increasingly interested in the ways that aspects of one's social network, such as how diverse one's friends are, or how large one's networks are, shape even highly personal attributes like one's political attitudes or body weight (Christakis and Fowler 2009).

pilot study

A trial run in survey research.

sampling

Studying a proportion of individuals or cases from a larger population as representative of that population as a whole.

sample

A small proportion of a larger population.

TABLE 1.3

Three of the Main Methods Used in Sociological Research

RESEARCH METHOD	STRENGTHS	LIMITATIONS
Ethnography	Usually generates richer and more in-depth information than other methods. Provides a broader understanding of social processes.	Can be used to study only relatively small groups or communities. Findings might apply only to groups or communities studied; not easily generalizable.
Surveys	Make possible the efficient collection of data on large numbers of individuals. Allow for precise comparisons to be made among the answers of respondents.	Material gathered may be superficial; if questionnaire is highly standardized, important differences among respondents' viewpoints may be glossed over. Responses may be what people profess to believe rather than what they actually believe.
Experiments	Influence of specific variables can be controlled by the investigator. Are usually easier for subsequent researchers to repeat.	Many aspects of social life cannot be brought into the laboratory. Responses of those studied may be affected by the experimental situation.

SAMPLING

Often sociologists are interested in the characteristics of large numbers of individuals—for example, the political attitudes of the American population as a whole. It would be impossible to study all these people directly, so researchers' solution is to use **sampling**—they concentrate on a **sample**, or small proportion, of the overall group. Sampling strategies, or the processes through which one selects cases or individuals to study, is an important step in both quantitative and qualitative research. However, for reasons we will see later, it is much more likely that a quantitative sample will be generalizable to the overall population. We can usually be confident that results from a population sample can be generalized to the total population, as long as the sample was properly chosen. Studies of only 2,000–3,000 voters, for instance, can give a very accurate indication of the attitudes and voting intentions of the entire population. But to achieve such accuracy, we need a **representative sample**: The group of individuals studied must be typical of the population as a whole.

A single best procedure for ensuring that a sample is representative is **random sampling**, in which a sample is chosen so that every member of the population has an equal probability of being included. The most sophisticated way of obtaining a random sample is to assign each member of the population a number and then use a computer to generate a random numbers list from which the sample is derived—for instance, by picking every tenth number. Random sampling is often done by researchers doing large population-based

representative sample

A sample from a larger population that is statistically typical of that population.

random sampling

Sampling method in which a sample is chosen so that every member of the population has the same probability of being included.



In Philip Zimbardo's make-believe prison, tension between students playing guards and students playing prisoners became dangerously real.

experiment

A research method in which variables can be analyzed in a controlled and systematic way, either in an artificial situation constructed by the researcher or in naturally occurring settings.

comparative research

Research that compares one set of findings on one society with the same type of findings on other societies.

surveys, aimed at capturing the behaviors or attitudes of the overall U.S. population. For qualitative researchers interested in a particular population, such as street vendors or gangsters, it simply would not make sense to try to draw a random sample.

Experiments

An **experiment** enables a researcher to test a hypothesis under highly controlled conditions established by the researcher. Experiments are often used in the natural sciences and psychology, as they are considered the best method for ascertaining *causality*, or the influence of a particular factor on the study's outcome. In an experimental situation, the researcher directly controls the circumstances being studied. Because most experiments occur in laboratories, however, the scope of topics explored is quite restricted. We can bring only small groups of individuals into a laboratory setting, and in such experiments, people know that they are being studied and may behave unnaturally. Experiments also neglect the macrosocial context, such as historical or political influences. Experiments are generally considered quantitative studies, because researchers often want to measure quantitatively the effect of the study's manipulation. For example, do young people commit a greater number of aggressive acts while playing a video game if they have just been exposed to a violent film clip as opposed to a peaceful film clip?

Although experiments are much more common in psychology than sociology, several experimental studies have made important contributions to sociological knowledge. Perhaps the most infamous example is the Stanford prison experiment carried out by Philip Zimbardo (1972), who set up a make-believe prison, randomly assigning some student volunteers to the role of prison guards and others to the role of prisoners. His aim was to see how social role shaped attitudes and behavior. The results shocked the investigators. Students who portrayed the guards quickly assumed an authoritarian manner; they displayed genuine hostility toward the prisoners, ordering them around and verbally abusing and bullying them. The prisoners, by contrast, showed a mixture of apathy and rebelliousness—a response often noted among inmates in real prisons. These effects were so marked and the level of tension so high that the experiment had to be called off at an early stage. Zimbardo concluded that behavior in prisons is influenced more by the nature of the prison situation itself than by the individual characteristics of those involved.

Comparative and Historical Research

Comparative research is of central importance in sociology because it enables researchers to document whether social behavior varies across time and place and by one's social group memberships. Most comparative work is quantitative, in that researchers aim to document whether behaviors and attitudes change over time and place; thus, a consistent metric is required to make comparisons. For example, divorce rates rose rapidly in the United States after World War II, reaching a peak in 1979. Since then, the divorce rate has dropped by nearly a quarter, with only 18 marriages

per 1,000 ending in divorce in 2014 (Eickmeyer 2015)—a statistic that expresses profound changes taking place in the area of sexual relations and family life. Do these changes reflect specific features of American society? We can find out by comparing divorce rates in the United States with those in other countries. Although the U.S. rate is higher than the rate in most other Western societies, the overall trends are similar.

Like comparative researchers, historical analysts also care about comparing the past with the present, but they may be less concerned with documented trends and more concerned with delving deeply into particularly historical periods to understand how historical context shapes individual lives. As such, historical researchers frequently focus on one narrow time period and have deep knowledge about that era; this perspective helps them make sense of the material they collect about a particular social or historical problem.

Sociologists commonly want to investigate past events by interviewing people involved in the events. Some periods of recent history can be studied in this way—such as in the case of the 1960s civil rights movement in the United States. Research in **oral history** means interviewing people about events they witnessed at some point earlier in their lives. This kind of research can stretch back in time at the most only some sixty or seventy years. To study much earlier historical periods, sociologists depend on the use of documents and written records, often held in special collections at libraries or the National Archives.

An interesting example of the use of historical documents is sociologist Anthony Ashworth's (1980) study of trench warfare during World War I. Ashworth was interested in the lives of soldiers who had to endure being under constant fire, crammed in close proximity for weeks on end. He used a range of documentary sources: official histories of the war, including those written about different military divisions and battalions; official publications of the time; the notes and records kept informally by individual soldiers; and personal accounts of war experiences. He discovered that most soldiers formed their own ideas about how often they intended to engage in combat with the enemy and often effectively ignored the commands of their officers. For example, on Christmas Day, German and Allied soldiers suspended hostilities, and in one place the two sides even staged an informal soccer match. These insights were gleaned from a rich and diverse array of sources.

Despite the distinctive strengths of ethnography, surveys, experiments, comparative research, and historical analysis, each method has limitations. Sociologists often combine several methods in a single piece of research, using each method to supplement and check on the others. This process is known as **triangulation**. Laud Humphreys's classic *Tearoom Trade* (1970) study is an example of how researchers may use multiple methods to develop a deep understanding of social behavior. *Tearoom Trade* is an exploration of the phenomenon within the gay community involving the pursuit of impersonal sex in public restrooms. This study used surveys and observation to obtain fascinating glimpses into the secret lives of gay men. Yet, as we will see in the next section, it also revealed the important ethical challenges faced by sociologists.

oral history

Interviews with people about events they witnessed earlier in their lives.

triangulation

The use of multiple research methods as a way of producing more reliable empirical data than are available from any single method.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What are the main advantages and limitations of ethnography as a research method?
2. Contrast the two types of questions commonly used in surveys.
3. What is a random sample?
4. Discuss the main strengths of experiments.
5. What are the similarities and differences between comparative and historical research?
6. Why is it important to use triangulation in social research?



Recognize the ethical problems researchers may face, and identify possible solutions to these dilemmas.

measures of central tendency

The ways of calculating averages.

correlation coefficient

A measure of the degree of correlation between variables.

mean

A statistical measure of central tendency, or average, based on dividing a total by the number of individual cases.

mode

The number that appears most often in a data set.

median

The number that falls halfway in a range of numbers.

standard deviation

A way of calculating the spread of a group of figures.

What Ethical Dilemmas Do Sociologists Face?

In his groundbreaking *Tearoom Trade* study (1970), Humphreys investigated “tearooms,” or public restrooms where men would go to have sex with other men—often hiding their “secret” lives from their wives, children, and coworkers. Humphreys’s study cast a new light on the struggles of men who were forced to keep their sexual proclivities secret. His book led to a deeper understanding of the consequences of the social stigma and legal persecution associated with gay lifestyles.

Despite the value and impact of Humphreys’s work, it also is held up as a cautionary example of the ethical dilemmas that researchers face. The key ethical questions that sociologists must ask are (1) Does the research pose risks to the subjects that are greater than the risks they face in their everyday lives? (2) Do the scientific gains or “benefits” of the research balance out the “risks” to the subjects? These questions do not have easy answers, as Humphreys’s work reveals.

Humphreys set out to understand what kinds of men came to the tearooms. In order to answer this question, he took on the role of a “lookout”—a person who loitered in the tearoom and would let the others know if an intruder, such as a police officer, was nearby. This allowed him to observe the gay men’s activity. He could not easily ask questions or talk to the men in the tearoom, however, because of the norm of silence that prevailed. Humphreys also could not ask personal questions of men who wanted to remain anonymous.

Given his desire to learn more than his observations would allow, Humphreys’s solution was to learn about the men in the tearooms by using survey methods. He would write down the license plate numbers of men who drove into the parking lot and who then went into the restrooms for the purpose of engaging in anonymous sex. Humphreys then gave those license plate numbers to a friend who worked at the Department of Motor Vehicles, securing the addresses of the men.

Months later, Washington University in St. Louis was conducting a door-to-door survey of sexual habits. Humphreys asked the principal investigators in that survey if he could add the names and addresses of his sample of tearoom participants. Humphreys then disguised himself as one of the investigators and went to interview these men at their homes, supposedly just to ask the survey questions but actually also to learn more about their social backgrounds and lives. He found that most of these men were married and led very conventional lives.

Humphreys later acknowledged that he was less than truthful to the men whose behavior he was studying. He didn’t reveal his identity as a sociologist when observing the tearoom activities. People who came into the tearoom assumed he was there for the same reasons they were and that his presence could be accepted at face value. While he did not tell any direct lies while observing the tearoom, he also did not reveal the real reason for his presence there.

Was his behavior ethical? The study had many benefits, including moving forward scientific knowledge about gay men during a period when their behaviors were highly

Statistical Terms



Research in sociology often makes use of statistical techniques in the analysis of findings. Some are highly sophisticated and complex, but those most often used are easy to understand. The most common statistics are **measures of central tendency** (ways of calculating averages) and **correlation coefficients** (measures of the degree to which one variable relates consistently to another).

There are three methods of calculating averages, each of which has certain advantages and shortcomings. Take as an example the amount of personal wealth (including all assets such as houses, cars, bank accounts, and investments) owned by thirteen individuals. Suppose the thirteen own the following amounts:

- | | |
|-------------|------------------|
| 1. \$0 | 8. \$80,000 |
| 2. \$5,000 | 9. \$100,000 |
| 3. \$10,000 | 10. \$150,000 |
| 4. \$20,000 | 11. \$200,000 |
| 5. \$40,000 | 12. \$400,000 |
| 6. \$40,000 | 13. \$10,000,000 |
| 7. \$40,000 | |

The **mean** corresponds to the average, arrived at by adding together the personal wealth of all thirteen people and dividing the result by thirteen. The total is \$11,085,000; dividing this by thirteen, we reach a mean of \$852,692.31. The mean is often a useful calculation because it is based on the whole range of data provided. However, it can be misleading where one or a small number of cases are very different from the majority. In our example, the mean is not in fact an appropriate measure of central tendency because the presence of one very large figure, \$10,000,000, skews the picture. One might get the impression when using the mean to summarize these data that most of the people own far more than they actually do. In such instances, one of two other measures may be used.

The **mode** is the figure that occurs most frequently in a given set of data. In our example, it is \$40,000. The problem with the mode is that it doesn't take into account the overall

distribution of the data—that is, the range of figures covered. The most frequently occurring case in a set of figures is not necessarily representative of their distribution as a whole and thus may not be a useful average. In this case, \$40,000 is too close to the lower end of the figures.

The third measure is the **median**, which is the middle of any set of figures; here, this would be the seventh figure, again \$40,000. Our example gives an odd number of figures, thirteen. If there had been an even number—for instance, twelve—the median would be calculated by taking the mean of the two middle cases, items 6 and 7. Like the mode, the median gives no idea of the actual range of the data measured.

Sometimes a researcher will use more than one measure of central tendency to avoid giving a deceptive picture of the average. More often, he or she will calculate the **standard deviation** for the data in question. This is a way of calculating the **degree of dispersal**, or the range, of a set of figures—which in this case goes from \$0 to \$10,000,000.

Correlation coefficients offer a useful way of expressing how closely connected two (or more) variables are. Where two variables correlate completely, we can speak of a perfect positive correlation, expressed as 1.0. Where no relation is found between two variables—they have no consistent connection at all—the coefficient is 0. A perfect negative correlation, expressed as -1.0, exists when two variables are in a completely inverse relation to each other. Perfect correlations are never found in the social sciences. Correlations of the order of 0.6 or more, whether positive or negative, are usually regarded as indicating a strong degree of connection between whatever variables are being analyzed. Positive correlations on this level might be found between, say, social class background and voting behavior.

degree of dispersal

The range or distribution of a set of figures.

Reading a Table

You will often come across tables when reading sociological literature. They sometimes look complex, but they are easy to decipher if you follow a few basic steps, listed here; with practice, these will become automatic. (See Table 1.4 as an example.) Do not succumb to the temptation to skip over tables; they contain information in concentrated form, which can be read more quickly than would be possible if the same material were expressed in words. By becoming skilled in the interpretation of tables, you will also be able to check how justified the conclusions a writer draws actually seem.

1. **Read the title in full.** Tables frequently have long titles that represent an attempt by the researcher to state accurately the nature of the information conveyed. The title of Table 1.4 first reveals the subject of the data. Next it indicates that the table provides material for comparison. And finally, it specifies that the data are given only for a limited number of countries.
2. **Look for explanatory comments, or notes, about the data.** A source note at the foot of Table 1.4 indicates that the data were obtained from the Pew Research Center, a large international survey organization. It also notes that data were not available for all nations for all years. Notes may say how the material was collected or why it is displayed in a particular way. If the data have not been gathered by the researcher but are based on findings originally reported elsewhere, a source will be included. The source sometimes gives you some insight into how reliable the

information is likely to be, while also indicating where to find the original data. In our table, the source note makes clear that the data have been taken from one international organization.

3. **Read the headings along the top and left-hand side of the table.** (Sometimes tables are arranged with “headings” at the foot rather than the top.) These tell you what type of information is contained in each row and column. In reading the table, keep in mind each set of headings as you scan the figures. In our example, the headings on the left give the countries involved, whereas those at the top refer to proportion who hold a “favorable” opinion of the United States and the years for which data are available.
4. **Identify the units used; the figures in the body of the table may represent cases, percentages, averages, or other measures.** Sometimes it may be helpful to convert the figures to a form more useful to you: If percentages are not provided, for example, it may be worth calculating them.
5. **Consider the conclusions that might be reached from the information in the table.** Most tables are discussed by the author, and what he or she has to say should, of course, be borne in mind. But you should also ask what further issues or questions could be suggested by the data: How might you explain some of these declines? Or the sudden and precipitous drops?

stigmatized. If Humphreys had been completely frank at every stage of the research, his study might not have gotten as far as it did. At the same time, the costs to the research subjects were potentially high. The observational part of his study posed only modest risk: Humphreys did not collect information about the participants that would have identified them. What he knew about them was similar to what all the other people in the tearoom knew. His presence did not expose them to any more risk than they already encountered in their everyday lives.

The more problematic aspect of Humphreys's study was that he wrote down the license plate numbers of the people who came into the tearooms, obtained their home

TABLE 1.4

Opinion of the United States: Comparison of Selected Nations

Several interesting trends can be seen from the data in this table. First, the extent to which people hold favorable attitudes toward the United States varies considerably across nations. Second, although there are strong national and regional patterns of support for the United States, we also see considerable historical variation within nations. For example, in Egypt, one-third held favorable views in 2006, yet this proportion has steadily gone downward and bottomed out at 10 percent in 2014. A similar trend is evident in Pakistan. Yet some nations show a steep and sudden drop rather than a steady decline. While half of Russians held a favorable view through much of the 2000s, this share had plummeted to 15 percent by 2015.

PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS WHO HOLD A FAVORABLE (OR UNFAVORABLE) OPINION OF THE UNITED STATES											
COUNTRY	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
China	42	47	34	41	47	58	44	43	40	50	44
Egypt	-	30	21	22	27	17	20	19	16	10	-
France	43	39	39	42	75	73	75	69	64	75	73
Germany	42	37	30	31	64	63	62	52	53	51	50
Indonesia	38	30	29	37	63	59	54	-	61	59	62
Japan	-	63	61	50	59	66	85	72	69	66	68
Jordan	21	15	20	19	25	21	13	12	14	12	14
Mexico	-	-	56	47	69	56	52	56	66	63	66
Pakistan	23	27	15	19	16	17	12	12	11	14	22
Poland	62	-	61	68	67	74	70	69	67	73	74
Russia	52	43	41	46	44	57	56	52	51	23	15
South Korea	-	-	58	70	78	79	-	-	78	82	84
Turkey	23	12	9	12	14	17	10	15	21	19	29
United Kingdom	55	56	51	53	69	65	61	60	58	66	65
United States	83	76	80	84	88	85	79	80	81	82	83

Note: Data not available for all nations for all years.

Source: Pew Research Center Global Indicators Database 2015

addresses from the DMV, and visited their homes under the guise of conducting a survey for Washington University. Even though Humphreys did not reveal to the men's families anything about the activities he observed in the tearooms, and even though he took great pains to keep the data confidential, the knowledge he gained could have been damaging. Because the activity he was documenting was illegal at the time, police officers might have demanded that he release information about the men's identities. A less skilled investigator might have slipped up when interviewing the subjects' families. Humphreys could have lost his notes, which could then have been found later by someone else.

Humphreys was one of the first sociologists to study the lives of gay men. His account was a humane treatment that went well beyond what little was known about gay men at that time. Although none of his research subjects suffered as a result of his book, Humphreys himself later said that if he were to do the study again, he would not trace license plates or visit people's homes. Instead, after gathering his data in the public tearooms, he might try to get to know a subset of the people well enough to inform them of his goals for the study.

It is unlikely that Humphreys's tactics will be repeated in the future. Yet as research and the technologies used by researchers evolve, new questions about research ethics will arise. For example, in 2013, a team of social scientists published an article exploring whether an individual's mood is affected by the content in his or her Facebook feed (Kramer, Guillory, and Hancock 2013). The researchers aimed to test a theory of "emotional contagion," or the idea that a person's own mood (as conveyed by the emotional tone of his or her Facebook posts) would be affected by the mood conveyed by the posts or news articles in the person's newsfeed. In order to help the researchers test this theory, Facebook manipulated the newsfeeds of over half a million randomly selected users, changing the number of positive and negative posts they saw in their feeds (Goel 2014). While some critics were concerned about issues of consent, others worried that the manipulated feed could pose a risk to depressed or anxious Facebook users. Might they be pushed over the edge if they read a string of mood-dampening posts in their feed? Given the ever-evolving landscape of social networking sites, researchers don't yet have a clear road map for how to proceed.

The federal government and both public and private universities maintain a number of procedures and policies to ensure that researchers conduct their research in an ethical fashion. In recent years, the federal government has become increasingly strict with universities that make use of government grant money for research purposes. The National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health have strict requirements outlining how human subjects must be treated. In response to these requirements, American universities now have international review boards (IRBs) that routinely review all research involving human subjects.

The result of these review procedures has been both positive and negative. On the positive side, researchers are more aware of ethical considerations than ever before. On the negative side, many sociologists are finding it increasingly difficult to get their work done when IRBs require them to secure informed consent from research subjects before being able to establish a rapport with the subjects. **Informed consent** means that study participants are given a broad description of the study prior to agreeing to participate. After reading this summary, they are free to opt out of the research. Another safeguard used to protect subjects is **debriefing**; after the research study ends, the investigator discusses any concerns the subjects may have and acknowledges whether strategies such as deception were used. Despite these safeguards, there will likely never be easy solutions to vexing problems posed by research ethics, especially in an era when the Internet and high-tech firms are offering up new and innovative ways to collect and examine data.

informed consent

The process whereby the study investigator informs potential participants about the risks and benefits involved in the research study. Informed consent must be obtained before an individual participates in a study.

debriefing

Following a research study, informing study participants about the true purpose of the study and revealing any deception that happened during the study.

CONCEPT CHECKS

What ethical dilemmas did Humphreys's *Tearoom Trade* study pose?

Contrast informed consent and debriefing.

How Does the Sociological Imagination Affect Your Life?

When we observe the world through the prism of the sociological imagination, we are affected in several important ways. First, we develop a greater awareness and understanding of cultural differences. For example, a high school guidance counselor won't easily gain the confidence of his or her students who are the targets of bullying without being sensitive to the ways that gender and sexual orientation shape students' experiences at school.

Second, we are better able to assess the results of public policy initiatives. For instance, while all fifty states have anti-bullying laws, we will not be able to understand how effective they are unless we systematically obtain data on the levels of bullying before and after the implementation of these policies.

Third, we may become more self-enlightened and may develop wise insights into our own behaviors. Have you ever bullied or picked on a classmate at school? Have you ever harassed a classmate online? If yes, why did you pick on that particular student? Were you encouraged to do so by your classmates? Did the anonymous nature of the Internet make you feel like you wouldn't get "caught"? Sociology helps us understand why we act as we do and helps us recognize that social context—such as our peers or school dynamics—also may shape our behaviors.

Fourth, developing a sociological eye toward social problems and developing rigorous research skills opens many career doors—as urban planners, social workers, and personnel managers, among other jobs. An understanding of society also serves those working in law, journalism, business, and medicine.

In sum, sociology is a discipline in which we often set aside our personal views and biases to explore the influences that shape our lives and those of others. Sociology emerged as an intellectual endeavor along with the development of modern societies, and the study of such societies remains its principal concern. Sociology has major practical implications for people's lives. Learning to become a sociologist is an exciting academic pursuit! The best way to make sure it is exciting is to approach the subject in an imaginative way and to relate sociological ideas and findings to your own life.



Understand how adopting a sociological perspective allows us to develop a richer understanding of ourselves, our significant others, and the world.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- Describe four ways that sociology can help us in our lives.
- What skills and perspectives do sociologists bring to their work?

The Big Picture

Sociology: Theory and Method

Thinking Sociologically

1. Healthy older Americans often encounter discriminatory treatment when younger people assume they are slow and thus overlook them for jobs they are fully capable of doing. How would each of the theoretical perspectives—functionalism, class conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism—explain the dynamics of prejudice against older adults?
2. Explain in some detail the advantages and disadvantages of doing comparative or historical research. What will it yield that will be better than experimentation, surveys, and ethnographic fieldwork? What are its limitations?
3. Let's suppose the dropout rate in your high school increased dramatically. The school board offers you a \$500,000 grant to do a study to explain the sudden increase. Following the study procedures outlined in your text, explain how you would go about doing your research. What might be some of the hypotheses to test in your study? How would you prove or disprove them?

Learning Objectives

What Is the "Sociological Imagination"?

p. 5

Learn what sociology covers as a field and how everyday topics like love and romance are shaped by social and historical forces. Recognize that sociology involves developing a sociological imagination and a global perspective, and understanding social change.

What Theories Do Sociologists Use?

p. 10

Learn about the development of sociology as a field. Be able to name some of the leading social theorists and the concepts they contributed to sociology. Learn the different theoretical approaches modern sociologists bring to the field.

What Kinds of Questions Can Sociologists Answer?

p. 22

Be able to describe the different types of questions sociologists address in their research.

What Are the Steps of the Research Process?

p. 23

Learn the steps of the research process and be able to complete the process yourself.

What Research Methods Do Sociologists Use?

p. 26

Familiarize yourself with the methods available to sociological researchers, and know the advantages and disadvantages of each. See how researchers use multiple methods in a real study.

What Ethical Dilemmas Do Sociologists Face?

p. 32

Recognize ethical dilemmas that can arise in field and lab research, and how to handle these dilemmas.

How Does the "Sociological Imagination" Affect What We Do?

p. 38

Understand how the sociological imagination affects what we do and how we think about the world.

Terms to Know

Concept Checks

ology • personal troubles • public issues

1. How does sociology help us understand the causes of bullying?
2. Contrast public issues and personal troubles.
3. What is the sociological imagination, according to C. Wright Mills?
4. How does the concept of social structure help sociologists better understand social phenomena?
5. What is globalization? How might it affect the lives of college students today?

ological imagination • structuration • globalization

ial facts • organic solidarity • social strain • anomie • materialist conception of history • capitalism • symbolic interactionism • functionalism • manifest functions • latent functions • conflict theories • Marxism • ideology • feminist theory • feminism • postmodernism • microsociology • macrosociology

1. What role does theory play in sociological research?
2. According to Émile Durkheim, what makes sociology a social science? Why?
3. According to Karl Marx, what are the differences between the classes that make up a capitalist society?
4. What are the differences between symbolic interactionist and functionalist approaches to the analysis of society?
5. How are macro and micro analyses of society connected?

ence • empirical investigation • factual questions • comparative questions • developmental questions • theoretical questions

1. Why is sociology considered a science?
2. What are the differences between comparative and developmental questions?

hypothesis • data

1. What are the seven steps of the research process?
2. What is a hypothesis?

qualitative methods • quantitative methods • ethnography • participant observation • survey • pilot study • sampling • sample • representative sample • random sampling • experiment • comparative research • oral history • triangulation • measures of central tendency • correlation coefficient • mean • median • standard deviation • degree of dispersal

1. What are the main advantages and limitations of ethnography as a research method?
2. Contrast the two types of questions commonly used in surveys.
3. What is a random sample?
4. Discuss the main strengths of experiments.
5. What are the similarities and differences between comparative and historical research?
6. Why is it important to use triangulation in social research?

informed consent • debriefing

1. What ethical dilemmas did Humphreys's *Tearoom Trade* study pose?
2. Contrast informed consent and debriefing.

1. Describe four ways that sociology can help us in our lives.
2. What skills and perspectives do sociologists bring to their work?

2

Culture and Society

During the fall of 2015, students across the United States organized demonstrations against racism on college campuses. Controversy abounded at Yale University when an instructor publicly questioned the validity of an email that had gone out from administrators with proposed guidelines for Halloween costumes. Ultimately, amid protest, the instructor and her husband resigned their posts as faculty-in-residence.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

What is culture?

Know what culture consists of, and recognize how it differs from society.

How does human culture develop?

Begin to understand how both biological and cultural factors influence our behavior. Learn the ideas of sociobiology and how others have tried to refute these ideas by emphasizing cultural differences.

What happened to premodern societies?

Learn how societies have changed over time.

How has industrialization shaped modern society?

Recognize the factors that transformed premodern societies, particularly how industrialization and colonialism influenced global development. Know the differences among industrialized societies, emerging economies, and developing societies, and how these differences developed.

How does globalization affect contemporary culture?

Recognize the effect of globalization on your life and the lives of people around the world. Think about the effect of a growing global culture.



In October 2015, the campus of Yale University broke out in controversy over a series of emails written by administrators about Halloween. The uproar began when an initial email went out from an Intercultural Affairs Committee representing Native American, black, Jewish, Latino, Asian American, and international students: "The end of October is quickly approaching, and along with the falling leaves and cooler nights come the Halloween celebrations on our campus and our community," the memo began. "These celebrations provide opportunities for students to socialize as well as to make positive contributions to our community. . . . However, Halloween is also unfortunately a time when the normal thoughtfulness and sensitivity of most Yale students can sometimes be forgotten and some poor decisions can be made, including wearing feathered headdresses, turbans, wearing 'war paint' or modifying skin tone or wearing blackface or redface."

While acknowledging students' right to free expression, the administrators asked students to consider how "culturally unaware or insensitive choices" might affect other groups. The

memo proposed that students ask themselves a series of questions before deciding on their costumes:

1. For a funny costume, is the humor based on “making fun” of real people, human traits, or cultures?
2. For a historical costume, does it further historical inaccuracies or misinformation?
3. For a cultural costume, does it reduce cultural differences to stereotypes or jokes?
4. For a religious costume, does it mock or belittle someone’s deeply held faith tradition?

cultural appropriation

When members of one cultural group borrow elements of another group’s culture.

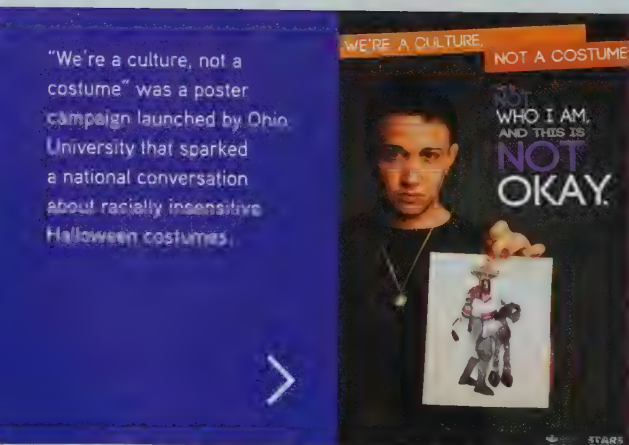
A few days after the Intercultural Affairs Committee sent out this advice to students, the deputy director of one of the Yale dormitories wrote a pointed response that questioned whether it was appropriate for college administrators to police the costumes of young adults. In an email to the dorm residents, she asked, “Is there no room anymore for a child or young person to be a little bit obnoxious, a little bit inappropriate or provocative, or yes, offensive? American universities were once a safe space not only for maturation but also for a certain regressive, or even transgressive, experience; increasingly, it seems, they have become places of censure and prohibition.”

This email set in motion a series of protests, with many students calling for her resignation (and that of her husband, who defended her email in his capacity as the dorm’s director). Many felt that she was dismissing the power of harmful stereotypes to further degrade marginalized groups by encouraging those who take offense to a person’s costume to “look away.” Although the president of Yale and the Yale College dean came out in support of the dorm director and his wife keeping their jobs, she ultimately decided to resign from teaching at the college.

So why were the Yale students so upset? At the heart of this controversy over Halloween costumes is a concept that sociologists refer to as **cultural appropriation**, which occurs when members of one cultural group borrow elements of another’s culture, such as when a non-Indian person dons a sari or a non-Japanese person wears a kimono. Is it always offensive to take on elements of a culture to which you don’t belong? Even the most well-intentioned and seemingly benign decisions to borrow the cultural style of another group can be understood quite differently by those who come from that culture. There are no hard and fast rules that can resolve such conflicts. One thing we can do is be aware of what is at stake here. Sometimes cultural appropriation can reduce an entire way of life to a demeaning stereotype

that exacerbates historically unequal power relations. For this reason, many schools have banned the use of Native American mascots. Similarly, it was this sociological insight that led the Intercultural Affairs Committee to urge students to be particularly thoughtful and sensitive to others’ feelings on Halloween.

As the protests at Yale demonstrate, issues related to cultural appropriation often come to a head at Halloween and at other campus parties. But culture is more than just how we dress. In this chapter, we will look at what culture is and its role in encouraging conformity to shared ways of thinking and acting. We then consider the early development of human culture, emphasizing features that distinguish human behavior from that of other species. After assessing the role of biology in shaping human behavior, we examine the aspects of culture that are essential for



human society. This leads to a discussion of cultural diversity, examining the cultural variations not only across different societies but also within a single society such as the United States.

Cultural variations among human beings are linked to different types of society, and we will compare and contrast the main forms of society found in history. The point of doing this is to tie together closely the two aspects of human social existence: the different cultural values and products that human beings have developed and the contrasting types of society in which such cultural development has occurred. Too often, culture is discussed separately from society, as though the two were disconnected, whereas in fact, they are closely intertwined. Throughout the chapter, we concentrate on how social change has affected cultural development. One instance of this is the effect of technology and globalization on the many cultures of the world.

What Is Culture?

The sociological study of culture began with Émile Durkheim in the nineteenth century and soon became the basis of anthropology, a social science specifically focused on the study of cultural differences and similarities among the world's peoples. Early social scientists assumed that "primitive" cultures were inferior, lagging far behind modern European "civilization." Sociologists and anthropologists now recognize that different cultures each have their own distinctive characteristics. The task of social science is to understand this cultural diversity, which is best done by avoiding value judgments.

Defining "Culture"

Culture consists of the values held by members of a particular group, the languages they speak, the symbols they revere, the norms they follow, and the material goods they create, from tools to clothing. Some elements of culture, especially the beliefs and expectations people have about one another and the world they inhabit, are a component of all social relations.

Values are abstract ideals. For example, monogamy—being faithful to one's sole romantic partner—is a prominent value in most Western societies. In other cultures, on the other hand, a person may be permitted to have several wives or husbands simultaneously. Likewise, freedom of expression is a cherished value in the United States and many other nations. The Yale Halloween incident vividly highlights an instance when the competing values of freedom of expression and sensitivity to the feelings of minority group members came into conflict.

Norms are widely agreed-upon principles or rules people are expected to observe; they represent the dos and don'ts of social life. Norms of behavior in marriage include, for example, how husbands and wives are supposed to behave toward their in-laws. In some societies, they are expected to develop a close relationship; in others, they keep a clear distance from each other.

Norms, like the values they reflect, vary widely both across and within cultures. Among most Americans, for example, one norm calls for direct eye contact between persons engaged in conversation; completely averting one's eyes is usually interpreted as a sign of weakness or rudeness. Yet, among the Navajo, a cultural norm calls for averting one's eyes as a sign of respect. Direct eye contact, particularly between strangers, is considered rude because it violates a norm of politeness. When a Navajo and a Western tourist encounter each other for the first time, the Navajo's cultural norm calls for averting the

culture

The values, norms, and material goods characteristic of a given group. The notion of culture is widely used in sociology and the other social sciences (particularly anthropology). Culture is one of the most distinctive properties of human social association.



Know what culture consists of, and recognize how it differs from society.

values

Ideas held by individuals or groups about what is desirable, proper, good, and bad. What individuals value is strongly influenced by the specific culture in which they happen to live.

norms

Rules of conduct that specify appropriate behavior in a given range of social situations. A norm either prescribes a given type of behavior or forbids it. All human groups follow definite norms, which are always backed by sanctions of one kind or another—varying from informal disapproval to physical punishment.

eyes, while the tourist's cultural norm calls for direct eye contact. The result is likely to be a misunderstanding: The Navajo may see the tourist as impolite and vulgar, while the tourist may see the Navajo as disrespectful or deceptive. Such cultural misunderstandings may lead to unfair generalizations and stereotypes and even promote outright hostility. Values and norms work together to shape how members of a culture behave within their surroundings. Even within a single culture, the norms of conduct differ by age, gender, and other important social subgroups. Gender norms are particularly powerful; women are expected to be more docile, caring, and even more moral than men.

material goods

The physical objects that a society creates; these influence the ways in which people live.

Finally, **material goods** refer to the physical objects that individuals in society create. These objects, in turn, influence how we live. They include the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the cars we drive to the homes we live in; the tools and technologies we use to make those goods, from sewing machines to computerized factories; and the towns and cities that we build as places in which to live and work. As we saw in the case of the Yale Halloween incident, material goods such as costumes can communicate very powerful social meaning. While dressing up like a Native American might be deeply offensive on a college campus, the response might be different at a Chicago Blackhawks hockey game where there is no expectation that students will be in a "safe space."

When we use the term *culture* in daily conversation, we often think of "high culture"—like fine art, literature, classical music, ballet. From a sociological perspective, the concept includes these activities, but also many more. Culture refers to the ways of life of the individual members or groups within a society: their apparel, marriage customs and family life, patterns of work, religious ceremonies, and leisure pursuits. The concept also covers the goods they create and the goods that become meaningful for them—bows and arrows, plows, factories and machines, computers, books, dwellings. We should think of culture as a "design for living" or "tool kit" of practices, knowledge, and symbols acquired—as we shall see later—through learning rather than by instinct (Kluckhohn 1949; Swidler 1986).

Is it possible to describe an "American" culture? Although the United States is culturally diverse, we can identify several characteristics of a uniquely American culture. First, it reflects a particular range of values shared by many, if not all, Americans, such as the belief in the merits of individual achievement or in equality of opportunity. Second, these values are connected to specific norms: For example, it is usually expected that people will work hard to achieve occupational success (Bellah et al. 1985; Parsons 1964). Third, it involves the use of material artifacts created mostly through modern industrial technology, such as cars, mass-produced food, clothing, and so forth.

Values and norms vary enormously across and even within cultures. Some cultures value individualism highly, whereas others place great emphasis on collectivism. A simple example makes this clear. Most pupils in the United States would be outraged to find another student cheating on an examination. In the United States, copying from someone else's paper goes against core values of individual achievement, equality of opportunity, hard work, and respect for the rules. Russian students, however, might be puzzled by this sense of outrage among their American peers. Helping one another pass an examination reflects the value Russians place on equality and on collective problem solving in the face of authority. Think of your own reaction to this example. What does it say about the values of your society?

Within a single society or community, values may also conflict: Some groups or individuals may value traditional religious beliefs, whereas others may favor freedom of expression, individual rights, and gender-based equality. Some people may prefer material



"... no-one shall take it away"

How careless memory can be. It can moly years of happiness, and offer up, instead, one brief moment of enjoyment. But this, at least, is yours to keep, and no-one shall take it away. To millions of men and women, Craven 'A' come ready to hand. Remembering the cool, firm feel of the natural cork tip, so kind to their lips, and recalling the rare flavour of the rich tobacco, so kind to their throats, the significance of other cigarettes escapes their memory.

Those who smoke Craven 'A' seldom care for other cigarettes

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Smoking was portrayed as sophisticated and elegant in the 1950s. Today, smokers are vilified for harming themselves and their children. What has contributed to these drastic changes in our perceptions of smokers?

comfort and success, whereas others may favor simplicity and a quiet life. In our changing age—filled with the global movement of people, ideas, goods, and information—it is not surprising that we encounter instances of cultural values in conflict.

Norms, like the values they reflect, also change over time. For example, beginning in 1964, with the U.S. surgeon general's report "Smoking and Health," which presented definitive medical evidence linking smoking with a large number of serious health problems, the U.S. government waged a highly effective campaign to discourage people from smoking. A social norm favoring smoking—once associated with independence, sex appeal, and glamour—has given way to an equally strong antismoking social norm that depicts smoking as unhealthful, unattractive, and selfish. In 2014, the proportion of American adults who smoked was 17 percent, compared to 42 percent in 1964, when the surgeon general's report was issued (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2015a).

Many of our everyday behaviors and habits are grounded in cultural norms. Movements, gestures, and expressions are strongly influenced by cultural factors. A clear example can be seen in the way people smile—particularly in public contexts—across different cultures. Among the Inuit (Eskimos) of Greenland, for example, one does not find the strong tradition of public smiling that exists in many areas of Western Europe and North America. This does not mean that the Inuit are cold or unfriendly; it is simply not their common practice to smile at or exchange pleasantries with strangers. As the service industry has expanded in Greenland in recent years, however, some employers have made efforts to instill smiling as a cultural value in the belief that smiling and expressing "polite" attitudes toward customers are essential to competitive business practices. Clients who are met with smiles and told "Have a nice day" are more likely to become repeat customers. In many supermarkets in Greenland, shop assistants are now shown training videos on friendly service techniques; the staff at some have even been sent abroad

for training courses. Initially these requirements were met with discomfort by some staff, who found the style insincere and artificial. Over time, however, the idea of public smiling—at least in the workplace—has become more accepted.

Culture and Society

society

A group of people who live in a particular territory, are subject to a common system of political authority, and are aware of having a distinct identity from other groups. Some societies, like hunting-and-gathering societies, are small, numbering no more than a few dozen people. Others are large, numbering millions—modern Chinese society, for instance, has a population of more than a billion people.

“Culture” can be distinguished from “society,” but these notions are closely connected. A **society** is a system of interrelationships that connects individuals together. No culture could exist without a society; equally, no society could exist without culture. Without culture, we would not be human at all, in the sense in which we usually understand that term. We would have no language in which to express ourselves, we would have no sense of self-consciousness, and our ability to think or reason would be severely limited.

Culture also serves as a society's glue because culture is an important source of conformity, providing its members with readymade ways of thinking and acting. For example, when you say that you subscribe to a particular value, such as formal learning, you are probably voicing beliefs that conform to those of your family members, friends, teachers, or others who are significant in your life.

Cultures differ, however, in how much they value conformity. Research based on surveys of more than 100,000 adults in over sixty countries shows that Japanese culture lies at one extreme in terms of valuing conformity (Hofstede 1997), while at the other extreme lies American culture, one of the least conformist, ranking among the world's highest in cherishing individualism (Hamamura 2012).

American high school and college students often see themselves as especially nonconformist. The hipsters of today, like the hippies of the 1960s and the punks of the 1980s, sport distinctive clothing styles, haircuts, and other forms of bodily adornment. Yet how individualistic are they? Are young people with piercings or tattoos really acting independently? Or are their styles perhaps as much the “uniforms” of their group as navy blue suits are among middle-aged business people? There is an aspect of conformity to their behavior—conformity to their own group.

Is the photo on the right, members of a 1970s commune relax outdoors. On the left, a Harajuku girl poses for a photograph in Tokyo, Japan. Though their distinctive styles set them apart from mainstream society, these people are not as nonconformist as they may think they are. Both subcultures conform to the norms of their respective social groups.



Since some degree of conformity to norms is necessary for any society to exist, one of the key challenges for all cultures is to instill in people a willingness to conform. This is accomplished in two ways (Parsons 1964). First, individuals learn the norms of their culture. While this occurs throughout a person's life, the most crucial learning occurs during childhood, and parents play a key role. When learning is successful, the norms are so thoroughly internalized that they become unquestioned ways of thinking and acting; they come to appear "normal." (Note the similarity between the words *norm* and *normal*.)

When a person fails to learn and adequately conform to a culture's norms, a second way of instilling cultural conformity comes into play: social control. Social control often involves the punishment of rule breaking. Administration of punishment includes such informal behavior as rebuking friends for minor breaches of etiquette, gossiping behind their backs, or ostracizing them from the group. Official, formal forms of discipline might range from parking tickets to imprisonment (Foucault 1979). Durkheim, one of the founders of sociology, argued that punishment serves not only to help guarantee conformity among those who would violate a culture's norms and values but also to vividly remind others what the norms and values are.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. Describe the main elements of culture.
2. What role does culture play in society?

How Does Human Culture Develop?

Human culture and human biology are closely intertwined. Understanding how culture is related to the physical evolution of the human species can help us better understand the central role that culture plays in shaping our lives.

Early Human Culture: Adaptation to Physical Environment

Scientists believe that the first humans evolved from apelike creatures on the African continent some 4 million years ago. Their conclusion is based on archaeological evidence and

Begin to understand how both biological and cultural factors influence our behavior. Learn the ideas of sociobiology and how others have tried to relate these ideas to understanding cultural differences.



As these pictures of members of a North Pole community (left) and a desert community (right) demonstrate, culture is powerfully influenced by geographic and climate conditions.

knowledge of the close similarities in blood chemistry and genetics between chimpanzees and humans. The first evidence of humanlike culture dates back only 2 million years. In these early cultures, humans fashioned stone tools, derived sustenance by hunting animals and gathering nuts and berries, harnessed the use of fire, and established a highly cooperative way of life. Because early humans planned their hunts, they must also have had some ability for abstract thought.

Culture enabled early humans to compensate for their physical limitations, such as lack of claws, sharp teeth, and running speed, relative to other animals (Deacon 1998). Culture freed humans from dependence on the instinctual and genetically determined set of responses to the environment characteristic of other species. The larger, more complex human brain permitted a greater degree of adaptive learning in dealing with major environmental changes such as the Ice Age. For example, humans figured out how to build fires and sew clothing for warmth. Through greater flexibility, humans were able to survive unpredictable challenges in their surroundings and shape the world with their ideas and their tools.

Yet early humans were closely tied to their physical environment, since they still lacked the technological ability to modify their immediate surroundings significantly (Bennett 1976; Harris 1975, 1978, 1980). Their ability to secure food and make clothing and shelter depended largely on the physical resources that were close at hand. Cultures in different environments varied widely as a result of adaptations by which people fashioned their cultures to be suitable to specific geographic and climatic conditions. For example, the cultures developed by desert dwellers, where water and food were scarce, differed significantly from the cultures that developed in rain forests, where such natural resources abounded. Human inventiveness spawned a rich tapestry of cultures around the world. As you will see at the conclusion of this chapter, modern technology and other forces of globalization pose both challenges and opportunities for future global cultural diversity.

Nature or Nurture?

Because humans evolved as a part of the world of nature, it would seem logical to assume that human thinking and behavior are the result of biology and evolution. In fact, one of the oldest and most enduring controversies in the social sciences is the “nature/nurture” debate: Are we shaped by our biology, or are we products of learning through life’s experiences—that is, of nurture? Biologists and some psychologists emphasize biological factors in explaining human thinking and behavior. Sociologists, not surprisingly, stress the role of learning and culture. They are also likely to argue that because human beings are capable of making conscious choices, neither biology nor culture wholly determines human behavior.

The nature/nurture debate has raged for more than a century. In the 1930s and 1940s, many social scientists focused on biological factors, with some researchers seeking (unsuccessfully), for example, to prove that a person’s physique determined his or her personality. In the 1960s and 1970s, scholars in different fields emphasized culture. For example, social psychologists argued that even the most severe forms of mental illness were the result of the labels that society attaches to unusual behavior rather than of biochemical processes (Scheff 1966). Today, partly because of new understandings in

genetics and brain neurophysiology, the pendulum is again swinging toward the side of biology.

The resurgence of biological explanations for human behavior began in the 1970s, when the evolutionary biologist Edward O. Wilson published *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (1975). The term **sociobiology** refers to the application of biological principles to explain the social activities of animals, including human beings. Using studies of insects and other social creatures, Wilson argued that genes influence not only physical traits but behavior as well. In most species, for example, males are larger and more aggressive than females and tend to dominate the “weaker sex.” Some suggest that genetic factors explain why, in all human societies that we know of, men tend to hold positions of greater authority than women.

One way in which sociobiologists have tried to illuminate the relations between the sexes is by means of the idea of “reproductive strategy.” A reproductive strategy is a pattern of behavior, arrived at through evolutionary selection, that favors the chances of survival of offspring. The female body has a larger investment in its reproductive cells than the male—a fertilized egg takes nine months to develop. Thus, according to sociobiologists, women will not squander that investment and are not driven to have sexual relations with many partners; their overriding aim is the care and protection of children. Men, on the other hand, tend toward promiscuity. Their wish to have sex with many partners is sound strategy from the point of view of the species; to carry out their mission, which is to maximize the possibility of impregnation, they move from one partner to the next. In this way, it has been suggested, we can explain differences in sexual behavior and attitudes between men and women.

Sociobiologists do not argue that our genes determine 100 percent of our behavior. For example, they note that depending on the circumstances, men can choose to act in nonaggressive ways. Even though this argument would seem to open up the field of sociobiology to culture as an additional explanatory factor in describing human behavior, social scientists have roundly condemned sociobiology for claiming that a propensity for particular behaviors, such as violence, is somehow “genetically programmed” into our brains (Seville Statement on Violence 1990).

How Nature and Nurture Interact

Most sociologists today would acknowledge a role for nature in determining attitudes and behavior, but with strong qualifications. For example, babies are born with the ability to recognize faces: Babies a few minutes old turn their heads in response to patterns that resemble human faces but not in response to other patterns (Cosmides and Tooby 1997; Johnson and Morton 1991). But it is a large leap to conclude that because babies are born with basic reflexes, the behavior of adults is governed by **instincts**: inborn, biologically fixed patterns of action found in all cultures. Sociologists tend to argue strongly against **biological determinism**, or the belief that differences we observe between groups of people, such as men and women, are explained wholly by biological (rather than social) causes.

Sociologists no longer pose the question as one of nature or nurture. Instead, they ask how nature and nurture interact to produce human behavior. But their main concern is with how our different ways of thinking and acting are learned through interactions

sociobiology

An approach that attempts to explain the behavior of both animals and human beings in terms of biological principles.

instinct

A fixed pattern of behavior that has genetic origins and that appears in all normal animals within a given species.

biological determinism

The belief that differences we observe between groups of people, such as men and women, are explained wholly by biological causes.

>

Sociologists argue that our preferences for particular body types are not biologically ingrained but rather shaped by the cultural norms of beauty communicated through magazine ads, commercials, and movies.



with family, friends, schools, television, and every other facet of the social environment. For example, sociologists argue that it's not an inborn biological disposition that makes American heterosexual males feel romantically attracted to a particular type of woman. Rather, it is the exposure they've had throughout their lives to tens of thousands of magazine ads, TV commercials, and film stars that emphasize specific cultural standards of female beauty.

Early child rearing is especially relevant to this kind of learning. Human babies have a large brain, requiring birth relatively early in their fetal development, before their heads have grown too large to pass through the birth canal. As a result, human babies are totally unequipped for survival on their own, compared with the young of other species, and must spend a number of years in the care of adults. This need, in turn, fosters a lengthy period of learning, during which the child is taught his or her society's culture.

Because humans think and act in so many different ways, sociologists do not believe that "biology is destiny." If biology were all-important, we would expect all cultures to be highly similar, if not identical. Yet this is hardly the case. This is not to say that human cultures have nothing in common. Surveys of thousands of different cultures have concluded that all known human cultures have such common characteristics as language, forms of emotional expression, rules that tell adults how to raise children or engage in sexual behavior, and even standards of beauty (Brown 1991). But there is enormous variety in exactly how these common characteristics play themselves out.

All cultures provide for childhood socialization, but what and how children are taught varies greatly from culture to culture. An American child learns the multiplication tables from a classroom teacher, while a child born in the forests of Borneo learns to hunt with older members of the tribe. All cultures have standards of beauty and ornamentation, but what is regarded as beautiful in one culture may be seen as ugly in another (Elias 1987; Elias and Dunning 1987; Foucault 1988). However, some feminist scholars have argued that with global access to Western images of beauty on the Internet, cultural definitions of beauty throughout the world are growing narrower and increasingly emphasize the slender physique that is so cherished in many Western cultures (Sepulveda and Calado 2012).

Cultural Diversity

The study of cultural differences highlights the importance of cultural learning as an influence on our behavior. Human behavior and practices—as well as beliefs—also vary widely from culture to culture and often contrast radically with what people from Western societies consider normal. In the West, we eat oysters but we do not eat kittens or puppies, both of which are regarded as delicacies in some parts of the world. Westerners regard kissing as a normal part of sexual behavior, but in other cultures the practice is either unknown or regarded as disgusting. All these different kinds of behavior are aspects of broad cultural differences that distinguish societies from one another.

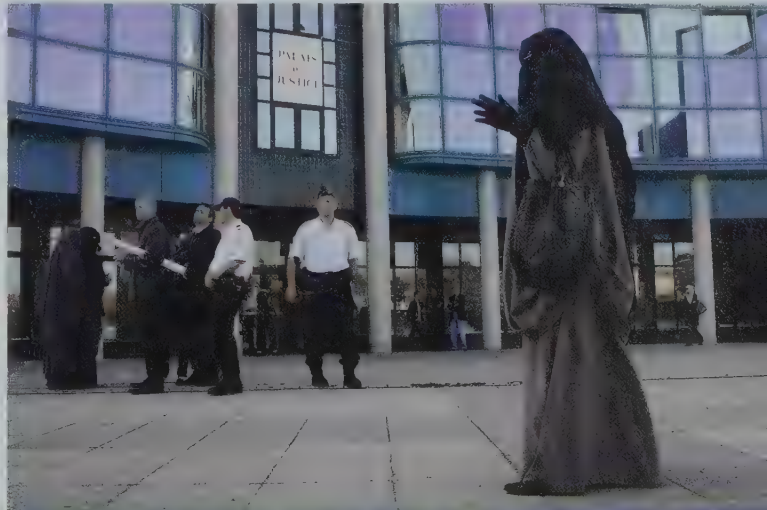
SUBCULTURES

Small societies tend to be culturally uniform, but industrialized societies are themselves culturally diverse or multicultural, involving numerous **subcultures**. As you will discover in the discussion of global migration in Chapter 10, practices and social processes such as slavery, colonialism, war, migration, and contemporary globalization have led to populations dispersing across borders and settling in new areas. This, in turn, has led to the emergence of societies that are cultural composites, meaning that the population is made up of a number of groups from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In modern cities, many subcultural communities live side by side. For example, over ninety different cultural groups can be found in New York City today. Some experts have estimated that as many as 800 different languages are regularly spoken by residents of New York City and its surrounding boroughs (Roberts 2010).

Most major European cities have become increasingly diverse in the past two decades, as large numbers of persons from North Africa have arrived. As transnational migration has increased, many European societies have struggled with how to integrate persons who bring with them distinct cultural and religious backgrounds. For example, in 2011, the French government made it a punishable offense for Muslim women to wear full-face veils in public spaces (except for houses of worship and private cars). France is a country based on the values of “liberty and equality” for all, and the *niqab*, a full-face veil that covers a woman's hair and face, leaving only the eyes clearly visible, is viewed as a cultural practice that oppresses women and deprives them of their freedoms (Erlanger 2011). This controversy over Muslim women's veils vividly portrays the challenges when different subcultural communities live side by side.

subcultures

Cultural groups within a wider society that hold values and norms distinct from those of the majority.



The tension between subgroup values and national values came to a head in 2011 when the French government banned Muslim women from wearing full-face veils in public. French policymakers believed that the *niqab* oppressed women and violated the nation's values of liberty and equality.

countercultures

Cultural groups within a wider society that largely reject the values and norms of the majority.

assimilation

The acceptance of a minority group by a majority population, in which the new group takes on the values and norms of the dominant culture.

multiculturalism

The viewpoint according to which ethnic groups can exist separately and share equally in economic and political life.

Subculture does not refer only to people from different cultural backgrounds, or who speak different languages, within a larger society. It can also refer to any segment of the population that is distinguishable from the rest of society by its cultural patterns. Examples might include Goths, computer hackers, hipsters, Rastafarians, and fans of hip-hop. Some people might identify themselves clearly with a particular subculture, whereas others may move fluidly among a number of different ones.

Culture plays an important role in perpetuating the values and norms of a society, yet it also offers important opportunities for creativity and change. Subcultures and **countercultures**—groups that largely reject the prevailing values and norms of society—can promote views that represent alternatives to the dominant culture. Social movements or groups of people sharing common lifestyles are powerful forces of change within societies. In this way, subcultures give people the freedom to express and act on their opinions, hopes, and beliefs. For example, throughout most of the twentieth century, gays and lesbians formed a distinct counterculture in opposition to dominant cultural norms. In a few cities such as San Francisco, New York, and Chicago, gays and lesbians lived in distinct enclaves and even developed political power bases. Over time, their political claims and lifestyle became more and more acceptable to mainstream Americans, so much so that gay marriage was legalized nationwide in 2015. Today, gays and lesbians are no longer a counterculture. As the wider society has increasingly embraced their demand to be included in the institution of marriage, gays and lesbians have embraced one of the most significant institutions of mainstream society.

U.S. schoolchildren are frequently taught that the United States is a vast melting pot into which various subcultures are assimilated. **Assimilation** is the process by which different cultures are absorbed into a single mainstream culture. Although it is true that virtually all peoples living in the United States take on many common cultural characteristics, many groups strive to retain some subcultural identity. In fact, identification based on race or country of origin in the United States persists today and is particularly strong among African Americans and immigrants from Asia, Mexico, and Latin America (Totti 1987).

Given the immense cultural diversity and number of subcultures in the United States, a more appropriate metaphor than the assimilationist “melting pot” might be the culturally diverse “salad bowl,” in which all the various ingredients, though mixed together, retain some of their original flavor and integrity, contributing to the richness of the salad as a whole. This viewpoint, termed **multiculturalism**, calls for respecting cultural diversity and promoting equality of different cultures. Adherents to multiculturalism acknowledge that certain central cultural values are shared by most people in a society but also that certain important differences deserve to be preserved (Anzaldúa 1990).

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND ETHNOCENTRISM

Every culture displays its own unique patterns of behavior, which may seem alien to people from other cultural backgrounds. If you have traveled abroad, you are probably familiar with the sensation that can result when you find yourself in a new culture. Everyday habits, customs, and behaviors that you take for granted in your own culture may not be part of everyday life in other parts of the world—even in countries that share the same language. The expression “culture shock” is an apt one! Often people feel disoriented when they become immersed in a new culture. This is because they have lost the familiar reference

points that help them understand the world around them and have not yet learned how to navigate the new culture.

A culture must be studied in terms of its own meanings and values—a key presupposition of sociology. Sociologists endeavor as far as possible to avoid **ethnocentrism**, or judging other cultures in terms of the standards of one's own. Because human cultures vary so widely, it is not surprising that people belonging to one culture frequently find it difficult to understand the ideas or behavior of people from a different culture. In studying and practicing sociology, we must remove our own cultural blinders in order to see the ways of life of different peoples in an unbiased light. The practice of judging a society by its own standards is called **cultural relativism**.

Applying cultural relativism—that is, suspending your own deeply held cultural beliefs and examining a situation according to the standards of another culture—can be fraught with uncertainty and challenge. Not only can it be hard to see things from a completely different point of view but cultural relativism sometimes raises troubling issues. Consider, for example, the ritual of female genital cutting, or what opponents have called “genital mutilation.” This is a painful ritual in which the clitoris and sometimes all or part of the vaginal labia of young girls are removed with a knife or a sharpened stone and the two sides of the vulva are partly sewn together as a means of controlling the young woman's sexual activity and increasing the sexual pleasure of her male partner.

In cultures where clitoridectomies have been practiced for generations, they are regarded as a normal, even expected, practice. A study of 2,000 men and women in two Nigerian communities found that nine out of ten women interviewed had undergone clitoridectomies in childhood and that the large majority favored the procedure for their own daughters, primarily for cultural reasons; they would be viewed as social outcasts if they did not have the procedure. Yet a significant minority believed that the practice should be stopped (Ebomoyi 1987). Clitoridectomies are regarded with abhorrence by most people from other cultures and by a growing number of women in the cultures in which they are practiced (El Dareer 1982; Johnson-Odim 1991; Lightfoot-Klein 1989).

These differences in views can result in a clash of cultural values, especially when people from cultures where clitoridectomies are common migrate to countries where the practice is actually illegal. In France, many mothers in the North African immigrant community arrange for traditional clitoridectomies to be performed on their daughters. Some of these women have been tried and convicted under French law for mutilating their daughters. These African mothers have argued that they were only engaging in the same cultural practice that their own mothers had performed on them, that their grandmothers had performed on their mothers, and so on. They complain that the French are ethnocentric, judging traditional African rituals by French customs. Feminists from Africa and the Middle East, while themselves strongly opposed to clitoridectomies, have been critical of Europeans and Americans who sensationalize the practice by calling it backward or primitive without seeking any understanding of the cultural and economic circumstances that sustain it (Accad 1991; Johnson-Odim 1991; Mohanty 1991). In this instance, globalization has led to a fundamental clash of cultural norms and values that has forced members of both cultures to confront some of their most deeply held beliefs. The role of the sociologist is to avoid knee-jerk

ethnocentrism

The tendency to look at other cultures through the eyes of one's own culture, and thereby misrepresent them.

cultural relativism

The practice of judging a society by its own standards.



Marriage is an example of a cultural universal, a value shared by all human cultures.

cultural universals

Values or modes of behavior shared by all human cultures.

language

A system of symbols that represent objects and abstract thoughts; the primary vehicle of meaning and communication in a society.

marriage

A socially approved sexual relationship between two individuals. Marriage normally forms the basis of a family of procreation—that is, it is expected that the married couple will produce and raise children.

responses and to examine complex questions carefully from as many different angles as possible.

Cultural Universals

Amid the diversity of human behavior, several **cultural universals** prevail. For example, there is no known culture without a grammatically complex **language**. All cultures possess some recognizable form of family system, in which there are values and norms associated with the care of children. The institution of **marriage** is a cultural universal, as are religious rituals and property rights. All cultures also practice some form of incest prohibition—the banning of sexual relations between close relatives, such as father and daughter, mother and son, and brother and sister. A variety of other cultural universals have been identified by anthropologists, including art, dancing, bodily adornment, games, gift giving, joking, and rules of hygiene.

Yet there are variations within each category. Consider, for example, the prohibition against incest. Incest is typically defined as sexual relations between

members of the immediate family, but in some cultures “the family” has been expanded to include cousins and others bearing the same family name. There have also been societies in which a small proportion of the population has been permitted to engage in incestuous practices. Within the ruling class of ancient Egypt, for instance, brothers and sisters were permitted to have sex with each other.

Among the cultural characteristics shared by all societies, two stand out in particular. All cultures incorporate ways of communicating and expressing meaning. All cultures also depend on material objects in daily life.

LANGUAGE

Language is one of the best examples for demonstrating both the unity and the diversity of human culture because there are no cultures without language, yet there are thousands of different languages spoken in the world. Anyone who has visited a foreign country armed with only a dictionary knows how difficult it is either to understand anything or to be understood. Although languages that have similar origins have words in common with one another—as do, for example, German and English—most of the world's major language groups have no words in common at all.

Language is involved in virtually all of our activities. In the form of ordinary talk or speech, it is the means by which we organize most of what we do. (We discuss the importance of talk and conversation in social life at some length in Chapter 4.) However, language is involved not just in mundane, everyday activities but also in ceremony, religion, poetry, and many other spheres. One of the most distinctive features of human language is that it allows us to vastly extend the scope of our thought and experience. Using language, we can convey information about events remote in time or space and can discuss

things we have never seen. We can develop abstract concepts, tell stories, make jokes, and express sarcasm.

In the 1930s, the anthropological linguist Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf advanced the **linguistic relativity hypothesis**, or the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which argues that the language we use influences our perceptions of the world. That is because we are much more likely to be aware of things in the world if we have words for them (Haugen 1977; Malotki 1983; Witkowski and Brown 1982). Expert skiers or snowboarders, for example, use terms such as *black ice*, *corn*, *powder*, and *packed powder* to describe different snow and ice conditions. Such terms enable them to more readily perceive potentially life-threatening situations that would escape the notice of a novice. In a sense, then, experienced winter athletes have a different perception of the world—or at least, a different perception of the alpine slopes—than novices do.

Language also helps give permanence to a culture and an identity to a people. Language outlives any particular speaker or writer, affording a sense of history and cultural continuity, a feeling of “who we are.” One of the central paradoxes of our time is that despite the globalization of the English language through the Internet and other forms of global media, local attachments to language persist, often out of cultural pride. For example, the French-speaking residents of the Canadian province of Quebec are so passionate about their linguistic heritage that they often refuse to speak English, the dominant language of Canada, and periodically seek political independence from the rest of Canada.

Languages—indeed, all symbols—are representations of reality. The symbols we use may signify things we imagine, such as mathematical formulas or fictitious creatures, or they may represent (that is, “re-present,” or make present again in our minds) things initially experienced through our senses. Symbols even represent emotions, as the common emoticons of :) (happy) and ;) (good-natured winking) reveal. Human behavior is oriented toward the symbols we use to represent reality, rather than to the reality itself—and these symbols are determined within a particular culture. Because symbols are representations, their cultural meanings must be interpreted when they are used. When you see a four-footed furry animal, for example, you must determine which cultural symbol to attach to it. Do you decide to call it a dog, a wolf, or something else? If you determine it is a dog, what cultural meaning does that convey? In American culture, dogs are typically regarded as household pets and lavished with affection. Among the Akha of northern Thailand, dogs are seen as food and treated accordingly. The diversity of cultural meanings attached to the word *dog* thus requires an act of interpretation. In this way, we are freed, in a sense, from being directly tied to the physical world around us.

SPEECH AND WRITING

All societies use speech as a vehicle of language. However, there are other ways of “carrying,” or expressing, language—most notably, writing. The invention of writing marked a major transition in human history. Writing first began as the drawing up of lists. Marks would be made on wood, clay, or stone to keep records about significant events, objects, or people. For example, a mark, or sometimes a picture, might be drawn to represent each tract of land possessed by a particular family or set of families (Gelb 1952). Writing began

linguistic relativity hypothesis

A hypothesis, based on the theories of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, that perceptions are relative to language; also referred to as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

as a means of storing information and as such was closely linked to the administrative needs of early civilizations. A society that possesses writing can locate itself in time and space. Documents can be accumulated that record the past, and information can be gathered about present-day events and activities.

Writing is not just the transfer of speech to paper or some other durable material. It is a phenomenon of interest in its own right. Written documents or texts have qualities in some ways quite distinct from the spoken word. The impact of speech is always by definition limited to the particular contexts in which words are uttered. Ideas and experiences can be passed down through generations in cultures without writing, but only if they are regularly repeated and passed on by word of mouth. Written texts, on the other hand, can endure for thousands of years, and through them people from past ages can in a certain sense address us directly. This is, of course, why documentary research is so important to historians. By interpreting the texts that are left behind by past generations, historians can reconstruct what their lives were like.

MATERIAL CULTURE

The symbols expressed in speech and writing are the chief ways in which cultural meanings are formed and expressed. But they are not the only ways. As we saw earlier in this chapter, both material objects and aspects of behavior can be used to generate meanings. A **signifier** is any vehicle of meaning—any set of elements used to communicate. The sounds made in speech are signifiers, as are the marks made on paper or other materials in writing. Other signifiers, however, include dress, pictures or visual signs, modes of eating, forms of building or architecture, and many other material features of culture (Hawkes 1977).

Styles of dress, for example, normally help signify differences between the sexes. Even colors can signify important aspects of culture. In contemporary society, young girls are typically dressed in pink while boys are dressed in blue—but this wasn't always the case (Paoletti 2012). In the nineteenth century, both boys and girls wore frilly white clothing. A June 1918 article in *Ladies' Home Journal* stated, "The generally accepted rule is pink for the boys, and blue for the girls. The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl" (Paoletti 2012).

Material culture is not simply symbolic; it is also vital for catering to physical needs—in the tools or technology used to acquire food, make weaponry, construct dwellings, manufacture our clothing, and so forth. We have to study both the practical and the symbolic aspects of material culture in order to understand it completely.

Culture and Social Development

Cultural traits are closely related to overall patterns in the development of society. The level of material culture reached in a given society influences, although by no means completely determines, other aspects of cultural development. This is easy to see, for example, in the level of technology. Many aspects of culture characteristic of our lives today—cars, smartphones, laptops and tablets, Wi-Fi, running water, electric light—depend on technological innovations that have been made only very recently in human history.

signifier

Any vehicle of meaning and communication.

The Secret Power of Cultural Norms and Values

Norms are widely agreed-upon principles or rules that people are expected to observe; they represent the dos and don'ts of social life. One way to illustrate the power of a social norm is to examine reactions to norm violations. Those who violate norms are often subject to the overt or subtle disapproval of others. Common reactions might include being scolded or mocked by friends for minor breaches of etiquette, being gossiped about behind our backs, or being ostracized from the social group. Yet norms are so powerful that violators often feel shame or self-criticism even in the absence of others' words or actions.

A vivid display of the power of norms is PostSecret, an ongoing community art project where people mail in their secrets anonymously on one side of a homemade postcard. The postcards are then posted online for others to view or comment on. What does it tell us about social norms when a young woman confesses, "He found my vomit in the sink. . . . I said I was fine. I LIED"? In American society, eating disorders like bulimia violate a social norm that says we shouldn't hurt ourselves. Yet it also subtly conveys another norm: Young women are expected to be thin in order to live up to our cultural ideals of "beauty." Using means other than the socially approved strategies of healthy diet and exercise, however, is a source of shame.

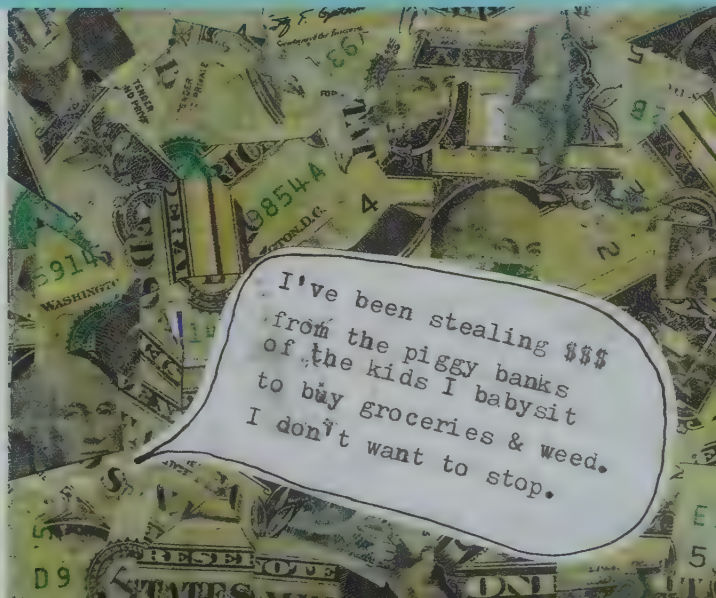
Other postcards make claims like "I've been stealing \$\$\$ from the piggy banks of the kids I babysit to buy groceries and weed."

This postcard reveals the violations of several important norms and values (and laws): that we should not steal (especially from children), that we should not do drugs, and that poverty is a stigmatized status—and one that people are often ashamed of.

A simple scroll through the postcards on the PostSecret website reveals the many social norms at play in our culture and the deep shame or fear of reprisal that comes from violating these behavioral expectations. Yet the fact that people throughout the world are willing to anonymously share their transgressions with others shows just how common norm violations are. It also shows just how powerful and even oppressive norms can be, given how many seek refuge by silently and anonymously "confessing" their wrongs on PostSecret.

A quick look at the site also reveals that the vast majority of participants are women. As we noted earlier in the chapter, some scholars have argued that norms regarding women's behavior are more rigid than those guiding men's behavior. Can you think of secrets that men may post, and how they might differ from those posted by women? How might sites like PostSecret reinforce or challenge social norms, especially gender norms? Do you think a forum like PostSecret would work in a venue other than the anonymous world of the Internet?

Our secrets powerfully reveal the social norms that govern our behavior. Postcards submitted to PostSecret, an ongoing community art project, highlight how certain behaviors like theft, eating disorders, and infidelity are stigmatized.



CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 Explain the nature/nurture debate.
- 2 Why do sociologists disagree with the claim that biology is destiny?
- 3 Give examples of subcultures that are typical of American society.
- 4 What is the difference between cultural ethnocentrism and cultural relativism?
- 5 Why is language considered to be a cultural universal?
- 6 What is the linguistic relativity hypothesis?

The same is true at earlier phases of social development. Before the invention of the smelting of metal, for example, goods had to be made of organic or naturally occurring materials like wood or stone—a basic limitation on the artifacts that could be constructed. Variations in material culture provide the main means of distinguishing different forms of human society, but other factors are also influential. Writing is an example. As has been mentioned, not all human cultures have possessed writing—in fact, for most of human history, writing was unknown. The development of writing altered the scope of human cultural potentialities, making possible different forms of social organization than those that had previously existed. Yet writing continues to evolve even today. Think about the language you use when you send texts to your friends. If you sent your grandparents a text with acronyms like FOMO, YOLO, and ROFL, would they understand what you were saying?

We now turn to analyzing the main types of society that existed in the past and that are still found in the world. In the present day, we are accustomed to societies that contain millions of people, many of them living crowded together in urban areas. But for most of human history, the Earth was much less densely populated than it is now, and it is only over the past hundred years or so that any societies have existed in which the majority of the population were city dwellers. To understand the forms of society that existed before modern industrialism, we have to call on the historical dimension of the sociological imagination.

What Happened to Premodern Societies?

>
Learn how societies have changed over time.

Premodern societies can actually be grouped into three main categories: hunters and gatherers, larger agrarian or pastoral societies (involving agriculture or the tending of domesticated animals), and nonindustrial civilizations or traditional states. We shall look at the main characteristics of these societies in turn.

The Earliest Societies: Hunters and Gatherers

For all but a tiny part of our existence on this planet, human beings have lived in hunting-and-gathering societies, small groups or tribes often numbering no more than thirty or forty people. Hunters and gatherers gain their livelihood from hunting, fishing, and gathering edible plants growing in the wild. Hunting-and-gathering cultures continue to exist in some parts of the world, such as in a few arid parts of Africa and the jungles of Brazil and New Guinea. Most such cultures, however, have been destroyed or absorbed by the spread of Western culture, and those that remain are unlikely to stay intact for much longer. Currently, fewer than a quarter of a million people in the world support themselves through hunting and gathering—only 0.004 percent of the world's population.

Compared with larger societies—particularly modern societies such as the United States—most hunting-and-gathering groups were egalitarian. Thus, there was little difference among members of the society in the number or kinds of material possessions; there were no divisions of rich and poor. The material goods they needed were limited to weapons for hunting, tools for digging and building, traps, and cooking utensils. Differences of position or rank tended to be limited to age and gender; men were almost always the hunters, while women gathered wild crops, cooked, and brought up the children.

Hunters and gatherers moved about a good deal, but not in a completely erratic way. They had fixed territories, around which they migrated regularly from year to year. Because they were without animal or mechanical means of transport, they could only take a few goods or possessions with them. Many hunting-and-gathering communities did not have a stable membership; people often moved among different camps, or groups split up and joined others within the same overall territory.

Hunters and gatherers had little interest in developing material wealth beyond what was needed for their basic needs. Their main concerns were with religious values and ritual activities. Members participated regularly in elaborate ceremonials and often spent a great deal of time preparing the dress, masks, paintings, or other sacred objects used in such rituals.

Hunters and gatherers are not merely primitive peoples whose ways of life no longer hold any interest for us. Studying their cultures allows us to see more clearly that some of our institutions are far from being natural features of human life. While we shouldn't idealize the circumstances in which hunters and gatherers lived, the lack of major inequalities of wealth and power and the emphasis on cooperation rather than competition are instructive reminders that the world created by modern industrial civilization is not necessarily to be equated with progress.

Pastoral and Agrarian Societies

About 15,000 years ago, some hunting-and-gathering groups turned to the raising of domesticated animals and the cultivation of fixed plots of land as their means of livelihood. **Pastoral societies** relied mainly on domesticated livestock, while **agrarian societies** grew crops (practiced agriculture). Some societies had mixed pastoral and agrarian economies.

Depending on the environment in which they lived, pastoralists reared animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, camels, or horses. Some pastoral societies still exist in the modern world, concentrated especially in areas of Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. They are usually found in regions of dense grasslands or in deserts or mountains, which are too poor in arable land for agriculture to be profitable.

At some point, hunting-and-gathering groups began to sow their own crops rather than simply collect those growing in the wild. This practice first developed as what is usually called *horticulture*, in which small gardens were cultivated by the use of simple hoes or digging instruments. Like pastoralism, horticulture provided for a more reliable supply of food than was possible from hunting and gathering and therefore could support larger communities. Because they were not on the move, people whose livelihood

pastoral societies

Societies whose subsistence derives from the rearing of domesticated animals.

agrarian societies

Societies whose means of subsistence are based on agricultural production (crop growing).

Basotho shepherds stand with their flock in Lesotho, Africa. Pastoral societies, which rely on domesticated livestock as their means of livelihood, still exist in certain areas of Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia.



was horticulture could develop larger stocks of material possessions than people in either hunting-and-gathering or pastoral communities. Some peoples in the world still rely primarily on horticulture for their livelihood.

Traditional Societies or Civilizations

From about 6000 BCE onward, we find evidence of societies larger than any that existed before and that contrast in distinct ways with earlier types. These societies were based on the development of cities, led to pronounced inequalities of wealth and power, and were ruled by kings or emperors. Because writing was used and science and art flourished, these societies are often called “civilizations.” The earliest civilizations developed in the Middle East, usually in fertile river areas. The Chinese Empire originated in about 1800 BCE, at which time powerful states were also in existence in what are now India and Pakistan.

Most traditional (premodern) civilizations were also empires: They achieved their size through the conquest and incorporation of other peoples (Kautsky 1982). This was true, for instance, of traditional Rome and China. At its height, in the first century CE, the Roman Empire stretched from Britain in northwest Europe to beyond the Middle East. The Chinese Empire, which lasted for more than 2,000 years, up to the threshold of the twentieth century, covered most of the massive region of eastern Asia now occupied by modern China.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. Compare the two main types of premodern societies.
2. Contrast pastoral and agrarian societies.

How Has Industrialization Shaped Modern Society?

What happened to destroy the forms of society that dominated the whole of history up to two centuries ago? The answer, in a word, is **industrialization**—the emergence of machine production, based on the use of inanimate power resources (such as steam or electricity). The industrialized, or modern, societies differ in several key respects from any previous type of social order, and their development has had consequences stretching far beyond their European origins.

The Industrialized Societies

Industrialization originated in eighteenth-century Britain as a result of the Industrial Revolution, a complex set of technological changes that affected the means by which people gained their livelihood. These changes included the invention of new machines (such as the spinning jenny for weaving yarn), the harnessing of power resources (especially water and steam) for production, and the use of science to improve production methods. Because discoveries and inventions in one field lead to more in others, the pace of technological innovation in **industrialized societies** is extremely rapid compared with that of traditional social systems.

In even the most advanced of traditional civilizations, the majority of people were engaged in working on the land. The relatively low level of technological development did not permit more than a small minority to be freed from the chores of agricultural production. By contrast, a prime feature of industrialized societies today is that the large majority of the employed population work in factories, offices, or shops rather than in agriculture. And over 90 percent of people live in towns and cities, where most jobs are to be found and new job opportunities created. The largest cities are vastly greater in size than the urban settlements found in traditional civilizations. In cities, social life becomes more impersonal and anonymous than before, and many of our day-to-day encounters are with strangers. Large-scale organizations, such as business corporations or government agencies, come to influence the lives of virtually everyone.

A further feature of modern societies concerns their political systems, which are more developed and intensive than forms of government in traditional states. In traditional civilizations, the political authorities (monarchs and emperors) had little direct influence on the customs and habits of most of their subjects, who lived in fairly self-contained local villages. With industrialization, transportation and communications became much more rapid, making for a more integrated “national” community.

The industrialized societies were the first **nation-states** to come into existence. Nation-states are political communities with clearly delimited borders dividing them from one another, rather than the vague frontier areas that used to separate traditional states. Nation-state governments have extensive powers over many aspects of citizens’ lives, framing laws that apply to all those living within their borders. The United States is a nation-state, as are virtually all other societies in the world today.



Recognize the factors that transformed premodern societies, particularly how industrialization and colonialism influenced global development. Know the differences among industrialized societies, emerging economies, and developing societies, and how these differences developed.

industrialization

The emergence of machine production, based on the use of inanimate power resources (such as steam or electricity).

industrialized societies

Highly developed nation-states in which the majority of the population work in factories or offices rather than in agriculture, and most people live in urban areas.

nation-state

A particular type of state, characteristic of the modern world, in which a government has sovereign power within a defined territorial area, and the population are citizens who know themselves to be part of a single nation.

People crowd the streets of Tokyo's entertainment district. Japan is an exemplar of an industrialized society. It is the third-largest economy, measured by GDP, lagging behind only the United States and China.



The application of industrial technology has been by no means limited to peaceful processes of economic development. From the earliest phases of industrialization, modern production processes have been put to military use, and this has radically altered ways of waging war, creating weaponry and modes of military organization much more advanced than those of nonindustrial cultures. Together, superior economic strength, political cohesion, and military superiority account for the seemingly irresistible spread of Western ways of life across the world over the past two centuries.

colonialism

The process whereby Western nations established their rule in parts of the world away from their home territories.

developing world

The less-developed societies, in which industrial production is either virtually nonexistent or only developed to a limited degree. The majority of the world's population live in less-developed countries.

Global Development

From the seventeenth to the early twentieth century, the Western countries established colonies in numerous areas previously occupied by traditional societies, using their superior military strength where necessary. Although virtually all these colonies have now attained their independence, **colonialism** was central to shaping the social map of the globe as we know it today. In some regions, such as North America, Australia, and New Zealand, which were only thinly populated by hunting-and-gathering or pastoral communities, Europeans became the majority population. In other areas, including much of Asia, Africa, and South America, the local populations remained in the majority.

Societies of the first of these two types, including the United States, have become industrialized. Those in the second category are mostly at a much lower level of industrial development and are often referred to as less-developed societies, or the **developing world**. Such societies include China, India, most African countries (such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Algeria), and those in South America (such as Brazil, Peru, and Venezuela). Because many of these societies are situated south of the United States and Europe, they are sometimes referred to collectively as the Global South, and contrasted to the wealthier, industrialized Global North.

THE DEVELOPING WORLD

The large majority of less-developed societies are in areas that underwent colonial rule in Asia, Africa, and South America. A few colonized areas gained independence early, such as Haiti, which became the first autonomous black republic in January 1804. The Spanish colonies in South America acquired their freedom in 1810; Brazil broke away from Portuguese rule in 1822.

Some countries that were never ruled from Europe were nonetheless strongly influenced by colonial relationships, the most notable example being China. By force of arms, China was compelled from the seventeenth century on to enter into trading agreements with European powers, by which the Europeans were allocated the government of certain areas, including major seaports. Hong Kong was the last of these. Most nations in the developing world have become independent states only since World War II—often following bloody anticolonial struggles. Examples include India, which shortly after achieving self-rule split into India and Pakistan; a range of other Asian countries (like Myanmar, Malaysia, and Singapore); and countries in Africa (including Kenya, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, and Algeria).

Although they may include peoples living in traditional fashion, developing countries are very different from earlier forms of traditional society. Their political systems are modeled on systems first established in the societies of the West—that is to say, they are nation-states. Most of the population still live in rural areas, but many of these societies are experiencing a rapid process of city development. Although agriculture remains the main economic activity, crops are now often produced for sale in world markets rather than for local consumption. Developing countries are not merely societies that have “lagged behind” the more industrialized areas. They have in large part been created by contact with Western industrialism, which has undermined the earlier, more traditional systems that were in place.

THE EMERGING ECONOMIES

Although the majority of developing countries lag well behind societies of the West, some have now successfully embarked on a process of industrialization. These **emerging economies**, which were previously referred to as newly industrializing economies (NIEs), include Brazil, Mexico, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. Emerging economies are characterized by a great deal of industry and/or international trade. The rates of economic growth of the most successful emerging economies, such as those in East Asia, are several times those of the Western industrial economies. No developing country figured among the top thirty exporters in the world in 1968, but today South Korea and Hong Kong are ranked in the top ten (Central Intelligence Agency 2016a).

The emerging economies of East Asia have shown the most sustained levels of economic prosperity. They are investing abroad as well as promoting growth at home. South Korea's production of steel has doubled in the last decade, and its shipbuilding and electronics industries are among the world's leaders. Singapore is becoming the major financial and commercial center of Southeast Asia. Taiwan is an important player in the manufacturing and electronics industries. All these changes in the emerging economies have directly affected the United States, whose share of global steel production, for example, has dropped significantly since the 1970s.

emerging economies

Developing countries that over the past two or three decades have begun to develop a strong industrial base, such as Singapore and Hong Kong.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 What does the concept of industrialization mean?
- 2 How has industrialization hurt traditional social systems?
- 3 Why are many African and South American societies classified as part of the developing world?

How Does Globalization Affect Contemporary Culture?

> Recognize the effect of globalization on your life and the lives of people around the world. Think about the effect of a growing global culture.

In Chapter 1 we noted that the chief focus of sociology historically has been the study of industrialized societies. As sociologists, can we thus safely ignore the developing world, leaving this as the domain of anthropology? We certainly cannot. The industrialized and the developing societies have developed in interconnection with one another and are today more closely related than ever before. Those of us living in industrialized societies depend on many raw materials and manufactured products coming from developing countries to sustain our lives. Conversely, the economies of most developing states depend on trading networks that bind them to industrialized countries. We can fully understand the industrialized order only against the backdrop of societies in the developing world—in which, in fact, by far the greater proportion of the world's population lives.

As the world rapidly moves toward a single, unified economy, businesses and people move about the globe in increasing numbers in search of new markets and economic opportunities. As a result, the cultural map of the world changes: Networks of peoples span national borders and even continents, providing cultural connections between their birthplaces and their adoptive countries (Appadurai 1986). A handful of languages come to dominate, and in some cases replace, the thousands of different languages that were once spoken on the planet.

It is increasingly impossible for cultures to exist as islands. There are few, if any, places on earth so remote as to escape radio, television, air travel (and the throngs of tourists this technology brings) or the computer. A generation ago, there were still tribes whose way of life was completely untouched by the rest of the world. Today, these peoples use machetes and other tools made in the United States or Japan, wear T-shirts and shorts manufactured in garment factories in the Dominican Republic or Guatemala, and take medicine manufactured in Germany or Switzerland to combat diseases contracted through contact with outsiders. These people also have their stories broadcast to people around the world through satellite television and the Internet. Within a generation or two at the most, all the world's once-isolated cultures will be touched and transformed by global culture, despite their persistent efforts to preserve their age-old ways of life.

The forces that produce a global culture are discussed throughout this book. These include:

- Television, which brings U.S. culture (through networks such as MTV and shows such as *The Big Bang Theory*) into homes throughout the world daily
- The emergence of a unified global economy, with businesses whose factories, management structures, and markets often span continents and countries
- “Global citizens,” such as managers of large corporations, who may spend as much time crisscrossing the globe as they do at home, identifying with a global, cosmopolitan culture rather than with their own nation's culture

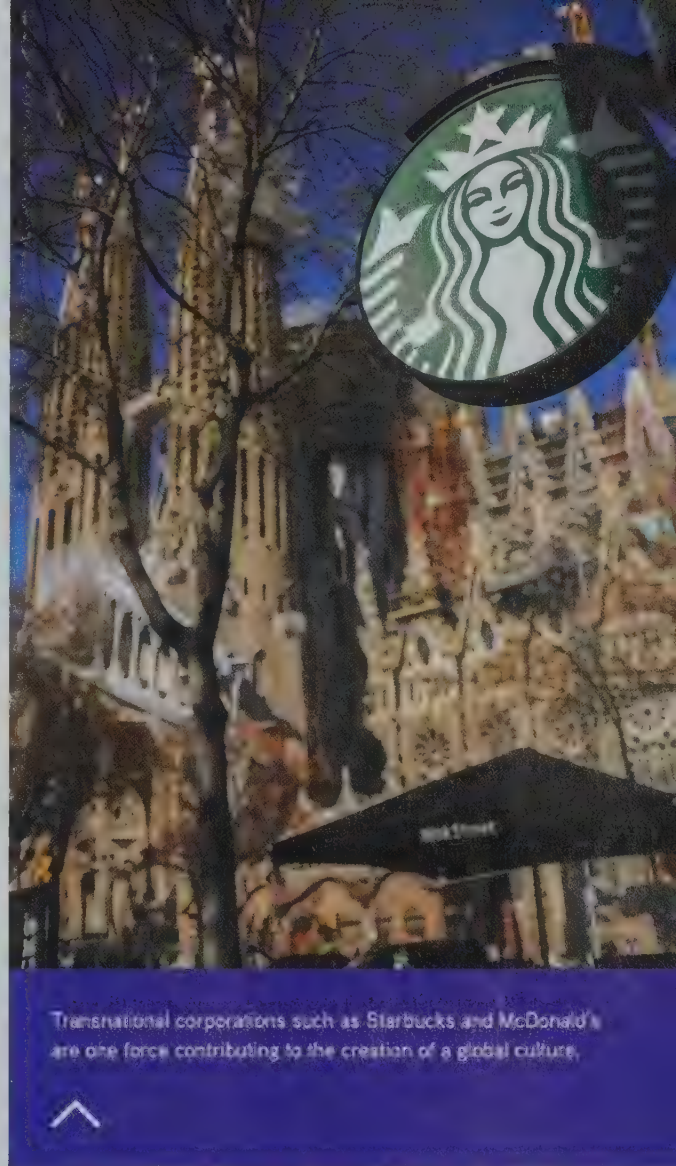
- A host of international organizations, including United Nations agencies, regional trade and mutual defense associations, multinational banks and other global financial institutions, international labor and health organizations, and global tariff and trade agreements, that are creating a global political, legal, and military framework
- Electronic communications (via cell phone, Skype, fax, email, text message, Facebook, Twitter, and other communications on the Internet), which make instantaneous communication with almost any part of the planet an integral part of daily life in the business world

The world has become a single social system as a result of the growing interdependence, both social and economic, that now affects virtually everyone. But it would be a mistake to think of this increasing interdependence, or globalization, of the world's societies simply as the growth of world unity. The globalizing of social relations should be understood primarily as the reordering of time and distance in social life. Our lives, in other words, are increasingly and quickly influenced by events happening far away from our everyday activities.

Does the Internet Promote a Global Culture?

Many believe that the rapid growth of the Internet around the world will hasten the spread of a global culture—one resembling the cultures of Europe and North America, currently home to nearly three-quarters of all Internet users. Although the Internet is a truly global space, several languages prevail among Internet users. For example, 26 percent of Internet users speak English as their main language, compared with 21 percent who speak Chinese and 8 percent who speak Spanish. In fact, ten languages alone account for more than three-quarters (78 percent) of all Internet users (Internet World Stats 2016b).

Given the dominance of the English language and Western values on the Internet, belief in such values as equality between men and women, the right to speak freely, democratic participation in government, and the pursuit of pleasure through consumption may be readily diffused throughout the world over the Internet. Moreover, Internet technology itself would seem to foster such values: Global communication, seemingly unlimited (and uncensored) information, and instant gratification are all characteristics of the new technology. Yet it may be premature to conclude that the Internet will sweep



aside traditional cultures, replacing them with radically new cultural values. Consider, for example, that the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, rose to power through the Internet, using the web to recruit new members and disseminate its anti-Western message across the globe.

As cyberspace becomes increasingly global, scholars continue to debate whether it will be used to perpetuate traditional cultural values or forge new cultural and political pathways. Consider the Middle Eastern country of Kuwait, a traditional Islamic culture that has recently experienced strong American and European influences. An oil-rich country on the Persian Gulf, Kuwait has one of the highest average per-person incomes in the world (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia 2011). The government provides free public education through the university level, resulting in high rates of literacy and education for both men and women. Kuwaiti television frequently carries NFL football and other U.S. programming, although broadcasts are regularly interrupted for the traditional Muslim calls to prayer. Half of Kuwait's approximately 2.7 million people are under thirty years old, and like their youthful counterparts in Europe and North America, many surf the Internet for new ideas, information, and consumer products.

Although Kuwait is in many respects a modern country, Kuwaiti law treats men and women differently. Legally, women have equal access to education and employment, yet they are barred from voting or running for political office. Cultural norms treating men and women differently have just as powerful an influence on daily life as formal laws. Women are generally expected to wear traditional clothing that leaves only the face and hands visible and are forbidden to leave home at night or be seen in public at any time with a man who is not a spouse or relative.

Deborah Wheeler and her colleagues (2006) have investigated the effect of the Internet on Kuwaiti culture. Although the Internet is highly popular in Kuwait, Wheeler found that Kuwaitis were extremely reluctant to voice strong opinions or political views online. With the exception of discussing conservative Islamic religious beliefs, which are freely disseminated over the Internet, Kuwaitis were remarkably inhibited online. Wheeler concluded that Kuwaiti culture, which is hundreds of years old, is not likely to be easily transformed by simple exposure to different beliefs and values on the Internet.

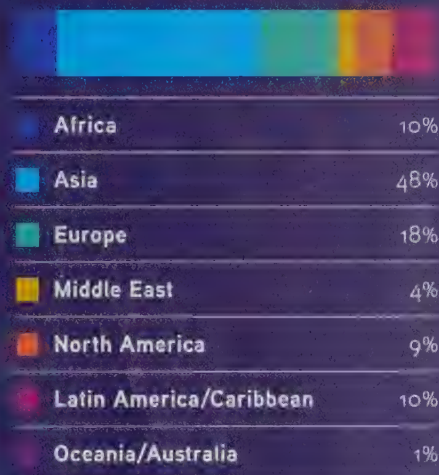
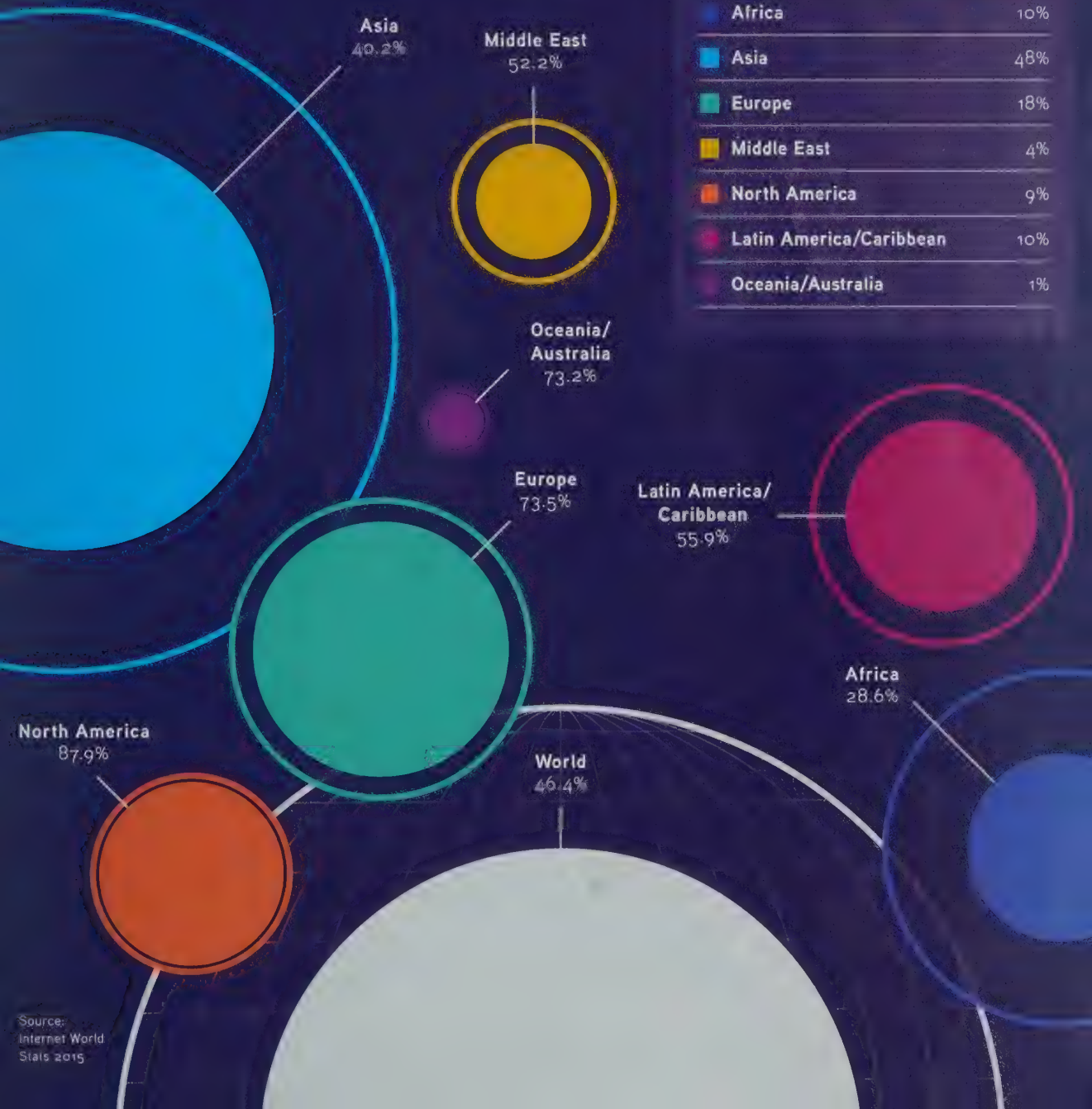
Did Wheeler's predictions prove true? Not necessarily, as the events of the Arab Spring reveal. Some scholars say that the political protests that erupted throughout major urban centers of North Africa and the Middle East during the spring of 2011 were fueled, in part, by communication on the Internet, including Facebook postings, chat room communications, and tweets (Howard 2011). According to Howard (2011), one activist who participated in the Cairo, Egypt, protests boasted, "We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world." Although the protests in Kuwait were smaller and shorter-lived than those in Egypt, Tunisia, and Bahrain, young people's use of the Internet played an important role (Al-Haqhaq 2011). However, young people may still feel constrained by their traditional culture, and thus find protection behind the anonymous nature of the Internet. As Kuwaiti technology expert Mustapha Said pointed out, "The feature of social media that allows you to become anonymous has encouraged many people to use them and become actively involved" (Al-Haqhaq 2011).

While cyberspace is becoming increasingly global, there remains a digital divide between individuals with access to the Internet and those without. While 88 percent of the population of North America is using the Internet, only 29 percent of the population of Africa is online.

○ = total population

● = % of population with Internet access

World Internet Users by Region



Protesters recharge their cell phones and computers at a charging center in Tahrir Square during the Arab Spring protests. Technology helped the movement take off and enabled participants to organize and communicate effectively.



Globalization and Local Cultures

The influence of a growing global culture has provoked numerous reactions at the local level. Many local cultures remain strong or are experiencing rejuvenation, partly as a response to the diffusion of global culture. Such a response grows out of the concern that a global culture, dominated by North American and European cultural values, will corrupt the local culture. For example, the Taliban, an Islamic movement that controlled most of Afghanistan until 2001, historically has sought to impose traditional, tribal values throughout the country. Through its governmental “Ministry for Ordering What Is Right and Forbidding What Is Wrong,” the Taliban banned music, closed movie theaters, prohibited the consumption of alcohol, and required men to grow full beards. Women were ordered to cover their entire bodies with *burkas*, tentlike garments with a woven screen over the eyes; they were forbidden to work outside their homes or even be seen in public with men who were not their spouses or relations. Violations of these rules resulted in severe punishment, sometimes death. The rise of the Taliban, and, more recently, ISIS, can be understood at least partly as a rejection of the spread of Western culture.

nationalism

A set of beliefs and symbols expressing identification with a national community.

The resurgence of local cultures is sometimes seen throughout the world in the rise of **nationalism**, a sense of identification with one's country that is expressed through a common set of strongly held beliefs. Sometimes these include the belief that the people of a particular nation have historical or God-given rights that supersede those of other people. Nationalism can be strongly political, involving attempts to assert the power of a nation based on a shared ethnic or racial identity over people of a different ethnicity or race. The world of the twenty-first century may well witness responses to globalization that celebrate ethnocentric nationalist beliefs, promoting intolerance and hatred rather than celebrating diversity.

New nationalisms, cultural identities, and religious practices are constantly being forged throughout the world. When you socialize with students from the same cultural

background or celebrate traditional holidays with your friends and family, you are sustaining your culture. The very technology that helps foster globalization also supports local cultures: The Internet enables you to communicate with others who share your cultural identity, even when they are dispersed around the world. Those who share a passion for a particular type of music might spend hours playing SongPop on their smartphone with competitors (whom they've never met in person) from around the globe. A casual search reveals thousands of websites and apps devoted to different cultures and subcultures.

Although sociologists do not yet fully understand these processes, they often conclude that despite the powerful forces of globalization operating in the world today, local cultures remain strong and indeed flourish. Yet, local cultural and social movements can thrive and flourish only if they are allowed to do so. Given the rapid social changes in recent decades, it is still too soon to tell whether and how globalization will transform our world, whether it will result in the homogenization of the world's diverse cultures, the flourishing of many individual cultures, or both.

CONCEPT CHECKS

How does global culture influence local cultures?

What is nationalism?

CHAPTER 2

The Big Picture

Culture and Society

Thinking Sociologically

1. Mention at least two cultural traits that you would claim are universals; mention two others you would claim are culturally specific traits. Locate and use case study materials from different societies you are familiar with to show the differences between universal and specific cultural traits. Are the cultural universals you have discussed derivatives of human instincts? Explain your answer fully.
2. What does it mean to be ethnocentric? How is ethnocentrism dangerous in conducting social research? How is ethnocentrism problematic among nonresearchers in their everyday lives?
3. Think about a favorite article of clothing of yours. What values does it convey, and what messages about you or your subculture does it communicate to others?

Learning Objectives

What Is Culture?

Know what culture consists of, and recognize how it differs from society.

p. 43

How Does Human Culture Develop?

Begin to understand how both biological and cultural factors influence our behavior. Learn the ideas of sociobiology and how others have tried to refute these ideas by emphasizing cultural differences.

p. 47

What Happened to Premodern Societies?

Learn how societies have changed over time.

p. 58

How Has Industrialization Shaped Modern Society?

Recognize the factors that transformed premodern societies, particularly how industrialization and colonialism influenced global development. Know the differences among industrialized societies, emerging economies, and developing societies, and how these differences developed.

p. 61

How Does Globalization Affect Contemporary Culture?

Recognize the effect of globalization on

Terms to Know

Concept Checks

cultural appropriation

culture • values • norms • material goods • society

1. Describe the main elements of culture.
2. What role does culture play in society?

sociobiology • instinct • biological determinism • subcultures • assimilation • multiculturalism • ethnocentrism • cultural relativism • cultural universals • language • marriage • linguistic relativity hypothesis • signifier

1. Explain the nature/nurture debate.
2. Why do sociologists disagree with the claim that biology is destiny?
3. Give examples of subcultures that are typical of American society.
4. What is the difference between cultural ethnocentrism and cultural relativism?
5. Why is language considered to be a cultural universal?
6. What is the linguistic relativity hypothesis?

pastoral societies • agrarian societies

1. Compare the two main types of premodern societies.
2. Contrast pastoral and agrarian societies.

industrialization • industrialized societies • nation-state • colonialism • developing world • emerging economies

1. What does the concept of industrialization mean?
2. How has industrialization hurt traditional social systems?
3. Why are many African and South American societies classified as part of the developing world?

- .. How does global culture influence local cultures?
- .. What is nationalism?

3

Socialization, the Life Course, and Aging



Transgender student Coy Mathis and her parents sued the school district to guarantee Coy the right to use the girls' bathroom. While social institutions such as schools often encourage conformity to norms of behavior, they can change over time.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

How are children socialized?

Learn about socialization (including gender socialization), and know the most important agents of socialization.

What are the five major stages of the life course?

Learn the various stages of the life course, and see the similarities and differences among different cultures and historical periods.

How do people age?

Understand that aging is a combination of biological, psychological, and social processes. Consider key theories of aging, particularly those that focus on how society shapes the social roles of older people and that emphasize aspects of age stratification.

What are the challenges of aging in the United States?

Evaluate the experience of growing old in the contemporary United States. Identify the physical, emotional, and financial challenges faced by older adults.





In July 2015, at the annual ESPY awards, the Arthur Ashe Courage Award was presented to Caitlyn Jenner in recognition of the former Olympic athlete's bravery in coming out as transgender. Caitlyn, now a transgender woman, was born Bruce Jenner in 1949 and attracted international glory when he won the gold medal for the grueling decathlon at the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal. The Arthur Ashe award—which counts Muhammed Ali, Billie Jean King, and Nelson Mandela as past winners—honors “strength in the face of adversity, courage in the face of peril and the willingness to stand up for their beliefs no matter what the cost.” In her acceptance speech, Jenner vowed “to do whatever I can to reshape the landscape of how transgender people are viewed and treated” (ESPN 2015).

Nearly three years earlier, six-year-old Coy Mathis and her family were also fighting their own courageous battle for transgender rights and respect. Coy, a transgender girl, was told that she could not use the girls' bathroom at her Colorado elementary school. Although she

was allowed to use the gender-neutral restroom in the nurse's office and teacher's lounge, the school ruled the main girls' bathroom off limits to Coy. She and her parents, Kathryn and Jeremy, successfully sued the school district, marking a major legal victory for transgender persons. Coy's parents said that they wanted their daughter to enjoy the same rights as any of her classmates and that relegating her to a special bathroom would make Coy vulnerable to bullying and stigmatizing (Banda and Ricciardi 2013).

Coy's battle sparked heated debates among parents, teachers, media pundits, and bloggers. Some questioned whether a young child could really have a gender identity. Others scoffed that Coy's preference for "girly" clothes and toys was just a phase. Others challenged the very existence of transgender identities. Jeff Johnston, a self-described "gender issues analyst" with the conservative organization Focus on the Family, baldly asserted that "male and female are categories of existence," denying the existence of any other gender identities (Erdely 2013).

While Kathryn and Jeremy initially thought that Coy would grow out of his predilection for all things girly, it soon became obvious to them that this was something much more than a phase. Born male—one of a triplet—Coy had rebelled against "boy" clothing and haircuts ever since she was a toddler. Refusing to wear firefighter or knight costumes, Coy instead gravitated toward princess dresses and demanded that her meals be served on pink decorative plates. Coy would cry when other children referred to her as a boy, and tearfully asked her mother when they would be going to the doctor so that Coy could get her "girl parts." Coy's parents reached out to doctors, psychologists, and other parents of children who seemed uncomfortable in their own bodies. Fearful Coy would end up a statistic—a staggering 25 to 40 percent of transgender children and teens attempt suicide—Kathryn and Jeremy decided to raise Coy as a girl (Grossman and D'Augelli 2007; Haas, Rodgers, and Herman 2014). They had already seen signs of depression in young Coy; even at age three she would become listless and sullen, refusing to put on boy's clothes and begging not to have to play outside. Coy showed sparks of happiness and joy only when allowed to truly be herself—a little girl (Erdely 2013).

The experiences of Caitlyn Jenner and Coy Mathis—and the public response (whether supportive or critical) from observers worldwide—illustrate the importance and complexities of socialization to everyday life. Sociologists are interested in the processes through which a young child such as Coy learns to become a member of society, complying with (or rejecting) society's ever-evolving expectations for how one should act, think, feel, and even dress. Social institutions—such as schools in Coy's case or sports in Jenner's case—and social actors encourage conformity to contemporary social norms through praise and discourage nonconformity through punishment and disapproval. Yet social institutions change over time, and the forces that socialize children shift accordingly. Try to imagine how Jenner's classmates and parents might have reacted if he had identified and dressed as a girl when he was a young child in the early 1950s. Contrast this with the support that Coy received from his parents and most of his classmates in the early 2010s. The study of socialization embodies a core theme of the "sociological imagination," that our lives are a product of both individual biographies and socio-historical context (Mills 1959).

Socialization is the process whereby an innocent child becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture into which he or she was born. The socialization of young persons contributes to the phenomenon of **social reproduction**—the process whereby societies have structural continuity over time. During the course of socialization, especially in the early years of life, children learn the ways of their parents and ancestors, thereby carrying

socialization

The social processes through which we develop an awareness of social norms and values and achieve a distinct sense of self.

social reproduction

The process whereby societies have structural continuity over time. Social reproduction is an important pathway through which parents transmit or produce values, norms, and social practices among their children.

on their values, norms, and social practices. All societies have characteristics that endure over long stretches of time, even though their members change as individuals are born and die. But at the same time, some old norms and customs die out as members of the older generation pass away, replaced with new “rules” to live by. For instance, while older generations of parents might have reprimanded their boys for being timid or playing with dolls, newer generations of parents may encourage their sons and daughters to “just be themselves.”

Socialization is not limited to childhood. Throughout the life course, individuals may experience **resocialization** when their life circumstances and social roles change. Resocialization involves either learning new skills and norms appropriate to one’s new roles and contexts or unlearning those skills and norms that may no longer be relevant. For example, upon retirement one must learn to take on a new social role that is different from the role of worker, and upon release from prison, ex-convicts must relearn how to be members of mainstream society. Or in the case of sixty-six-year-old Caitlyn Jenner, she had to relearn how to walk, dress, and interact with others in her new role as a woman. Although gender is often thought of as “natural,” we will soon learn (both here and in Chapter 9) that how we dress, speak, and even the career and family choices we make are a product of lifelong socialization.

Socialization connects the different generations to one another (Turnbull 1983). The birth of a child alters the lives of those who are responsible for his or her upbringing—who themselves undergo new learning experiences. Parenting usually ties the activities of adults to children for the remainder of their lives. Older people still remain parents when they become grandparents, thus forging another set of relationships that bond the generations. Although the process of cultural learning is much more intense in infancy and early childhood than in later life, learning and adjustment go on through the whole life course.

In the sections to follow, we continue the theme of “nature interacting with nurture,” introduced in the previous chapter. We first describe the process of human development from infancy to early childhood. We compare different theoretical interpretations of how and why children develop as they do, and how gender identities develop. We move on to discuss the main groups and social contexts that influence socialization throughout the life course. Finally, we focus on one distinctive stage of the life course: old age. We discuss the problems faced by persons ages sixty-five and older, who now make up the most rapidly growing age group in the United States and the developed world.

How Are Children Socialized?

One of the most distinctive features of human beings, compared with other animals, is self-awareness—the awareness that one has an identity distinct and separate from others. During the first months of life, an infant possesses little or no understanding of differences between human beings and material objects in the environment and has no awareness of self. Children begin to use concepts such as “I,” “me,” and “you” at around age two or after. They gradually come to understand that others have distinct identities, consciousness, and needs separate from their own.

resocialization

The process of learning new norms, values, and behaviors when one joins a new group or takes on a new social role, or when one’s life circumstances change dramatically.



Caitlyn Jenner went through a process of resocialization when transitioning into her new role as a woman.



Learn about socialization (including gender socialization), and know the most important agents of socialization.

Theories of Child Development

cognition

Human thought processes involving perception, reasoning, and remembering.

social self

According to the theory of George Herbert Mead, the identity conferred upon an individual by the reactions of others. A person achieves self-consciousness by becoming aware of this social identity.

self-consciousness

Awareness of one's distinct social identity as a person separate from others. Human beings are not born with self-consciousness but acquire an awareness of self as a result of early socialization.

generalized other

A concept in the theory of George Herbert Mead, according to which the individual takes over the general values of a given group or society during the socialization process.

sensorimotor stage

According to Jean Piaget, the first stage of human cognitive development, in which a child's awareness of his or her environment is dominated by perception and touch.

The processes through which the self emerges and develops is much debated, in part because the most prominent theories about child development emphasize different aspects of socialization. The American philosopher and sociologist George Herbert Mead gave attention mainly to how children learn to use the concepts of "I" and "me." Jean Piaget, the Swiss student of child behavior, focused on **cognition**—the ways in which children learn to think about themselves and their environment.

G. H. MEAD AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF

Mead's ideas form the basis of a general tradition of theoretical thinking, symbolic interactionism, and have had a broad impact in sociology. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes that interaction between human beings takes place through symbols and the interpretation of meanings (see Chapter 1). Mead's work also provides an account of the main phases of child development, giving particular attention to the emergence of a sense of self.

According to Mead, infants and young children develop as social beings by imitating the actions of those around them. Play is one way in which this takes place; young children often imitate what adults do. A toddler may make mud pies, having seen an adult cooking, or may dig in the dirt with a spoon, having observed someone gardening. Children's play evolves from simple imitation to more complicated games in which at age four or five they will act out an adult role. Mead called this "taking the role of the other"—learning what it is like to be in the shoes of another person. At this stage, children acquire a developed sense of self; that is, they develop an understanding of themselves as separate agents—as a "me"—by seeing themselves through the eyes of others. We achieve self-awareness, according to Mead, when we learn to distinguish the "me" from the "I." The "I" is the unsocialized infant, a bundle of spontaneous wants and desires. The "me," as Mead used the term, is the **social self**. Individuals develop **self-consciousness**, Mead argued, by coming to see themselves as others see them.

A further stage of child development, according to Mead, occurs when the child is about eight or nine years old. This is the age at which children tend to take part in organized games, rather than unsystematic play. It is at this period that children begin to understand the overall values and morality that guide human behavior. To learn organized games, children must understand the rules of play and notions of fairness and equal participation. Children at this stage learn to grasp what Mead termed the **generalized other**—the general values and moral rules of the culture in which they are developing.

JEAN PIAGET AND THE STAGES OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Piaget emphasized the child's active capability to make sense of the world. Children do not passively soak up information but instead select and interpret what they see, hear, and feel in the world around them. Piaget described several distinct stages of cognitive development during which children learn to think about themselves and their environment. Each stage involves the acquisition of new skills and depends on the successful completion of the preceding one.

Piaget called the first stage, which lasts from birth up to about age two, the **sensorimotor stage** because infants learn mainly by touching objects, manipulating them, and physically exploring their environment. Until about age four months, infants cannot differentiate themselves from their environment. Infants gradually learn to distinguish people from objects, coming to see that both have an existence independent of their immediate perceptions. By the end of the sensorimotor stage, children understand that their environment has distinct and stable properties.

The next phase, called the **preoperational stage**, is the one to which Piaget devoted the bulk of his research. This stage lasts from age two to seven. Children acquire a mastery of language and an ability to use words to represent objects and images in a symbolic fashion. A four-year-old might use a sweeping hand, for example, to represent the concept “airplane.” Piaget termed the stage “preoperational” because children are not yet able to use their developing mental capabilities systematically. Children in this stage are **egocentric**. As Piaget used it, this term does not refer to selfishness, but to the tendency of the child to interpret the world exclusively in terms of his or her own position. For example, children at the preoperational stage cannot hold connected conversations with others. In egocentric speech, what the child says is more or less unrelated to what the other speaker said. Children talk together but not to one another in the same sense that adults do.

A third period, the **concrete operational stage**, lasts from age seven to eleven. During this phase, children can master logical but not abstract notions. They are able to handle ideas such as causality without much difficulty. They become capable of carrying out the mathematical operations of multiplication, division, and subtraction. Children by this stage are much less egocentric. In the preoperational stage, if a girl is asked “How many sisters do you have?” she may correctly answer one. But if asked “How many sisters does your sister have?” she will probably answer none because she cannot see herself from the point of view of her sister. The concrete operational child is able to answer such a question with ease.

The years from eleven to fifteen cover what Piaget called the **formal operational stage**. During adolescence, the developing child becomes able to grasp highly abstract and hypothetical ideas. When faced with a problem, children at this stage are able to review many possible ways of solving it and go through them theoretically in order to reach a solution. According to Piaget, the first three stages of development are universal, but not all adults reach the formal operational stage. The development of formal operational thought depends in part on one's education, which may foster abstract reasoning.

Agents of Socialization

Agents of socialization are groups or social contexts in which significant processes of socialization occur. Primary socialization occurs in infancy and childhood and is the most intense period of cultural learning. It is the time when children learn language and basic behavioral patterns that form the foundation for later learning. The family is the main agent of socialization during this phase. Secondary socialization takes place later in childhood and into maturity. In this phase, schools, peer groups, social organizations (such as sports teams), the media, and eventually the workplace become socializing forces for individuals. Social interactions in these contexts help people learn the values, norms, and beliefs that make up the patterns of their culture.

preoperational stage

According to Jean Piaget, the second stage of human cognitive development, in which a child has advanced sufficiently to master basic modes of logical thought.

egocentric

According to Jean Piaget, the characteristic quality of a child during the early years of life. Egocentric thinking involves understanding objects and events in the environment solely in terms of the child's own position.

concrete operational stage

The stage of human cognitive development, as formulated by Jean Piaget, in which the child's thinking is based primarily on physical perception of the world.

formal operational stage

According to Jean Piaget, the stage of human cognitive development at which the growing child becomes capable of handling abstract concepts and hypothetical situations.

agents of socialization

Groups or social contexts within which processes of socialization take place.

FAMILIES

Since family systems vary worldwide, the range of family contacts that the infant experiences also varies widely across cultures. The mother is commonly the most important individual in the child's early life, but the nature of the relationships established between mothers and their children is influenced by the form and regularity of their contact.

In modern societies, most early socialization occurs within a small-scale or **nuclear family** context. Most American children spend their early years within a domestic unit comprising mother, father, and perhaps one or two other children, although the proportion growing up in two-parent households is lower than it was in prior decades (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015j). In many other cultures, by contrast, aunts, uncles, and grandparents are often part of a single household and serve as caretakers even for very young infants. Even within U.S. society, family contexts vary widely. Some children are brought up in single-parent households; some are cared for by one biological and one nonbiological parent figure (for example, a divorced parent and a stepparent, or parents in a same-sex relationship). The majority of mothers are now employed outside the home and return to their paid work shortly after the births of their children. Despite these variations, families typically remain the major agent of socialization from infancy to adolescence and beyond.

In most traditional societies, the family into which a person was born largely determined the individual's social position for the rest of his or her life. In modern societies, social position is not inherited at birth in this way, yet the region and social class of the family into which an individual is born affect patterns of socialization. Children pick up ways of behaving from their parents or others in their neighborhood or community. Patterns of child rearing and discipline, together with contrasting values and expectations, are found in different sectors of large-scale societies. It is easy to understand the influence of different types of family background if we think of what life is like, say, for a child growing up in a poor single-parent family in a disadvantaged urban neighborhood compared with one born into an affluent two-parent family in a posh suburb (Kohn 1977).

Of course, few, if any, children simply take over the outlook of their parents unquestioningly. This is especially true in the modern world, in which change is so pervasive. Moreover, the wide range of socializing agents in modern societies leads to many divergences between the outlooks of children, adolescents, and the parental generation. For example, while Coy Mathis's parents supported her desire to dress, play, and identify however she wished, some of Coy's classmates' parents and media pundits held very different views that emphasized conformity to traditional gender norms rather than freedom of expression.

SCHOOLS

Another important socializing agent is the school. Schooling is a formal process: Students pursue a clearly defined curriculum of subjects. Yet schools are agents of socialization in more subtle respects. Students are expected to be punctual, to be quiet in class, to obey their teachers, and to observe rules of school discipline. How teachers react to their students, in turn, affects the students' views and expectations of themselves. These expectations also become linked to later job experience when students leave school. Peer groups

nuclear family

A family group consisting of an adult or adult couple and their dependent children.



Families are a key site of social reproduction. Children model the behavior of their parents. In this way, values and behaviors are reproduced across generations.

are often formed at school, and the system of keeping children in classes according to age reinforces their impact.

PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Another socializing agency is the **peer group**. Peer groups consist of individuals of a similar age. The family's importance in socialization is obvious because the experience of the infant and young child is shaped more or less exclusively within it. It is less apparent, especially to those of us living in Western societies, how significant peer groups are. Children over age four or five usually spend a great deal of time in the company of friends the same age. Given the high proportion of women now in the workforce whose young children play together in day-care centers and preschool, peer relations are more important than ever before (Corsaro 1997; Harris 1998).

Peer relations are likely to have a significant effect beyond childhood and adolescence. Informal groups of people of similar ages, at work and in other situations, are usually of enduring importance in shaping individuals' attitudes and behavior. Peer groups also play an important role in changing norms, with more contemporary peer groups upholding or promoting behaviors that might not have been supported in earlier generations. While Bruce Jenner's classmates in the 1950s no doubt promoted gender conformity, Coy Mathis and her young friends may grow up to hold, and encourage in one another, much more open-minded views about gender, identity, and gender roles.

THE MASS MEDIA

Newspapers and periodicals flourished in the West from the early 1800s onward, but they were confined to a fairly small readership. It was not until a century later that such printed materials became part of the daily experience of millions of people, influencing their attitudes and opinions. The spread of mass media involving printed documents was soon accompanied by electronic communication—radio, television, records, and videos. Today, it is a rare American who goes a day (or even an hour) without reading an article, watching a video, or listening to a podcast online. In fact, more than 90 percent of teens go online at least once a day while nearly a quarter (24 percent) use the Internet “almost constantly” (Lenhart 2015). Americans spend a large portion of their leisure time consuming media. According to the American Time Use Survey, Americans watched an average of nearly three hours of television per day in 2015, representing more than half of their total leisure time (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016g).

Much research has been done to assess the effects of the media, especially television programs, on the audiences they reach, particularly children. Children and adolescents often model the gender roles and practices that they see on their favorite television shows. Media, including fashion magazines and music videos, are also cited as powerful influences on girls' body image, or their beliefs about the “ideal” body weight and physique (Grabe, Ward, and Hyde 2008). Television shows like *I Am Jazz*, a reality show about the daily life of transgender teenager Jazz Jennings, has been praised as providing a role model for young children who may be conflicted about their own gender (Time 2014). The most commonly researched topic, however, is the impact of television on propensities to crime and violence.

In recent years researchers have become interested in studying the ways that video games (especially violent video games) affect children. Nearly three-quarters (72 percent)

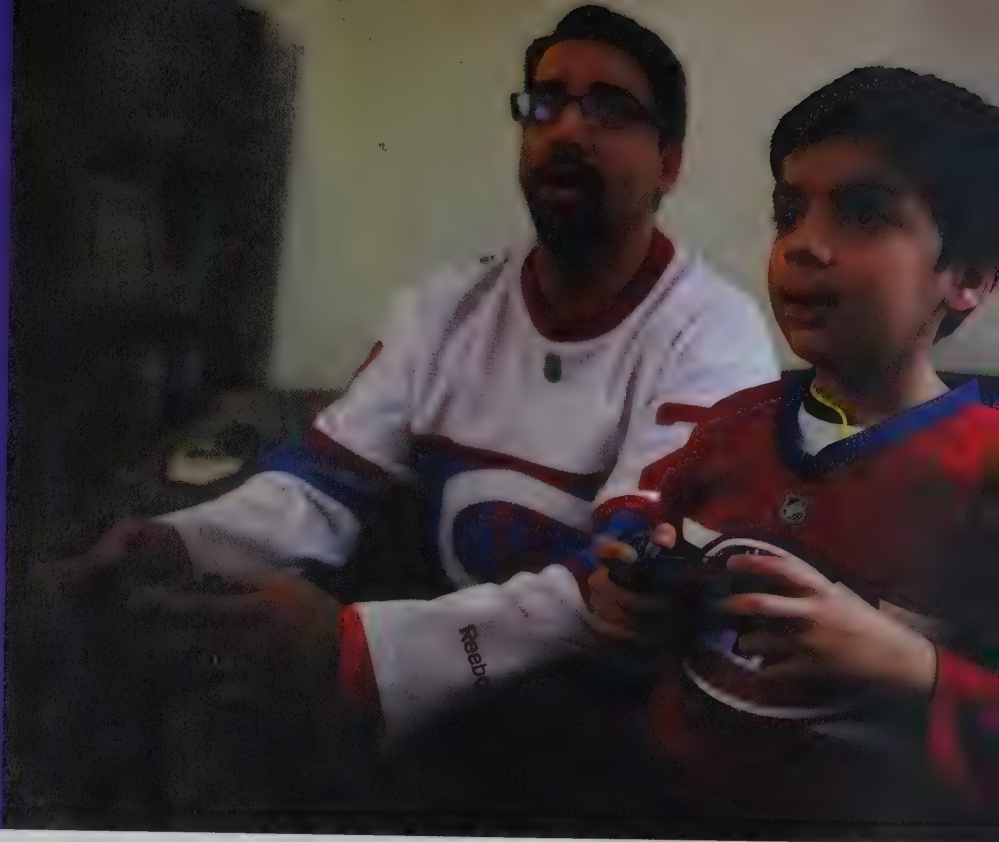
peer group

A friendship group composed of individuals of similar age and social status.



YouTube and reality television personality, author, and LGBTQ rights activist Jazz Jennings uses the media to share her own experiences as a transgender teenager.

Recent research has found that certain kinds of action-packed video games can promote cognitive development in children



of teenagers play video games on their phone, computer, or a console such as PlayStation, Xbox, or Wii, including 84 percent of teenage boys and 59 percent of teenage girls (Lenhart 2015). Given what we've learned about socialization, is this a potentially harmful trend?

It is doubtful that a child's involvement with most video games harms his or her achievement at school. While at times increased video game use and decreased school performance go hand in hand, it is unlikely that video games cause a decline in school performance. It is also possible that video games can help youth develop skills and behaviors that are good for their physical, emotional, intellectual, and social well-being. Recent work by neuroscientists and psychologists find that some types of action-packed video games boost children's brain stimulation, cognitive development, spatial abilities, problem-solving skills, and even self-esteem (Granic, Lobel, and Engels 2014).

WORK

Across all cultures, work is an important setting within which socialization processes operate, although it is only in industrial societies that large numbers of people go out to work—that is, go each day to places of work separate from the home. In traditional communities, many people farmed the land close to where they lived or had workshops in their dwellings. “Work” in such communities was not as clearly distinct from other activities as it is for most members of the workforce in the modern West. In the industrialized countries, joining the workforce ordinarily marks a much greater transition in an individual's life than beginning work in traditional societies.

The work environment often poses unfamiliar demands, perhaps calling for major adjustments in the person's outlook or behavior. In addition to mastering the specific tasks of their job and internalizing company policies and practices, many workers also need to learn how to “feel” on the job. Sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983) has documented the ways that workers, especially women workers, learn to feel and then display socially acceptable emotions at work. For instance, flight attendants learn to keep a calm and cool demeanor, even if they are fearful when the airplane hits extreme turbulence. Restaurant hostesses must exude a sunny and positive mood, even if their customers are surly. In doing so, they project an image of safety, security, and goodwill on behalf of their employers.

Social Roles

Through the process of socialization, individuals learn about **social roles**—socially defined expectations that a person in a given social position follows. The social role of doctor, for example, encompasses a set of behaviors that should be enacted by all individual doctors, regardless of their personal opinions or outlooks. Because all doctors share this role, it is possible to speak in general terms about the professional behavior of doctors, regardless of the specific individuals who occupy that position.

Some sociologists, particularly those associated with the functionalist school, regard social roles as fixed and relatively unchanging parts of a society's culture. According to this view, individuals learn the expectations that surround social positions in their particular culture and perform those roles largely as they have been defined. Social roles do not involve negotiation or creativity. Rather, they prescribe, contain, and direct an individual's behavior. Through socialization, individuals internalize social roles and learn how to carry them out.

This view, however, is mistaken. It suggests that individuals simply take on roles, rather than creating or negotiating them. Socialization is a process in which humans can exercise agency; we are not simply passive subjects waiting to be instructed or programmed. Individuals come to understand and assume social roles through an ongoing process of social interaction.

Identity

The cultural settings in which we are born and mature to adulthood influence our behavior, but that does not mean that humans are deprived of individuality or free will. Some sociologists do tend to write about socialization as though this were the case. But such a view is fundamentally flawed—socialization is also at the origin of our very individuality and freedom. In the course of socialization, each of us develops a sense of identity and the capacity for independent thought and action.

Identity is a multifaceted concept—it relates to the understandings people hold about who they are and what is meaningful to them. Some of the main sources of identity include gender, sexual orientation, nationality or ethnicity, and social class. Sociologists typically speak of two types of identity: social identity and self-identity (or personal identity). **Social identity** refers to the characteristics that other people attribute to an individual. These can be seen as markers that indicate who the individual is. At the same time, they place that individual in relation to other individuals who share the same attributes. Examples of

social roles

Socially defined expectations of an individual in a given status, or occupying a particular social position. In every society, individuals play a number of social roles, such as teenager, parent, worker, or political leader.

social identity

The characteristics that other people attribute to an individual.



People often exhibit multiple social identities simultaneously, sometimes seemingly conflicting ones.

self-identity

The ongoing process of self-development and definition of our personal identity through which we formulate a unique sense of ourselves and our relationship to the world around us.

social identities include student, mother, lawyer, Catholic, homeless, Asian, dyslexic, married, and so forth. Nearly all individuals have social identities comprising more than one attribute, reflecting the many dimensions of our lives. A person could simultaneously be a mother, an engineer, a Muslim, and a city council member. Although this plurality of social identities can be a potential source of conflict for people, most individuals organize meaning and experience in their lives around a primary identity that is fairly continuous across time and place.

If social identities mark ways in which individuals are the same as others, self-identity (or personal identity) sets us apart as distinct individuals. **Self-identity** refers to the process of self-development through which we formulate a unique sense of ourselves and our relationship to the world around us. The notion of self-identity draws heavily on the work of symbolic interactionists. The individual's constant negotiation with the outside world helps create and shape his or her sense of self. Though the cultural and social environments are factors in shaping self-identity, individual agency and choice are of central importance.

If at one time people's identities were largely informed by their membership in broad social groups, bound by class or nationality, they are now more multifaceted and less stable. Individuals have become more socially and geographically mobile due to processes such as urban growth and industrialization. This has freed people from the tightly knit, relatively homogeneous communities of the past in which patterns were passed down in a fixed way across generations. It has created the space for other sources of personal meaning, such as gender and sexual orientation, to play a greater role in people's sense of identity.

In today's world, we have unprecedented opportunities to create our own identities. We are our own best resources in defining who we are, where we come from, and where we are going. Now that the traditional signposts of identity have become less essential, the social world confronts us with a dizzying array of choices about who to be, how to live, and what to do, without offering much guidance about which selections to make. The decisions we make in our everyday lives—about what to wear, how to behave, and how to spend our time—help make us who we are. Through our capacity as self-conscious, self-aware human beings, we constantly create and re-create our identities, patterns exemplified by the gender transitions of Caitlyn Jenner and Coy Mathis.

Gender Socialization

As we learned in the case of Coy Mathis, gender influences every aspect of daily life. How a child dresses and speaks, the toys the child plays with, the activities he or she engages in, and how others view the child are all powerfully shaped by gender. Yet, the norms and expectations about how one "should" behave as a boy or girl must be, in part, learned. Agents of socialization play an important role in how children learn gender roles. Let's

now turn to the study of **gender socialization**: the learning of gender roles through social factors such as the family and the media.

REACTIONS OF PARENTS AND ADULTS

Many studies have been carried out on the degree to which gender differences are the result of social influences. Classic studies of mother-infant interaction show differences in the treatment of boys and girls even when parents believe their reactions to both are the same. Adults asked to assess the personality of a baby give different answers according to whether they believe the child to be a girl or a boy. In one experiment, five young mothers were observed while interacting with a six-month-old named Beth. They tended to smile at her often and offer her dolls to play with. She was seen as "sweet," having a "soft cry." The reaction of a second group of mothers to a child the same age, named Adam, was noticeably different. The baby was likely to be offered a train or other "male" toys to play with. Beth and Adam were actually the same child, dressed in different clothes (Will and Datan 1976).

The case of baby Storm Stocker vividly reveals how powerfully we adhere to subtle expectations about gender differences, even for infants. Storm's parents, Kathy Witterick and David Stocker, decided to keep their baby's gender a secret, informing only their midwives and two older sons of Storm's sex. They dressed Storm in gender-neutral clothing and refused to use gender-specific pronouns like *he* or *she* when describing their baby. They wanted to make sure that others did not treat their child in stereotypically gendered ways, such as those experienced by babies Beth and Adam (Will and Datan 1976). When announcing Storm's birth, Kathy and David sent out an announcement proclaiming, "We decided not to share Storm's sex for now—a tribute to freedom and choice in place of limitation, a standup to what the world could become in Storm's lifetime." This simple act was met by a firestorm of angry reactions from bloggers, media commentators, and even family and friends. The hostility directed toward Kathy and David shows just how deeply entrenched gender and gender socialization are even in the twenty-first century (Davis and James 2011).

GENDER LEARNING

Gender learning by infants is almost certainly unconscious. Before a child can accurately label itself as either a boy or a girl, it receives a range of preverbal cues. For instance, male and female adults usually handle infants differently. The cosmetics women use contain scents different from those the baby might learn to associate with males. Systematic differences in dress, hairstyle, and so on provide visual cues for the infant in the learning process. By age two, children have a partial understanding of what gender is. They know whether they are boys or girls, and they can usually categorize others accurately. Not until five or six, however, does a child know that everyone has gender and that sex differences between girls and boys are anatomically based.

The toys, picture books, and television programs with which young children come into contact all tend to emphasize differences between male and female attributes. Toy stores and department stores usually categorize their products by gender. Even toys that seem neutral in terms of gender are not always so in practice. For example, toy kittens and rabbits might be thought of as appropriate for girls, whereas lions and tigers

gender socialization

The learning of gender roles through social factors such as schooling, the media, and status.



In her "Pink & Blue" project, photographer JeongMee Yoon records girls' obsession with the color pink. What are the implications of the gender-typed packaging and color coding that we see in children's toys and clothing?

race socialization

The specific verbal and nonverbal messages that older generations transmit to younger generations regarding the meaning and significance of race.

are seen as more appropriate for boys. Similarly, boys are typically expected to dress up like ninjas or superheroes for Halloween, whereas girls are expected to dress up like princesses or other highly "feminine" characters.

But these stark gender divides are fading. For example, in 2015 Target, the nation's largest retailer, stopped dividing their toy sections into "boy" and "girl" sections and also discontinued the pink- and blue-colored walls previously used to draw attention to gender-typed toys. Recognizing that nearly every product for children is gender-typed, Target management also stopped dividing up other departments by gender, such as bedding. Boys and girls might be equally likely to want a *Star Wars* or a *Dora the Explorer* comforter (Luckerson 2015). The move was triggered, in part, by shoppers' concerns regarding the needless gender labeling of toys. Most famously, shopper Abi Bechtel noted a sign in Target's toy section differentiating "building sets" and "girls' building sets." The notion that gender-neutral toys are healthy for all children is rapidly spreading, with more and more manufacturers abandoning gender-typed colors and designs of their toys.

Similarly, children's books and television shows teach important, though subtle, lessons about gender. Scholarly analyses of children's books and TV shows find that girls are highly underrepresented. Sociologist Janice McCabe and colleagues (2011) examined nearly 6,000 books published from 1900 to 2000 and found that males are central characters in 57 percent of children's books published per year, whereas only 31 percent have female central characters. Although male characters (including male animal characters) were found in every book, only

one-third of children's books published in any given year featured central characters that were female.

Other studies have found that the activities of males and females in children's books also differ. A classic study by Lenore Weitzman and colleagues (1972) found that male characters in picture books engaged in adventurous pursuits and outdoor activities demanding independence and strength. When girls did appear, they were portrayed as passive and confined mostly to indoor activities. Girls cooked and cleaned for the males or awaited their return. Much the same was true of the adult men and women represented in the storybooks. Women who were not wives and mothers were imaginary creatures like witches or fairy godmothers.

More recent research suggests that things have changed somewhat, but that the large bulk of children's literature remains much the same. Fairy tales, for example, reflect traditional attitudes toward gender and the sorts of aims and ambitions girls and boys are expected to have. "Some day my prince will come," in versions of fairy tales from several centuries ago, usually implied that a girl from a poor family might

dream of wealth and fortune. Today, its meaning has become more closely tied to the ideals of romantic love. Even the popular *Twilight* series enchanted teenage girls with the romantic tale of high school student Bella Swan meeting her soul mate (and vampire) Edward Cullen. However, the popular animated film *Frozen* turned the romantic love story on its head when sisters Anna and Elsa declared that their sisterly love was just as important as their love for their suitors.

Gender socialization is very powerful, and gender-typed expectations are fulfilled and reproduced in everyday life (Bourdieu 1990; Lorber 1994).

RACE SOCIALIZATION

Scholars have long recognized the ways that we learn to be male or female, but how did you learn about your racial or ethnic heritage? Did your parents ever teach you what it means to be white, black, Asian, or Latino? Sociologists have recently explored the process of **race socialization**, which refers to the specific verbal and nonverbal messages that older generations transmit to younger generations regarding the meaning and significance of race, racial stratification, intergroup relations, and personal identity (Lesane-Brown 2006).

The research team of sociologist Tony Brown and psychologist Chase Lesane-Brown have examined the messages that parents teach and the effects of this socialization on children's lives. Their work rests on the assumption that while ethnic minority parents (especially black parents) must socialize their children to be productive members of society, just as white parents do, they also face an additional task: raising children with the skills to survive and prosper in a society that often devalues blackness. As part of race socialization, black parents also prepare their children to understand their heritage, their cultures, and what it means to belong to a racial group that has historically occupied a low and stigmatized status in the United States (Lesane-Brown 2006).

Understanding race socialization will become increasingly important for future cohorts of young people. In our increasingly global society, children and young people will need to develop the skills and capacities to negotiate multicultural contexts in their everyday lives (Priest et al. 2014). Parents, teachers, and other agents of socialization must also promote positive racial attitudes, counter negative attitudes, and enable effective responses to racism when it occurs. Although race socialization has historically focused on raising black children to fit in and get ahead in a racist world, scholars today recognize that white children, too, should be socialized to recognize and fight racism when they see it unfold (Priest et al. 2014).



Sociologists are interested in how children learn what it means to be a member of a particular racial group, especially one that is devalued.



CONCEPT CHECKS

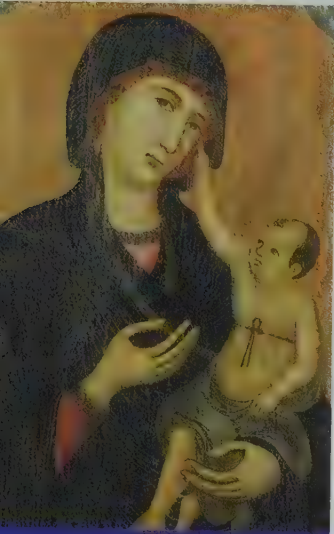
- 1 What is social reproduction? What are some specific ways that the four main agents of socialization contribute to social reproduction?
- 2 According to Mead, how does a child develop a social self?
- 3 What are the four stages of cognitive development according to Piaget?
- 4 How do the media contribute to gender role socialization?
- 5 What are the main components of race socialization?



Learn the various stages of the life course, and see the similarities and differences among different cultures and historical periods.

life course

The various transitions and stages people experience during their lives.



This *Madonna and Child*, painted in the thirteenth century by Duccio di Buoninsegna, depicts the infant Jesus with a mature face. Until recently, children in Western society were viewed as little adults.



What Are the Five Major Stages of the Life Course?

The transitions that individuals pass through during their lives seem at first glance to be biologically fixed—from childhood to adulthood and eventually to death. But the stages of the human **life course** are social as well as biological in nature. They are influenced by culture and by the material circumstances of people's lives. For example, in the modern West, death is usually thought of in relation to old age because most people enjoy a life span of seventy-five years or more. In traditional societies of the past, however, more people died at younger ages than survived to old age.

Childhood

To people living in modern societies, childhood is a clear and distinct stage of life. Children are different from babies or toddlers; childhood is the stage between infancy and adolescence. Yet the concept of childhood, like so many other aspects of social life today, has come into being only over the past two or three centuries. In earlier societies, the young moved directly from a lengthy infancy into working roles within the community. French historian Philippe Ariès (1965) argued that “childhood,” conceived of as a separate phase of development, did not exist in medieval times. In the paintings of medieval Europe, children are portrayed as little adults, with mature faces and the same style of dress as their elders.

Until the early twentieth century, in the United States and most other Western countries, children were put to work at what now seems a very young age. There are countries in the world today, in fact, where young children are engaged in full-time work, sometimes in physically demanding circumstances (for example, in coal mines). The ideas that children have distinctive rights and that the use of child labor is morally wrong are quite recent developments.

Because of the prolonged period of childhood that we recognize today, modern societies are in some respects more child centered than traditional ones. Parents are viewed as the sole protectors of their children, and parents who behave in ways that may be considered hurtful to their children are judged harshly. For instance, not all the parents at Eagleside Side Elementary were supportive of Kathryn and Jeffrey Mathis's decision to allow Coy to identify as a girl.

It seems possible that as a result of changes currently occurring in modern societies, the separate character of childhood is diminishing once more. Some observers have suggested that children now grow up too fast. Even small children may watch the same television programs as adults, thereby becoming much more familiar early on with the adult world than preceding generations did.

The Teenager

The idea of the “teenager,” so familiar to us today, also didn't exist until recently. The biological changes involved in puberty (the point at which a person becomes capable of adult sexual activity and reproduction) are universal. Yet in many cultures, these physical changes do not produce the degree of emotional turmoil and uncertainty often found among teens

in modern societies. In cultures that celebrate “rites of passage,” or distinct ceremonies that signal a person’s transition to adulthood, the process of psychosexual development generally seems easier to negotiate. Adolescents in such societies have less to “unlearn” because the pace of change is slower. There is a time when children in Western societies are required to be children no longer: to put away their toys and break with childish pursuits. In traditional cultures, where children are already working alongside adults, this process of unlearning is normally much less jarring.

In Western societies, teenagers are betwixt and between, navigating the often complicated space between childhood and adulthood: Pop culture promotes sexy clothing among teens, yet frowns upon teenage sexual activity. Teens may wish to go to work and earn money as adults do, but they are legally required to stay in school.

Young Adulthood

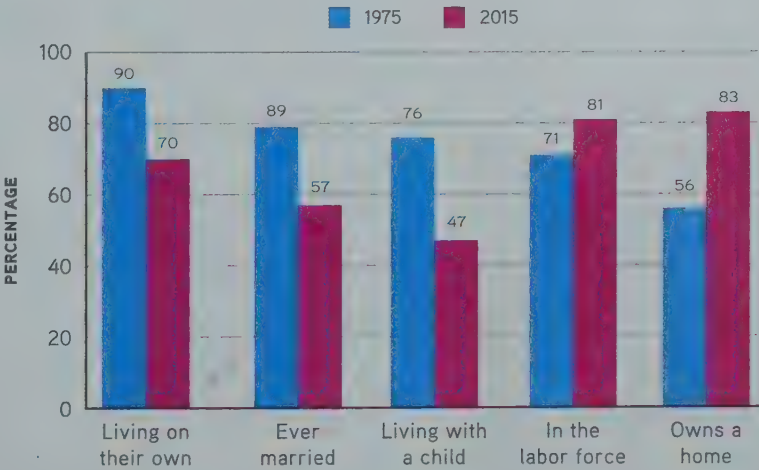
Young adulthood is a stage of exploration, often before one settles on a permanent job, spouse, or home. This stage of personal and sexual development is unique to modern societies (Furstenberg et al. 2004). Particularly among more affluent groups, people in their early twenties are taking the time to travel; to explore sexual, political, and religious affiliations; to try out different careers; and to date and live with several romantic partners before eventually marrying. The importance of this postponement of the responsibilities of full adulthood is likely to increase, given the extended period of education many people now undergo.

Although it is difficult to pinpoint precisely when one makes the “transition to adulthood,” one team of researchers identified five benchmarks of adulthood: leaving one’s parents’ home, finishing school, getting married, having a child, and achieving financial independence. In 1960, fully 65 percent of men and 77 percent of women had achieved all five benchmarks by age thirty. By contrast, only 25 percent of men and 39 percent of women had done so in 2010 (Furstenberg and Kennedy 2013; Furstenberg et al. 2004). These statistics clearly show that the transition to adulthood is being delayed today and that some benchmarks historically considered as signifiers of adulthood, such as becoming a parent, may be less central to one’s identity as an adult in the twenty-first century (Figure 3.1).

Midlife or “Middle Age”

Most young adults in the West today can look forward to a life stretching right through to old age. In premodern times, few could anticipate such a future with much confidence. Death

FIGURE 3.1
Thirty-Year-Olds: 1975 vs. 2015



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2016b

through sickness or injury was much more frequent among all age groups than it is today. Given these advances in life expectancy, a “new” life course stage has been recognized in the twentieth century: midlife, or middle age (Cohen 2012). Midlife, the stage between young adulthood and old age, is generally described as the years between ages forty-five and sixty-five.

Midlife is distinct from other life course stages in that there is not an “official” or legal age of entry. For example, American youth become legal adults at age eighteen, whereas age sixty-five is generally believed to signify the transition to old age and the receipt of retirement benefits. One’s entry to midlife, by contrast, tends to be signified by the social roles one adopts (or relinquishes). While some scholars believe that menopause, or the loss of reproductive potential, signals women’s transition to midlife, others believe that for both men and women, midlife is marked by transitions such as the “empty nest” stage (when children leave the family home).

Midlife is also a psychological turning point where men and women may assess their past choices and accomplishments and make new choices that prepare them for the second half of life. Keeping a forward-looking outlook in middle age has taken on a particular importance in modern societies. Most people do not expect to be doing the same thing their whole lives, as was the case for the majority in traditional cultures. For example, women who spent their early adulthood raising a family and whose children have left home may feel free to pursue new personal goals, whereas men who stayed at financially stable jobs while supporting their young families may choose to pursue their earlier career dreams (Lachman 2001).

Later Life or “Old Age”

In traditional societies, older people were normally accorded a great deal of respect and had a say over matters of importance to the community. Within families, the authority of both men and women typically increased with age. In industrialized societies, by contrast, older people tend to lack authority within both the family and the wider social community. Having retired from the labor force, they may be poorer than ever before in their lives. At the same time, there has been a great increase in the proportion of the population over age sixty-five. In 1900, only about one in twenty-five people in the United States was sixty-five or older. In 2015, about one in every seven Americans was over sixty-five, and this proportion is projected to rise to one in five (21 percent) by the year 2040 (Administration on Aging 2015). The same trend is found in all industrially advanced countries.

Surviving until the life course stage of “elder” in a traditional culture often marked the pinnacle of the status an individual could achieve. In modern societies, retirement tends to bring the opposite consequences. No longer living with their children and often having retired from paid work, some older people find it difficult to make the final period of their life rewarding. It used to be thought that those who successfully cope with old age do so by turning to their inner resources, becoming less interested in the material rewards that social life has to offer. Although this may often be true, it seems likely that in a society in which many are physically healthy in old age, an outward-looking view will become more and more prevalent. Those in retirement might find renewal in what has been called the “third age,” in which a new phase of education begins. *

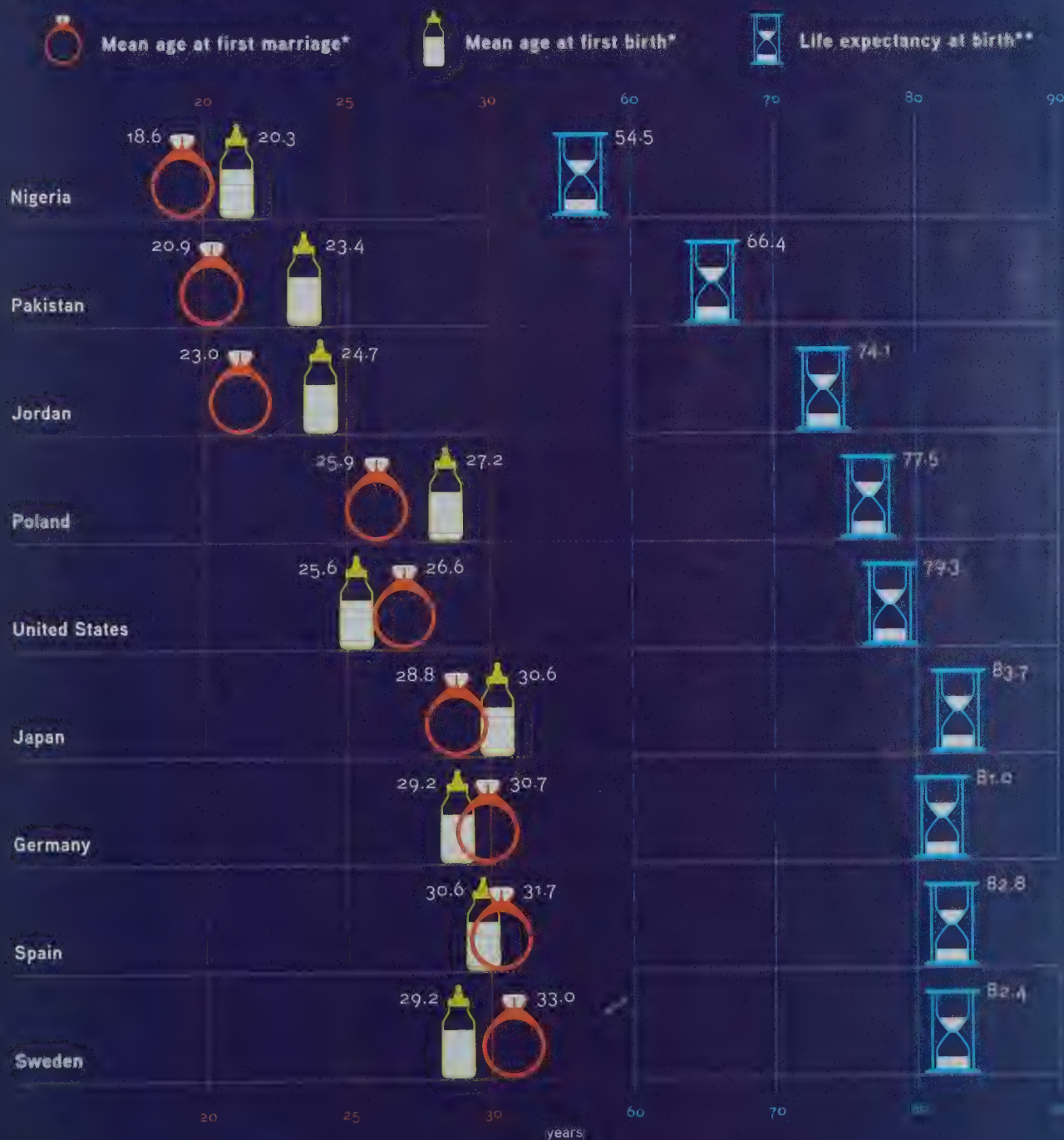
CONCEPT CHECKS

What is meant by the term *life course*?

What are the five stages of the life course, and what are some defining features of each stage?

Life Course Transitions

Individuals pass through a number of key transitions during the course of their lives. The transition to adulthood, often indicated by benchmarks such as getting married and having children, is being delayed today, especially in high-income countries. In many northern and western European nations, young adults have their first child before marriage while cohabitating relationships.



*Mean age of women

**Life expectancy at birth is for both sexes in 2015

Sources: UNDESA 2014; UNECE 2014; OECD 2016

How Do People Age?

Understand that aging is a combination of biological, psychological, and social processes. Consider key theories of aging, particularly those that focus on how society shapes the social roles of older people and that emphasize aspects of age stratification.

Of all the life course stages that sociologists study, older adults are the group of greatest interest to policymakers. Why? Older adults, or individuals age sixty-five or older, are the most rapidly growing segment of the U.S. population (Figure 3.2); as such, they will create new challenges for American society. In 2014, 46 million Americans were sixty-five or older (15 percent of the U.S. population), including 6 million over age eighty-five (Administration on Aging 2015). Growing old can be a fulfilling and rewarding experience, or it can be filled with physical distress and social isolation. For most older Americans, the experience of aging lies somewhere in between. In this section, we delve into the meaning of being old and look at the ways in which people adapt to growing old, at least in the eyes of sociologists.

aging

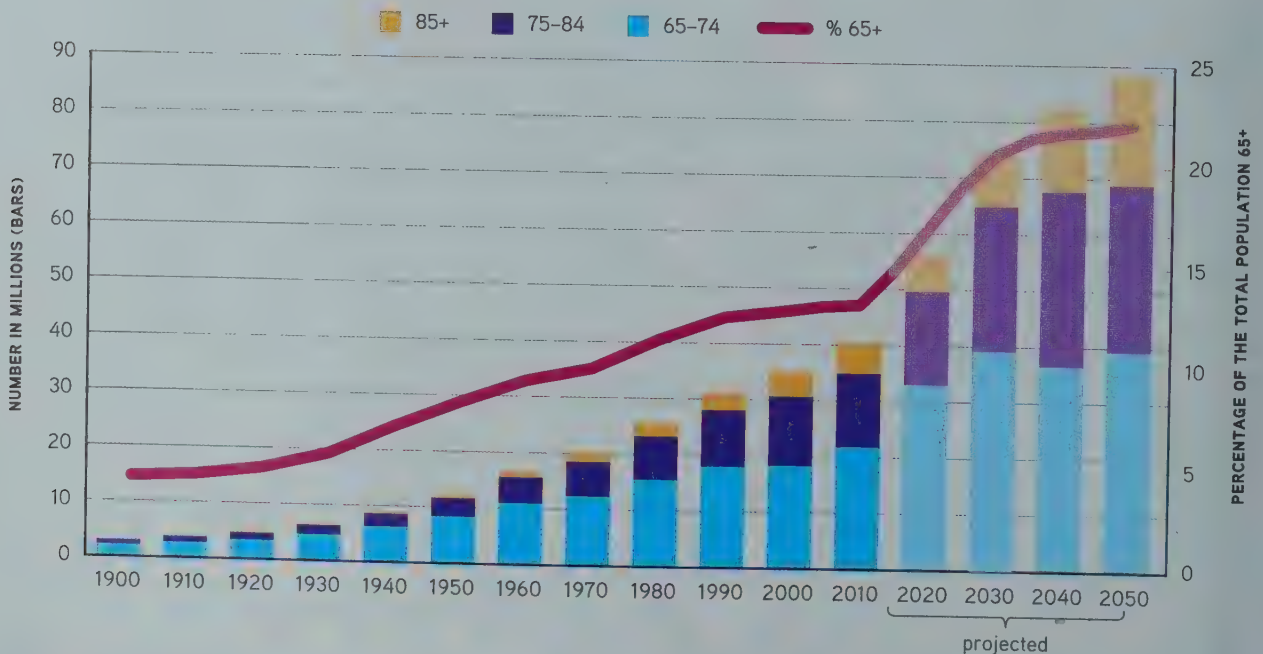
The combination of biological, psychological, and social processes that affect people as they grow older.

The Meanings of “Age”

What does it mean to age? **Aging** can be defined as the combination of biological, psychological, and social processes that affect people as they grow older (Abeles and Riley 1987; Atchley 2000; Riley et al. 1988). These three processes suggest the metaphor of three different, although interrelated, developmental “clocks”: (1) a biological one, which refers to

FIGURE 3.2

Growth of the Elderly Population in the U.S. by Age Group, 1900-2050



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2010e

the physical body; (2) a psychological one, which refers to the mind and mental capabilities; and (3) a social one, which refers to cultural norms, values, and role expectations having to do with age. Our notions about the meaning of age are rapidly changing, both because recent research is dispelling many myths about aging and because advances in nutrition and health have enabled many people to live longer, healthier lives than ever before.

Growing Old: Trends and Competing Sociological Explanations

Social gerontologists, or social scientists who study aging, have offered a number of theories regarding the nature of aging in U.S. society. Some of the earliest theories emphasized individual adaptation to changing social roles as a person grows older. Later theories focused on how society shapes the social roles of older adults, often in inequitable ways. The most recent theories have been more multifaceted, focusing on the ways in which older persons actively create their lives within specific institutional contexts (Hendricks 1992).

THE FIRST GENERATION OF THEORIES: FUNCTIONALISM

The earliest theories of aging reflected the functionalist approach that was dominant in sociology during the 1950s and 1960s. They emphasized how individuals adjusted to changing social roles as they aged and how those roles were useful to society. The earliest theories often assumed that aging brings with it physical and psychological decline and that changing social roles have to take this decline into account (Hendricks 1992).

Talcott Parsons, one of the most influential functionalist theorists of the 1950s, argued that U.S. society needs to find roles for older persons consistent with advanced age. He expressed concern that the United States, with its emphasis on youth and its avoidance of death, had failed to provide roles that adequately drew on the potential wisdom and maturity of its older citizens. Moreover, given the graying of U.S. society that was evident even in Parsons's time, he believed that this failure could well lead to older people becoming discouraged and alienated from society. To achieve a "healthy maturity," Parsons (1960) argued, older adults need to adjust psychologically to their changed circumstances, while society needs to redefine the social roles of older persons. Their former roles (such as work) have to be abandoned, while new forms of productive activity (such as volunteer service) need to be identified.

Parsons's ideas set the foundation for **disengagement theory**, the notion that it is functional for society to remove people from their traditional roles when they become older, thereby freeing up those roles for others (Cumming and Henry 1961; Estes, Binney, and Culbertson 1992). According to this perspective, given the increasing frailty, illness, and dependency of older people, it becomes increasingly dysfunctional for them to occupy traditional social roles they are no longer capable of adequately fulfilling. Older adults, therefore, should retire from their jobs, pull back from civic life, and eventually withdraw from other activities as well. Disengagement is assumed to be functional for the larger society because it opens up roles for younger people, who presumably will carry them out with fresh energy and new skills. Disengagement is also assumed to be functional for older persons because it enables them to take on less taxing roles consistent with their advancing age and declining health.



Most social gerontologists agree that older adults should remain engaged in their work and social roles for as long as they are able. Rewarding activities such as volunteer work can enhance health and well-being in later life.



social gerontologists

Social scientists who study older adults and life-course influences on aging processes.

disengagement theory

A functionalist theory of aging that holds that it is functional for society to remove people from their traditional roles when they become elderly, thereby freeing up those roles for others.

Although there is some intuitive appeal to disengagement theory, the idea that older people should completely disengage from the larger society is based on the outdated stereotype that old age involves frailty and dependence. As a result, no sooner did the theory appear than these very assumptions were challenged, often by some of the theory's original proponents (Cumming 1963, 1975; Hendricks 1992; Henry 1965; Hochschild 1975; Maddox 1965, 1970). These challenges gave rise to two distinct yet related functionalist theories of aging, which drew conclusions quite opposite to those of disengagement theory: activity and continuity theories.

activity theory

A functionalist theory of aging that maintains that busy, engaged people are more likely to lead fulfilling and productive lives.

continuity theory

Theoretical perspective on aging that specifies that older adults fare best when they participate in activities consistent with their personalities, preferences, and activities from earlier in life.

social conflict theories of aging

Arguments that emphasize the ways in which the larger social structure helps to shape the opportunities available to older adults. Unequal opportunities are seen as creating the potential for conflict.

According to **activity theory**, people who are busy leading fulfilling and productive lives can be functional for society. The guiding assumption is that an active individual is much more likely to remain healthy, alert, and socially useful. In this view, people should remain engaged in their work and other social roles as long as they are capable of doing so. If a time comes when a particular role becomes too difficult or taxing, then other roles can be sought—for example, volunteer work in the community.

Activity theory finds support in research showing that continued activity well into old age—whether volunteer work, paid employment, hobbies, or visits with friends and family—is associated with good mental and physical health (Birren and Bengtson 1988; Rowe and Kahn 1987; Schaie 1983). Yet critics observe that not all activities are equally valuable, giving rise to **continuity theory**. This theory specifies that older adults fare best when they participate in activities that are consistent with their personalities, preferences, and activities from earlier in life (Atchley 1989). For instance, a retired elementary school teacher may find volunteering at a local elementary school to be much more satisfying than playing bingo at a local community center.

Critics of functionalist theories of aging argue that these theories emphasize the need for older adults to adapt to existing conditions, either by disengaging from socially useful roles or by actively pursuing them, but that they do not question whether the circumstances faced by older adults are just. In response to this critique, another group of theorists arose—those growing out of the social conflict tradition (Hendricks 1992).

THE SECOND GENERATION OF THEORIES: SOCIAL CONFLICT

Unlike their predecessors, who emphasized the ways that older adults could be integrated into the larger society, the second generation of theorists focused on sources of **social conflict** between older persons and society (Hendricks 1992). Like other theorists who were studying social conflict in U.S. society during the 1970s and early 1980s, these theorists stressed the ways in which the larger social structure helped shape the opportunities available to older persons; unequal opportunities were seen as creating the potential for conflict.

According to this view, many of the problems of aging—such as poverty, poor health, and inadequate health care—are systematically produced by the routine operation of social institutions. A capitalist society, the reasoning goes, favors those who are most economically powerful. While there are certainly some older adults who have “made it” and are set for life, many have not—and these people must fight to get even a meager share of society’s scarce resources. Among persons ages 65 and older, those who fare worst tend to include women, low-income people, and ethnic minorities (Atchley 2000; Estes 1986, 1991; Hendricks 1992; Hendricks and Hendricks 1986). For example, poverty rates among older adults have plummeted over the past sixty years, with roughly 9 percent of older adults living in poverty today, compared with 35 percent in 1959 (DeNavas-Walt

Apps for Successful Aging

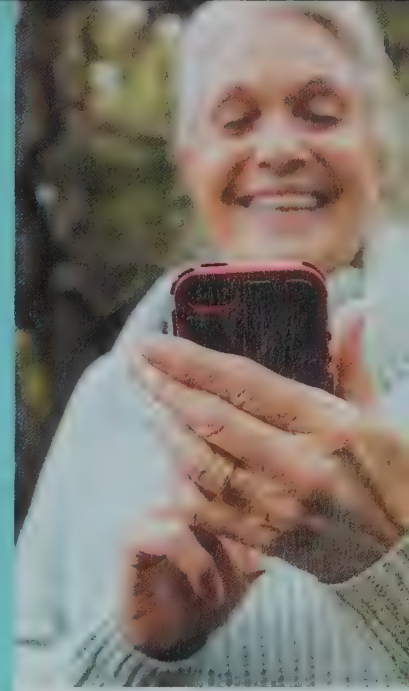
Apps might be thought of as “kid’s stuff.” Older adults, by contrast, are often seen as confused or stymied by technology. Yet in recent years, gerontologists have teamed up with IT experts to develop apps to help foster successful aging. Rather than assuming that older adults’ fading eyesight will render smartphones useless, or that their increasingly arthritic hands can’t type into a small keyboard, app developers are innovating by adapting their programs to the needs and capacities of older adults. While technology is often maligned as a force that is undermining human contact and connectedness, for older adults technology may be the very thing that facilitates their social integration and helps them manage the physical realities of aging (Hall, Stellefson, and Bernhardt 2012).

Most older adults, even relatively healthy ones, rely on multiple medications every day—often to treat common symptoms like high blood pressure or high cholesterol. Yet taking medications daily can be a challenge, even for younger persons. Several apps have been devised to help older adults remember to take their medications. Without this app, some older adults may forget to take their meds altogether, while others might take their medication, then forget that they’ve taken it and take another pill, putting themselves at risk of an overdose. Apps like Pillboxie, designed by registered nurse Jared Sinclair, allow older adults (or their caregivers) to enter all their daily medications into their iPhone and receive regular reminders. When entering their pills, users indicate the size, shape, color, and form of their medication, making them easier for aging eyes to identify (Caldwell 2012).

Physical health concerns aren’t the only challenge facing older adults. Many may feel intellectually disengaged, as they exit the workforce and struggle to find new activities to round out their days. While games like “Words with Friends” might be viewed as a silly distraction for younger persons, these word-based games are praised by gerontologists as a way to keep older adults’ minds active, engaged, and nimble. Some apps are designed especially for older adults suffering from cognitive impairment or the early stages of dementia. For example, Clevermind is a voice-activated app that links older adults to brainteaser puzzles like card-matching memory games, weather and news sites, medical and nutrition information, and shortcuts to social networking sites that bring older adults in contact with their caregivers, children, and friends (Barry 2015).

Smartphones are often criticized for keeping people socially isolated, yet they can be critical to the social engagement of older adults. Although young people may take Skype for granted, it can be a lifeline for older adults. As Americans are increasingly geographically mobile, older adults may live miles, if not oceans, away from their children and grandchildren. Skype allows older adults to “watch” their grandchildren grow up, even if they have real face-to-face contact only once every several years (Lajeunesse 2013). In this way, smartphone apps are helping older adults to manage and thrive, even in the face of biological, social, and psychological aging.

Think about the biological, psychological, and social aspects of aging described earlier in this chapter. What kind of apps might you design to help older adults adjust to each of these distinctive aspects of the aging process?



From medication to mindfulness, apps can facilitate social integration and help manage the physical realities of aging.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What factors or processes should we keep in mind when studying aging or the meaning of being old? Why?
2. Summarize the three theoretical frameworks used to describe the nature of aging in U.S. society.
3. What are the main criticisms of functionalism and conflict theory?

Evaluate the experience of growing old in the United States. Identify the physical, emotional, and financial challenges faced by older adults.

life course theory

A perspective based on the assumptions that the aging process is shaped by historical time and place; individuals make choices that reflect both opportunities and constraints; aging is a lifelong process; and the relationships, events, and experiences of early life have consequences for later life.

and Proctor 2016). However, even today the poverty rate among older adults is as high as 40 percent among unmarried black and Hispanic older women (Carr 2010).

THE THIRD GENERATION OF THEORIES: LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVES

Life course theorists reject what they regard as the one-sided emphases of both functionalism and conflict theories, where older adults are viewed either as merely adapting to the larger society (functionalism) or as victims of the stratification system (social conflict). Rather, **life course theory** maintains that older persons play an active role in determining their own physical and mental well-being, while recognizing the constraints imposed by social structural factors.

According to this theory, the aging process is shaped by historical time and place; factors such as wars, economic shifts, and the development of new technologies shape how people age. Yet this perspective also emphasizes agency, where individuals make choices that reflect both the opportunities and constraints facing them. Yet the most important theme of the life course perspective is that aging is a lifelong process: relationships, events, and experiences of early life have consequences for later life.

What Are the Challenges of Aging in the U.S.?

Older individuals make up a highly diverse category about whom few broad generalizations can be made. For one thing, the aged population reflects the diversity of U.S. society that we've made note of elsewhere in this textbook: They are rich, poor, and in between; they belong to all racial and ethnic groups; they live alone and in families of various sorts; they vary in their political values and preferences; and they are gay and lesbian as well as heterosexual. Furthermore, like other Americans, they are diverse with respect to health: Although some suffer from mental and physical disabilities, most lead active, independent lives.

Race has a powerful influence on the lives of older persons. Whites, on average, live five years longer than African Americans, largely because blacks have much greater odds of dying in infancy, childhood, and young adulthood. Blacks also have much higher rates of poverty and, therefore, are more likely to suffer from inadequate health care compared with whites. As a result, a much higher percentage of whites have survived past age sixty-five compared with other racial groups. The combined effect of race and sex is substantial. In 2014, the life expectancy for a white woman was eighty-one years, compared to seventy-three years for a black man (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2016d).

Currently, 13 percent of the population ages sixty-five and older in the United States are foreign born (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2016a). In California, New York, Hawaii, and other states that receive large numbers of immigrants, as many as one-fifth of the population ages sixty-five and older were born outside the United States (Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics 2013). Most older immigrants either do not speak English well or do not speak it at all.

Integrating older immigrants into U.S. society poses special challenges: Some are highly educated, but most are not. Most lack a retirement income, so they must depend on their families or public assistance for support. Among those who arrived in the United States since 2000, 21 percent were living beneath the poverty line in 2012, over twice the rate of older people born in this country (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2013t). In 2012, 16 percent of foreign-born older adults were living below the poverty line in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2013t).

Finally, as people live to increasingly older ages, they are diverse in terms of age itself. It is useful to distinguish among different age categories of the 65+ population, such as the **young old** (ages sixty-five to seventy-four), the **old old** (ages seventy-five to eighty-four), and the **oldest old** (age eighty-five and older). The young old are most likely to be economically independent, healthy, active, and engaged; the oldest old—the fastest-growing segment of the age 65+ population—are most likely to encounter difficulties such as poor health, financial insecurity, isolation, and loneliness (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2011f). Not only are these differences due to the effects of aging, they also reflect cohort differences. The young old came of age during the post-World War II period of strong economic growth and benefited as a result: They are more likely to be educated; to have acquired wealth in the form of a home, savings, or investments; and to have had many years of stable employment. These advantages are much less likely to be enjoyed by the oldest old, partly because their education and careers began at an earlier time, when economic conditions were not so favorable (Treas 1995).

What is the experience of growing old in the United States? Although older persons do face some special challenges, most older people lead relatively healthy, satisfying lives. Still, one national survey found a substantial discrepancy between what most Americans under sixty-five thought life would be like when they passed that milestone and the actual experiences of those who had. We will next examine some of the common problems that older adults confront (see Chapter 7 for a discussion of poverty among older Americans) and identify the factors that put older persons at risk for these problems.

Health Problems

The prevalence of chronic disabilities among the older population has declined in recent years, and most older adults rate their health as reasonably good and free of major disabilities (Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics 2013). Still, older people suffer from more health problems than most younger people, and health difficulties often increase with advancing age. In 2014, half of all noninstitutionalized persons age sixty-five and older reported suffering from arthritis, 30 percent had heart disease, and 24 percent had experienced some type of cancer (Administration on Aging 2015).

In 2010, more than three-quarters of noninstitutionalized people over sixty-five considered their health to be “good,” “very good,” or “excellent”; slightly more than two out of three persons age eighty-five or older reported the same (Federal Interagency Forum on



A daughter helps her aging mother raise her right hand as she is sworn in as a U.S. citizen.

young old

Sociological term for persons between the ages of sixty-five and seventy-four.

old old

Sociological term for persons between the ages of seventy-five and eighty-four.

oldest old

Sociological term for persons age eighty-five and older.

More than three-quarters of noninstitutionalized older adults rate their health as "good" or better. Experts urge persons age sixty-five and older to "use it or lose it" when it comes to physical fitness.



Aging-Related Statistics 2013). It is not surprising that the percentage of people needing help with daily activities increases with age: Only one in ten persons between the ages of sixty-five and seventy-five report needing daily assistance, yet this figure rises to one in five for people between seventy-five and seventy-nine and to one in three for people between eighty and eighty-four. Half of all people over eighty-five require assistance (Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics 2013).

Paradoxically, there is some evidence that the fastest-growing group of the aged population, the oldest old (those eighty-five and older), tend to enjoy relative robustness, which partially accounts for their having reached their advanced age. This is possibly one of the reasons that health-care costs for a person who dies at ninety are about a third of those for a person who dies at seventy (Angier 1995). Unlike many other Americans, persons age sixty-five and older are fortunate in having access to public health insurance (Medicare) and, therefore, medical services. The United States, however, stands virtually alone among the industrialized nations in failing to provide adequately for the complete health care of its most senior citizens (Hendricks and Hatch 1993).

Nearly all (about 93 percent) of older Americans are covered to some extent by Medicare. But because this program covers about half of the total health-care expenses of individuals age sixty-five and older, 62 percent of older people supplement Medicare with their own private insurance (Smith and Medalia 2015). The rising costs of private insurance have unfortunately made this option impossible for a growing number of older adults. On average, older Americans paid nearly \$6,000 out-of-pocket for health care—an increase of 50 percent since 2004. Despite Medicare, health care costs still comprise 13 percent of older adults' total expenses (Administration on Aging 2015).

When older adults become physically unable to care for themselves, they may move into assisted-living facilities, long-term care facilities, or nursing homes. Only about 1 percent of people between age sixty-five and seventy-four are in a nursing home, a figure

that rises to 3 percent among people seventy-five to eighty-four, and to 10 percent for those over eighty-five (Administration on Aging 2015). Because the average (median) cost of a nursing home is now over \$77,000 a year (Genworth 2011), the nonpoor older people who require such institutionalization may find their lifetime savings quickly depleted. Nursing homes have long had a reputation for austerity and loneliness. However, the quality of most has improved in recent years, both because federal programs such as Medicaid help cover the cost of care and because of federal quality regulations. Still, living for many years in a nursing home or assisted-living facility was cited as a concern about growing old by over half of respondents, according to a recent national survey.

Even if the problems of social isolation, prejudice, physical abuse, and health declines affect only a relatively small proportion of all older persons, the raw numbers of people facing these challenges will increase as the large baby boom cohort enters into old age. The baby boom cohort refers to the 75 million people born between 1946 and 1964 in the United States; the oldest boomers turned sixty-five in 2011. This large population will present unforeseen challenges for government-funded programs such as Social Security and Medicare, while reinventing the very meaning of old age. The baby boom cohort is more educated than any generation that has come before it; American society will no doubt benefit by incorporating rather than isolating future cohorts of older adults and drawing on their considerable reserves of experience and talents.

Elder Abuse

Mistreatment and abuse of older adults may take many forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, or financial abuse; neglect; or abandonment (National Center on Elder Abuse 1999). Elder mistreatment is very difficult to measure and document. Older adults who are embarrassed, ashamed, or fearful of retaliation by their abusers may be reluctant to report such experiences. As a result, official prevalence rates are low. Worldwide, it is estimated that between 4 and 6 percent of older adults experience some form of abuse at home. The National Social Life, Health and Aging Project (NSHAP) is the first nationally representative population-based survey to ask older adults about their recent experiences of mistreatment. Laumann and colleagues (2008) found that 9 percent of older adults reported verbal mistreatment, 3.5 percent reported financial mistreatment, and less than 1 percent reported physical mistreatment by a family member. Women and persons with physical disabilities were most likely to report abuse.

It is widely believed that abuse results from the anger and resentment that adult children feel when confronted with the need to care for their infirm parents (King 1984; Steinmetz 1983). Most studies have found this to be a false stereotype, however. In the NSHAP study, most mistreatment was perpetrated by someone other than a member of the elder's immediate family. Of those who reported verbal mistreatment, 26 percent named their spouse or romantic partner as the perpetrator, 15 percent named their child, and 57 percent named someone other than a spouse, parent, or child. Similarly, 56 percent of elders who reported financial mistreatment said that someone other than a family member was responsible; of family members, though, children were mentioned most often while spouses were rarely named. Other studies show that when a child abused an aged parent, he or she was more likely to be financially dependent on the parent. The child may feel resentment about being dependent, whereas the parent may be unwilling

to terminate the abusive relationship because he or she feels obligated to help the child (Pillemer 1985).

Social Isolation

One common stereotype about older adults is that they are socially isolated. This is not true of the majority of older people: Four out of five older persons have living children, and the vast majority can rely on their children for support if necessary (Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics 2013). More than nine out of ten adult children believe that maintaining parental contact is important to them, including the provision of financial support if it is needed (Finley, Roberts, and Banahan 1988). The reverse is also true: Many studies have found that older parents continue to provide support for their adult children, particularly during times of difficulty such as divorce. Being geographically distant from family members does not seem to be a problem either. Among older adults who do not live with their child, approximately three-quarters live within a thirty-five-minute drive of at least one child (Lin and Rogerson 1995). This arrangement is exactly what most older adults want; studies repeatedly show that they prefer to remain independent and reside in their own homes (albeit near their children). In other words, they want “intimacy at a distance” (Gans and Silverstein 2006).

Future generations may suffer more from social isolation than older people do today. Changing patterns of family structure, including increases in divorce and a decline in remarriage, may mean that an increasing proportion of older people will live alone (Goldscheider 1990). In 2015, 36 percent of older women and 20 percent of men lived alone (Administration on Aging 2015). Women are more likely than men to live alone because they are more likely to outlive their spouse; they are also less likely than men to remarry following widowhood or divorce. While 70 percent of older men are married, the same can only be said of 45 percent of older women. Women are also more likely than men to be widowed. In 2015, 34 percent of older women and only 12 percent of older men were widowed (Administration on Aging 2015).

Part of the reason that older women are less likely than men to remarry is the highly skewed sex ratio among older adults. In 2014, there were 127 older women for every 100 older men; for those eighty-five or older, this ratio increases to 192 women for every 100 men (Administration on Aging 2015). The fact that women outlive men means that older women are more likely to experience problems of isolation and loneliness. These problems are compounded by cultural values that make growing old gracefully easier for men than for women. In U.S. culture, youth and beauty are viewed as especially desirable qualities for women. Older men, on the other hand, are more likely to be valued for their material success: Graying at the temples is a sign of distinction for a man, rather than a call for a visit to the hair salon. As a result, older divorced or widowed men are much more likely to find a mate than older women who are living alone because the pool of eligible mates for older men is more likely to include potential partners who are many years younger.

The mere presence of social relationships does not ward off loneliness, however. An estimated 29 percent of older married persons report some symptoms of loneliness; this pattern is particularly common among persons whose spouses are ill, have a dissatisfying (or nonexistent) sexual relationship, or have infrequent or conflicted conversations (AARP 2012; de Jong Gierveld et al. 2009). As de Jong Gierveld and Havens (2004) noted, loneliness depends on one’s “standards as to what constitutes an optimal network of relationships.”

ageism

Discrimination or prejudice against a person on the basis of age.

That is, it's getting less support than we want rather than the objective number of social ties that matters when it comes to loneliness.

Prejudice

Discrimination on the basis of age, or **ageism**, is now against federal law. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA) protects job applicants and employees forty years of age and older from discrimination on the basis of age in hiring, firing, promotion, and pay. Nonetheless, prejudices based on false stereotypes are common. Older adults are frequently seen as perpetually lonely, sad, infirm, forgetful, dependent, senile, old-fashioned, inflexible, and embittered (Palmore 2015).

There are a number of reasons for such prejudice. The American obsession with youthfulness, reflected in popular entertainment and advertising, leads many younger people to disparage their elders, frequently dismissing them as irrelevant. The new information technology culture undoubtedly reinforces these prejudices because youthfulness and computer abilities seem to go hand in hand. In the fast-paced world of Twitter and dot-com businesses that seem to flourish and perish overnight, young people may come to view older adults as anachronistic.

These stereotypes are harmful, especially if they translate into discriminatory or ageist treatment. The actions of the aging baby boom cohort may help chip away at outdated and inaccurate notions of what old age is. Consider that folk music luminary Bob Dylan graced the cover of *AARP* magazine in 2013, the year he turned seventy-three. Just four years earlier, in 2009, Bruce Springsteen was featured on the cover; that same year, Springsteen and the E Street Band had the second-highest-grossing concert tour—topped only by the then-fifty-year-old Bono and his bandmates in U2.

Just as older adults are a vital part of popular culture, they are becoming an increasingly large presence online. In 2015, 58 percent of Americans sixty-five and older used the Internet, and more than a quarter (27 percent) of older adults use social networking sites such as Facebook (Perrin and Duggan 2015). Experts agree that baby boomers may play a critical role in further helping to dissolve stereotypes of the frail, senile older adult.

In many ways, older adults face some of the same problems experienced by Coy Mathis and Caitlyn Jenner, whom we met at the beginning of the chapter. Young boys are expected to be strong and tough—not “sissies.” Girls, but not boys, are believed to like pink, wear skirts, and behave in a feminine way. Likewise, older adults are stereotyped as being old-fashioned and out of it. Even though these two examples are very different—one involving the youngest stage of the life course, and the other involving the oldest—they both reveal the power of social expectations. However, social expectations can change over time, and as old “cohorts” or generations die out and are replaced with younger generations holding more contemporary beliefs, we might expect that stereotypes—whether based on age or gender—may slowly fade away.



The social meaning of age shifts over time. Gloria Estefan was fifty-six when she appeared on the cover of *AARP* magazine, an age now considered midlife.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. Contrast the young old, old old, and oldest old.
2. Describe at least three common problems that older Americans often experience.
3. What characteristics differentiate those older adults who are emotionally and physically well from those who face great distress in later life?

The Big Picture

Socialization, the Life Course, and Aging

Thinking Sociologically

1. Concisely review how an individual becomes a social person according to the two leading theorists discussed in this chapter: George Herbert Mead and Jean Piaget. Which of these two theories seems most appropriate and correct to you? Explain why.
2. Conforming to gender-typed expectations regarding clothing, hair, and other aspects of personal appearance is one of many things we do as a result of socialization. Suggest how the family, peers, schools, and mass media help establish the desire to conform with (or reject) typically "male" versus "female" expectations for appearance. Of the preceding, which force is the most persuasive? Explain.

Learning Objectives

How Are Children Socialized?

p. 75

Learn about socialization (including gender socialization), and know the most important agents of socialization.

What Are the Five Major Stages of the Life Course?

p. 86

Learn the various stages of the life course, and see the similarities and differences among different cultures and historical periods.

How Do People Age?

p. 90

Understand that aging is a combination of biological, psychological, and social processes. Consider key theories of aging, particularly those that focus on how society shapes the social roles of older people and that emphasize aspects of age stratification.

What Are the Challenges of Aging in the United States?

experience of growing old in the temporary United States. Identify the emotional, and financial challenges faced by older adults.

Terms to Know

socialization • social reproduction •
resocialization

gnition • social self • self-consciousness •
neralized other • sensorimotor stage •
eoperational stage • egocentric • concrete
erational stage • formal operational stage •
ents of socialization • nuclear family •
er group • social roles • social identity •
lf-identity • gender socialization •
ce socialization

e course

ing • social gerontologists • disengagement
eory • activity theory • continuity theory •
cial conflict • life course theory

ng old • old old • oldest old • ageism

Concept Checks

1. What is social reproduction? What are some specific ways that the four main agents of socialization contribute to social reproduction?
2. According to Mead, how does a child develop a social self?
3. What are the four stages of cognitive development according to Piaget?
4. How do the media contribute to gender role socialization?
5. What are the main components of racial socialization?

1. What is meant by the term *life course*?
2. What are the five stages of the life course, and what are some defining features of each stage?

1. What factors or processes should we keep in mind when studying aging or the meaning of being old? Why?
2. Summarize the three theoretical frameworks used to describe the nature of aging in U.S. society.
3. What are the main criticisms of functionalism and conflict theory?

1. Contrast the young old, old old, and oldest old.
2. Describe at least three common problems that older Americans often confront.
3. What characteristics differentiate those older adults who are emotionally and physically well from those who face great distress in later life?

4

Social Interaction and Everyday Life in the Age of the Internet

Who Owns a Smartphone?

p. 119



Notre Dame football star Manti Te'o was widely ridiculed when news broke that Lennay Kekua, his girlfriend of nearly a year, never existed. Kekua, constructed as part of an elaborate "catfishing" hoax by an acquaintance of Te'o's, existed only on social media.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

What is social interaction?

Familiarize yourself with the study of everyday life. Know the various forms of nonverbal communication.

How do we manage impressions in daily life?

Learn about the ways you carefully choose to present yourself to others in daily interactions—both face-to-face and virtually.

What rules guide how we communicate with others?

Learn the research process of ethnomethodology, the study of our conversations, and how we make sense of one another.

How do time and space affect our interactions?

Understand that interaction is situated, that it occurs in a particular place and for a particular length of time. See that the way we organize our social actions is not unique by learning how other cultures organize their social lives.

How do the rules of social interaction affect your life?

See how face-to-face interactions reflect broader social factors such as social hierarchies.



For most college students, romantic relationships are just as important as their schoolwork. In the 1950s and 1960s, coeds might have met for the first time at a formal “mixer” and written long heartfelt letters to each other during their summer months spent apart. In the 1980s and 1990s, a couple might have met while standing in line at a keg party and kept in touch over late-night phone calls during winter and summer breaks.

Today, many college students first meet their boyfriend or girlfriend in their dorm or through a mutual friend, but many also meet (and keep in touch) online, whether through meet-up websites and smartphone apps like Tinder or social networking sites like Facebook. But is it possible to maintain a meaningful romantic relationship with no face-to-face contact and only virtual exchanges with one’s partner? Manti Te’o thought so.

Seemingly overnight, Manti Te’o was transformed from a national sports star to a national joke. In 2012, Te’o was a star football player for Notre Dame. An All-American and finalist for

the Heisman Trophy, Te'o was a highly decorated college football player. But Te'o was more than a football star; he became a hometown hero when he led his team to victory on the same day in September 2012 that he learned of the deaths of both his grandmother and girlfriend. Despite his heartbreak, Te'o did not miss a single football game that season, telling reporters and teammates that he had promised his girlfriend, Lennay Kekua, that he would play regardless of what happened to her. Kekua, a Stanford University student, had been battling leukemia.

In January 2013, Te'o made headlines again. The sports blog Deadspin broke the shocking news that Te'o's girlfriend, Lennay Kekua, hadn't died. In fact, she had never existed at all. Kekua was entirely fictional, constructed as part of an elaborate Internet hoax by a distant acquaintance of Te'o's.

How was it possible that Te'o had maintained a nearly yearlong "relationship" with a fictional young woman? In a public statement, Te'o explained, "This is incredibly embarrassing to talk about, but over an extended period of time, I developed an emotional relationship with a woman I met online. We maintained what I thought to be an authentic relationship by communicating frequently online and on the phone, and I grew to care deeply about her" (ESPN 2013b). Te'o had previously lied to his family, teammates, and the press about meeting Kekua in person, afraid they would think he was "crazy." Was Te'o crazy, or was he simply trying to maintain a long-distance online relationship while also juggling his busy schedule as a student athlete? Is an exclusively online relationship really a form of social interaction?

Throughout most of human history, people have communicated mainly face-to-face. The U.S. Postal Service was established in the late eighteenth century, making it easier than ever to communicate through writing. Then, in the nineteenth century, the advent of the telephone revolutionized how Americans interacted with one another. In the last two decades, email, SMS, and social networking sites have once again revolutionized the way humans communicate. In this chapter, we will explore how each of these forms of communication—along with subtle, nonverbal aspects of communication—constitutes social interaction and carries important messages about how our society functions.

social interaction

The process by which we act with and react to those around us.

microsociology

The study of human behavior in contexts of face-to-face interaction.



Familiarize yourself with the study of everyday life. Know the various forms of nonverbal communication.

What Is Social Interaction?

Erving Goffman was a highly influential sociologist who created a new field of study focused on **social interaction**. In the 1950s and 1960s, Goffman wrote that sociologists needed to concern themselves with seemingly trivial aspects of everyday social behavior. His work on social interaction is just one example of the broader sociological subfield called **microsociology**. This term was conceived by sociologist Harold Garfinkel to describe a field of study that focused on individual interaction and communication within small groups; this subfield stood in contrast with earlier sociological work, which historically had examined large social groups and societal-level behaviors. Goffman, and eminent scholars such as George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, examined seemingly small exchanges, such as conversation patterns and the ways that social actors develop a shared understanding of their social context.

The study of social interaction reveals important things about human social life. For instance, think about the last time you walked down the street and passed a stranger, or shared an elevator ride with a stranger. Did you subtly try to avoid eye contact? Goffman

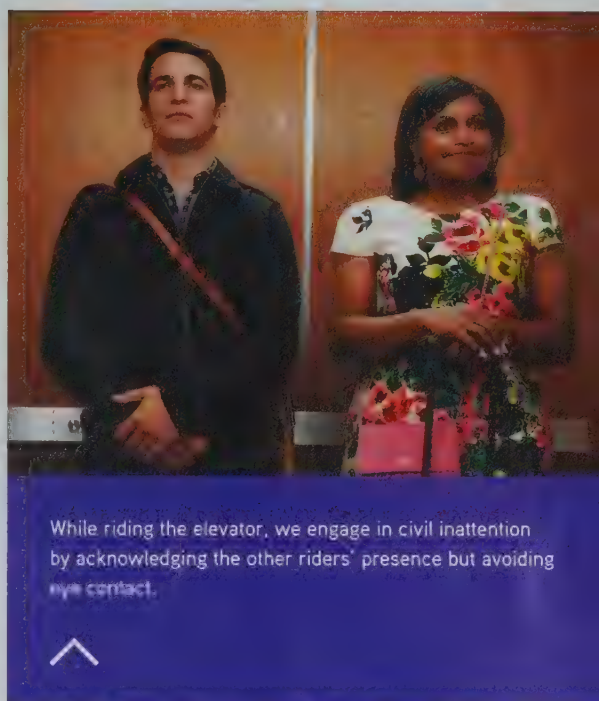
believed that such small gestures are meaningful and rich with messages about human interaction. When passersby—either strangers or intimates—quickly glance at each other and then look away again, they demonstrate what Goffman (1967, 1971) calls **civil inattention**. Civil inattention is not the same as merely ignoring another person. Each individual indicates recognition of the other person's presence but avoids any gesture that might be taken as too intrusive. Goffman argued that the study of such apparently insignificant forms of social interaction is of major importance in sociology and, far from being uninteresting, is one of the most absorbing of all areas of sociological investigation. There are three reasons for this.

First, our ordinary routines give structure and form to what we do. We can learn a great deal about ourselves as social beings, and about social life itself, from studying them. Our lives are organized around the repetition of similar patterns of behavior from day to day, week to week, month to month, and year to year. Think of what you did yesterday, for example, and the day before that. If they were both weekdays, you probably woke up at about the same time each day (an important routine in itself). You may have gone to class fairly early in the morning, making a journey from home to school that you make virtually every weekday. You perhaps met some friends for lunch, returning to classes or private study in the afternoon. Later, you retraced your steps back home or to your dorm, possibly going out later in the evening with friends.

Of course, the routines we follow are not identical from day to day, and our patterns of activity on weekends usually contrast with those on weekdays. If we make a major change in our life, like leaving college to take a full-time job, alterations in our daily routines are usually necessary, but then we establish a new and fairly regular set of habits again.

Second, the study of everyday life reveals to us how humans can act creatively to shape reality. Although social behavior is guided to some extent by forces such as roles, norms, and shared expectations, individuals also have **agency**, or the ability to act, think, and make choices independently (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). The ways that people perceive reality may vary widely based on their backgrounds, interests, and motivations. Because individuals are capable of creative action, they continuously shape reality through the decisions and actions they take. In other words, reality is not fixed or static—it is created through human interactions. However, as we shall see later in this chapter, even our most private or seemingly minor interactions are shaped by **structure**, or the recurrent patterned arrangements and hierarchies that influence or limit the choices and opportunities available to us.

Third, studying social interaction in everyday life sheds light on larger social structures, systems, and institutions. All large-scale social systems depend on the patterns of social interaction we engage in daily. This is easy to demonstrate. Let's reconsider the case of two strangers passing on the street. Such an event may seem to have little direct relevance to large-scale, more permanent forms of social structure. But when we take into account many such interactions, they are no longer irrelevant. In modern societies, most people live in towns and cities and constantly interact with



civil inattention

The process whereby individuals in the same physical setting demonstrate to each other that they are aware of the other's presence.

agency

The ability to think, act, and make choices independently.

structure

The recurrent patterned arrangements and hierarchies that influence or limit the choices and opportunities available to us.

people they do not know personally. Civil inattention is one of many mechanisms that give public life—with its bustling crowds and fleeting, impersonal contacts—its distinctive character.

When we published the first edition of this book more than twenty-five years ago, the study of face-to-face communication was a well-settled territory. Over the past decade or so, however, social interaction has been transformed due to the rise of the Internet. In this chapter, we not only review the traditional findings of the field, but we also ask how these findings must be modified in light of the rise of email, Twitter, smartphone apps, and social networking sites like Facebook. We will first learn about the nonverbal cues all of us use when interacting with one another. We then move on to analyze everyday speech—how we use language to communicate to others the meanings we wish to get across. Finally, we focus on the ways in which our lives are structured by daily routines, paying particular attention to how we coordinate our actions across space and time.

Nonverbal Communication

Social interaction requires many forms of **nonverbal communication**—the exchange of information and meaning through facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, and movements of the body. Nonverbal communication, sometimes referred to as “body language,” often alters or expands on what is said with words. In some cases, our body language may convey a message that is discrepant with our words.

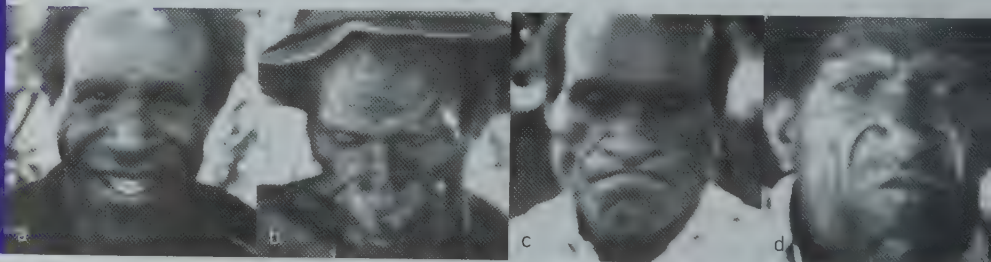
FACE, GESTURES, AND EMOTION

One major aspect of nonverbal communication is the facial expression of emotion. Paul Ekman and his colleagues developed what they call the Facial Action Coding System (FACS) for describing movements of the facial muscles that give rise to particular expressions (Ekman and Friesen 1978). By this means, they tried to inject some precision into an area notoriously open to inconsistent or contradictory interpretations—for there is little agreement about how emotions are to be identified and classified. Charles Darwin, one of the originators of evolutionary theory, claimed that basic modes of emotional expression are the same in all human beings and across all cultures. Although some have disputed the claim, Ekman's research among people from widely different cultural backgrounds seems to confirm Darwin's view. Ekman and W. V. Friesen carried out a study of an isolated community in New Guinea, whose members previously had virtually no contact with outsiders. When they were shown pictures of facial expressions conveying six emotions, the

nonverbal communication

Communication between individuals based on facial expression or bodily gestures rather than on language.

Paul Ekman's photographs of facial expressions from a tribesman in an isolated community in New Guinea helped test the idea that basic modes of emotional expression are the same among all people. Here the instructions were to show how your face would look if you were a person in a story and (a) your friend had come and you were happy, (b) your child had died, (c) you were angry and about to fight, and (d) you saw a dead pig that had been lying there a long time.





<

Hand gestures are one form of nonverbal communication. Unlike facial expressions, hand gestures vary widely by culture.

New Guineans identified the same emotions (happiness, sadness, anger, disgust, fear, surprise) we would.

According to Ekman, the results of his own and similar studies of different peoples support the view that the facial expression of emotion and its interpretation are innate in human beings. He acknowledges that his evidence does not conclusively demonstrate this, and it's possible that widely shared cultural learning experiences are involved; however, his conclusions are supported by other types of research. Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1972) studied six children born deaf and blind to determine to what extent their facial expressions were the same as those of sighted and hearing individuals in particular emotional situations. He found that the children smiled when engaged in obviously pleasurable activities, raised their eyebrows in surprise when sniffing at an object with an unaccustomed smell, and frowned when repeatedly offered a disliked object. Because the children could not have seen other people behaving in these ways, it seems that these responses must be innately determined.

By contrast, there are no gestures or bodily postures that are universally known and understood in all cultures. In some societies, for instance, people nod when they mean no, the opposite of Anglo-American practice. Gestures Americans tend to use a great deal, such as pointing, seem not to exist among certain peoples (Bull 1983). Similarly, a straightened forefinger placed in the center of the cheek and rotated is used in parts of Italy as a gesture of praise but appears to be unknown elsewhere (Donadio 2013).

Like facial expressions, gestures and bodily posture are continually used to fill out utterances as well as to convey meanings when nothing is actually said. All three can be used to joke, show irony, or indicate skepticism. The nonverbal impressions that we convey may inadvertently indicate that what we say is not quite what we really mean. Blushing is perhaps the most obvious example, but innumerable other subtle indicators can be picked up by other people. Genuine facial expressions tend to evaporate after four or five seconds. A smile that lasts longer could indicate deceit. An expression of surprise

that lasts too long may indicate deliberate sarcasm—to show that the individual is not in fact surprised after all.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

On the Internet, it is very difficult to capture dimensions of emotion that are present only with facial expression. At first, the need that Internet users felt to approximate facial gestures resulted in at least two common faces:

:) or :-)

As time passed, a need for greater subtlety resulted in other widely understood variations, such as this winking smiley face:

;-)

Email may have once been devoid of facial expression, but today the average email user may insert different emotions into a message. Strongly felt sentiments might be typed in all capitals, a gesture that is considered “shouting.” The strong need human beings feel to communicate with their faces has also led to other innovations, like Skype and Facetime. But in general, people who communicate over email or the phone lack the benefit of seeing the faces of their conversational partners as they speak. If they could, then perhaps Manti Te'o would not have been duped into thinking that Lennay Kekua was a real woman, rather than a virtual creation. This is especially true of text messaging, which strips away both faces and voices.

Why and how does this matter for human relationships and interactions? On the phone, whether it's a cell phone or landline, an individual will frequently talk for a longer stretch of time than he or she would in a face-to-face conversation. Unable to see the face of a conversational partner, the speaker can't as readily adjust what he or she is saying in response to clues from the listener that he or she “gets it.” Yet, the phone maintains at least some immediacy of feedback that email and text messages, to a lesser extent, lack. This is why in email disputes, people who are unable to make mutual adjustments in response to verbal or facial cues will end up saying much more—communicated in the form of long messages—than they would need to say in spoken conversation.

Which is best? Would you prefer to make your point via email or text message, over the phone or Skype, or in person? Using sociological insights like these might make you prefer electronic communication at certain times and face-to-face communication at others. For example, if you are dealing with a powerful person and want to get your thoughts across, you may want to avoid a situation in which he or she can signal with facial gestures that your idea is silly and thus inhibit you from making all your points. The power to signal with facial gestures is one of the things that people do to control the flow of a conversation. On the other hand, face-to-face communication gives you an opportunity to try out an idea on someone more powerful than yourself without going too far down the road if he or she is actually unreceptive. You probably would not want to conduct an important conversation via text message, instead limiting its use to minor or immediate issues.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What is microsociology?
2. What are three reasons why it is important to study daily social interactions?
3. What is nonverbal communication?
4. Describe several ways that individuals communicate their emotions to one another.
5. How do email and in-person communication differ?

How Do We Manage Impressions in Daily Life?

Goffman and other writers on social interaction often draw on imagery from drama and theater in their analyses. The concept of a social role, which we learned about in Chapter 3, is an important component of social interaction. *Roles* are socially defined expectations that a person in a given **status** (or **social position**) follows. For example, most children are socialized to conform to gender-specific behavioral expectations that are consistent with their biological sex. Roles can also be much more specific; for example, the teacher's role involves acting in specified ways toward his or her pupils. Goffman sees social life as though played out by actors on a stage, or on many stages, because how we act depends on the roles we are playing at a particular time.

Impression Management

People are sensitive to how they are seen by others (that is, their “audience”) and use many forms of **impression management** to compel others to react to them in the ways they wish. Although we may sometimes do this in a calculated way, usually it is among the things we do without conscious attention. When going on a job interview, a person will typically dress more formally and try to put his or her best foot forward; however, when going out with friends, he or she might dress down, use slang, and act in ways that are unlikely to impress a prospective employer.

A crucial observation of social interaction is that every human being possesses a self that is forever fragile and vulnerable to embarrassment or even humiliation. People are intensely attuned to what others think of them and how they are being viewed. That's part of the reason that we're so careful about what we post on Facebook and why we cringe if we're tagged by friends in unflattering or embarrassing photos. Seeking approval and respect, individuals want to “save face” at every turn. In social interactions, human beings tend to collaborate with others to make sure that the encounter ends without embarrassment for anyone. Social life, like a play, involves many players, and they must collaborate to make each scene work.

Think of examples from your own life when you had a choice of whether to collaborate with another person. If you're at a party and someone approaches you whom you don't want to talk to, you will likely try to end the interaction in a way that spares the other person embarrassment. It is highly unlikely that you would simply tell the person “Get lost!” rather than help him or her save face. This is because there is a norm of collaboration by which human beings try to move through life without embarrassing or humiliating others. When this collaboration does not occur, the interaction is notable for the participants.

The “pose” or “front” that we adopt depends a great deal on our social role, but no specific role dictates any particular presentation of self. A person's demeanor can be different depending on the social context. For instance, as a “student” you have a certain status and are expected to act a certain way when you are around your professors.



Learn about the ways you carefully choose to present yourself to others in daily interactions—some face-to-face and virtually.

status

The social honor or prestige that a particular group is accorded by other members of a society. Status groups normally display distinct styles of life—patterns of behavior that the members of a group follow. Status privilege may be positive or negative.

social position

The social identity an individual has in a given group or society. Social positions may be general in nature (those associated with gender roles) or may be more specific (occupational positions).

impression management

Preparing for the presentation of one's social role.

Focused and Unfocused Interaction

unfocused interaction

Interaction occurring among people present in a particular setting but not engaged in direct face-to-face communication.

focused interaction

Interaction between individuals engaged in a common activity or in direct conversation with each other.

encounter

A meeting between two or more people in a situation of face-to-face interaction. Our daily lives can be seen as a series of different encounters strung out across the course of the day. In modern societies, many of these encounters are with strangers rather than people we know.

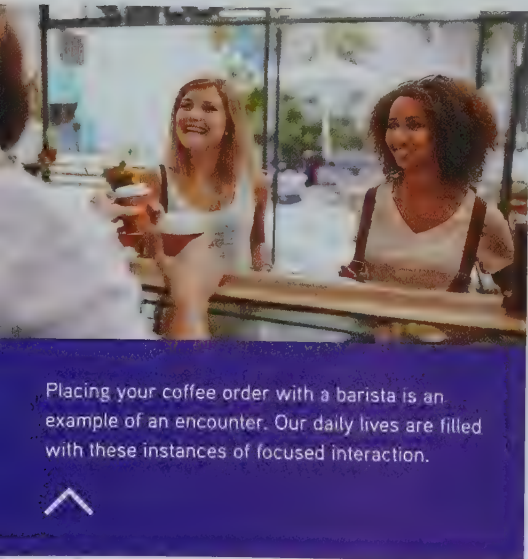
In many social situations, we engage in what Goffman calls unfocused interaction with others. **Unfocused interaction** takes place whenever individuals exhibit mutual awareness of one another's presence but do not engage in direct communication or conversation. This is usually the case anywhere large numbers of people are assembled, such as on a busy street, in a theater, or at a party. When people are in the presence of others, even if they do not directly talk to them, they continually communicate nonverbally through their posture and facial and physical gestures.

Focused interaction occurs when individuals directly attend to what others say or do. Except when someone is standing alone, say, at a party, all interaction involves both focused and unfocused exchanges. Goffman calls an instance of focused interaction an **encounter**, and much of our day-to-day life consists of encounters with other people—family, friends, colleagues—frequently occurring against the background of unfocused interaction with others present. Small talk, seminar discussions, games, and routine face-to-face interactions (with ticket clerks, waiters, shop assistants, and so forth) are all examples of encounters.

Encounters always need “openings,” which indicate that civil inattention is being discarded. When strangers meet and begin to talk at a party, the moment of ceasing civil inattention is always risky, because misunderstandings can easily occur about the nature of the encounter being established (Goffman 1971). Hence, the making of eye contact may first be ambiguous and tentative. A person can then act as though he or she had made no direct move if the overture is not accepted. In focused interaction, each person communicates as much by facial expression and gesture as by the words actually exchanged.

Goffman distinguishes between the expressions individuals “give” and those they “give off.” The first are the words and facial expressions people use to produce certain impressions on others. The second are the clues that others may spot to check their sincerity or truthfulness. For instance, a restaurant owner listens with a polite smile to the statements of customers about how much they enjoyed their meals. At the same time, he is noting how pleased they seemed to be while eating the food, whether a lot was left over, and the tone of voice they use to express their satisfaction.

Think about how Goffman's concepts of focused and unfocused interaction, developed mainly to explain face-to-face social encounters, would apply to our current age of Internet communication. Can you think of a way in which unfocused interaction occurs on Facebook and Twitter? In some small online communities, everyone can have a mutual awareness of who else is online, without being in direct contact with them. On sites like Twitter, people are constantly broadcasting status updates about what they're doing at that moment. These status updates make it possible for people in unfocused interaction to have even more control over how they are perceived than people who are merely in one another's presence. Instead of revealing their facial expressions or posture, which they may be unconscious of, people can carefully craft the message or tweet they wish to broadcast.



Placing your coffee order with a barista is an example of an encounter. Our daily lives are filled with these instances of focused interaction.

Audience Segregation

Although people cooperate to help one another “save face,” they also endeavor individually to preserve their own dignity, autonomy, and respect. One of the ways that people do this is by arranging for “audience segregation” in their lives. In each of their roles they act somewhat differently, and they endeavor to keep the roles both distinct and separate from one another. This means that they can have multiple selves. Frequently these selves are consistent, but sometimes they are not. People find it very stressful when boundaries break down, or when they cannot reconcile their role in one part of life with their role in another. For example, some college freshmen try to distance themselves from former classmates in order to carve out a new “college” identity that won’t be tainted by embarrassing stories from high school. Or, some people live very different lives at home and at work. For example, due to discrimination against gays and lesbians, someone who appears “straight” at work may live happily with a same-sex partner at home. Like all people who engage in audience segregation, they show a different face to different people. Audience segregation implicitly encourages impression management.

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT IN THE INTERNET AGE

The concept of “audience segregation” helps us understand some of the dilemmas of electronic communication. Some people maintain two different Facebook pages, one linked to family members or coworkers and another linked to friends and peers. Why might someone do this? Our Facebook pages are a strategy to “impression manage,” or to carefully and selectively portray an image of ourselves to the outside world. On your “professional” page, you might try to convey an image of a respectable student and employee by carefully curating the information and images you post. By contrast, on your personal page, you might post photos that present a more fun and carefree version of yourself.

Consider the social situation of a copied message. You write a message to a friend asking her whether she prefers to go to the early show or the late show. You also tell your friend that you have a new boyfriend whom you hope she will like. She replies and copies the other people who are thinking of going to the movie, many of whom you never intended to tell about the new romance. Suddenly, the audience segregation you had imagined has broken down.

In recent years, undergraduate students have posted pictures of themselves drinking at parties, or even naked, only to discover that future employers conducted web searches before making hiring decisions. Some students have even found themselves expelled from their colleges for posting inappropriate photos or comments on Facebook. An even more devastating example of blurring audiences is the case of sexting: A high school student may send a revealing photo of herself to her boyfriend, only to have him forward it to the entire school—whether out of cruelty or by mistake. Personal catastrophes like these occur frequently in the age of email and smartphones.



As they wait to board the subway, commuters engage in unfocused interaction. While they aren’t talking directly to one another, the riders are communicating through their posture and facial expressions.



CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1. What is impression management?
- 2. Compare and contrast focused and unfocused interaction.
- 3. Why do we segregate our audiences in daily life?

What Rules Guide How We Communicate with Others?



Learn the research process of ethnomethodology, the study of our conversations, and how we make sense of one another.

We can make sense of what is said in conversation only if we know the social context, which does not appear in the words themselves. Take the following conversation (Heritage 1985):

A: I have a fourteen-year-old son.

B: Well, that's all right.

A: I also have a dog.

B: Oh, I'm sorry.

What do you think is happening here? What is the relation between the speakers? What if you were told that this is a conversation between a prospective tenant and a landlord? The conversation then becomes sensible: Some landlords accept children but don't permit their tenants to keep pets. Yet if we don't know the social context, the responses of individual B seem to bear no relation to the statements of A. Part of the sense is in the words, and part is in the way in which the meaning emerges from the social context.

The most inconsequential forms of daily talk presume complicated, shared knowledge brought into play by those speaking. In fact, our small talk is so complex that it has so far proved impossible to program even the most sophisticated computers to converse with human beings. The words used in ordinary talk do not always have precise meanings, and we “fix” what we want to say through the unstated assumptions that back it up. If Maria asks Tom, “What did you do yesterday?” the words in the question themselves suggest no obvious answer. A day is a long time, and it would be logical for Tom to answer, “Well, at 7:16, I woke up. At 7:18, I got out of bed, went to the bathroom, and started to brush my teeth. At 7:19, I turned on the shower. . . .” We understand the type of response the question calls for by knowing Maria, what sort of activities she and Tom consider relevant, and what Tom usually does on a particular day of the week, among other things.

Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology is the study of the “ethnomethods”—the folk, or lay, methods—people use to make sense of what others do and particularly of what they say. We all apply these methods, normally without having to give any conscious attention to them. This field was created by Harold Garfinkel, who, along with Goffman, was one of the most important figures in the study of microinteraction.

Garfinkel argued that in order to understand the way people use context to make sense of the world, sociologists need to study the “background expectancies” with which we organize ordinary conversations. He highlighted these in some experiments

ethnomethodology

The study of how people make sense of what others say and do in the course of day-to-day social interaction. Ethnomethodology is concerned with the “ethnomethods” by which people sustain meaningful exchanges with one another.

Turning Away from Face-to-Face Interaction

How many times have you taken out a book and started reading it during a meal with friends or relatives? For most people, that would constitute an unacceptable breach of everyday etiquette. And yet, it has become completely routine to pull out a smartphone to read emails or text messages during an in-person interaction. What is the difference between reading a book and reading the messages on your smartphone? In each case, we seem to be distracted by something outside the conversation.

Until very recently, there was an expectation that people who engaged in face-to-face communication would maintain eye contact and even occasionally nod their heads while listening. While old-fashioned etiquette suggests that two or more people should be engaged in a continuous flow of focused interaction as they talk to one another, today it is increasingly acceptable for conversation to happen in a far less focused manner. Dozens of apps on the average smartphone can remove part of our attention while we are still in physical proximity to others with whom we are interacting. It is not uncommon for a person to look down and move from app to app while involved in a face-to-face interaction. A recent survey found that 89 percent of cell phone owners said that they used their phone—whether to read or send a message or take a photo—during their last social activity (Rainie and Zickuhr 2015).

What is truly new about interaction today is that people are involved in multiple conversations at one time, or they are following one story online while listening to another in person. Often, people send emails and texts with the expectation that conversations online will be as ongoing as face-to-face communication. Thus, people feel obligated to respond immediately online even if they are immersed in a face-to-face interaction.

Does using a cell phone while talking have the effect of ruining conversation? A recent study found that just the presence of a cell phone can inhibit our ability to connect with the people around us (Lin 2012). Younger users—often referred to as digital natives—often see nothing wrong with having one's attention in multiple places at the same time. They have grown up in a world in which it feels natural to interact with a cell phone in hand. They move effortlessly between face-to-face and online interactions. They also argue that having the Internet as a conversational resource raises the level and quality of interaction as they look things up that are relevant to the discussion.

Even if digital natives have a point—that they can process interaction just as well when they are multitasking—don't they have a moral imperative to look someone in the eye and make them feel valued? Or are such expectations purely social constructions of a particular historical era, which will fall by the wayside as the older generation passes on? Is it possible that as the human mind gets accustomed to simultaneously interacting online and in person, that the traditional moral claims on conversation will no longer feel reasonable?

Should that happen, will that have any enduring impact on human character? Sherry Turkle, a sociologist and clinical psychologist at MIT, has argued that our reliance on smartphones while we talk is having a detrimental impact on our capacity to put ourselves in the place of others—to experience empathy: "We suppress this capacity by putting ourselves in environments where we're not looking at each other in the eye, not sticking with the other person long enough or hard enough to follow what they're feeling" (Davis 2015).

Today it is not uncommon to simultaneously interact with people both face-to-face and online. In what other ways does technology affect the way we interact?





Meaningful communication among friends would be impossible without shared understandings of what is said and why.



he undertook with student volunteers. The students were asked to engage a friend or relative in conversation and to insist that casual remarks or general comments be actively pursued to make their meaning precise. If someone said, "Have a nice day," the student was to respond, "Nice in what sense, exactly?" "Which part of the day do you mean?" and so forth. One of the exchanges that resulted ran as follows. S is the friend; E, the student volunteer (Garfinkel 1963):

S: *How are you?*

E: *How am I in regard to what? My health, my finances, my schoolwork, my peace of mind, my . . . ?*

S: *(red in the face and suddenly out of control) Look! I was just trying to be polite. Frankly, I don't give a damn how you are.*

Why do people get so upset when apparently minor conventions of talk are not followed? The answer is that the stability and meaningfulness of our daily social lives depend on the sharing of unstated cultural assumptions about what is said and why. If we weren't able to take these for granted, meaningful communication would be impossible. Any question or contribution to a conversation would have to be followed by a massive "search procedure" of the sort Garfinkel's subjects were told to initiate, and interaction would simply break down. What seem at first sight to be unimportant conventions of talk, therefore, turn out to be fundamental to the very fabric of social life, which is why their breach is so serious.

Interactional Vandalism

We have already seen that conversations are one of the main ways in which our daily lives are maintained in a stable and coherent manner. We feel most comfortable when the tacit conventions of small talk are adhered to; when they are breached, we can feel threatened, confused, and insecure. In most everyday talk, conversants are carefully attuned to the cues they get from others—such as changes in intonation, slight pauses, or gestures—to facilitate conversation smoothly. By being mutually aware, conversants "cooperate" in opening and closing interactions and in taking turns to speak. Interactions in which one party is conversationally "uncooperative," however, can create tension.

Garfinkel's students created tense situations by intentionally undermining conversational rules as part of a sociological experiment. But what about situations in the real world in which people make trouble through their conversational practices? One study investigated verbal interchanges between pedestrians and street people in New York City to understand why such interactions are often seen as problematic by passersby. The researchers used a technique called **conversation analysis** to compare a selection of street interchanges with samples of everyday talk. Conversation analysis is a methodology that examines all facets of a conversation for meaning—from the smallest filler words (such as *um* and *ah*) to the precise timing of interchanges (including pauses, interruptions, and overlaps).

The study looked at interactions between black men—many of whom were homeless or addicted to drugs or alcohol—and white women who passed by them on the street.

conversation analysis

The empirical study of conversations, employing techniques drawn from ethnomethodology. Conversation analysis examines details of naturally occurring conversations to reveal the organizational principles of talk and its role in the production and reproduction of social order.

The men often try to initiate conversations with passing women by calling out to them, complimenting them, or asking them questions. But something “goes wrong” in these conversations because the women rarely respond as they would in a normal interaction. Even though the men’s comments are rarely hostile in tone, the women tend to quicken their step and stare fixedly ahead (Duneier and Molotch 1999).

The term **interactional vandalism** describes cases like these in which a subordinate person breaks the tacit rules of everyday interaction that are of value to the more powerful. Men on the street often do conform to everyday forms of speech in their interactions with one another, local shopkeepers, the police, relatives, and acquaintances. But when they choose to, they subvert the tacit conventions for everyday talk in a way that leaves passersby disoriented. Even more than physical assaults or vulgar verbal abuse, interactional vandalism leaves victims unable to articulate what has happened.

This study of interactional vandalism provides another example of the two-way links between micro-level interactions and forces that operate on the macro level. To the men on the street, the white women who ignore their attempts at conversation appear distant, cold, and bereft of sympathy—legitimate targets for such interactions. The women, meanwhile, may often take the men’s behavior as proof that they are indeed dangerous and best avoided. Interactional vandalism is closely tied up with overarching class, gender, and racial structures. The fear and anxiety generated by these mundane interactions help reinforce the outside statuses and forces that, in turn, influence the interactions themselves. Interactional vandalism is part of a self-reinforcing system of mutual suspicion and incivility.

How might interactional vandalism play out on the Internet? Can we think of ways in which less powerful people engaged in electronic communications undermine the taken-for-granted rules of interaction that are of value to the more powerful? The very existence of the Internet creates spaces in which less powerful people can hold their superiors accountable in ways they never were before. Think of all the blogs in which workers talk anonymously about their bosses or situations in which workers forward rude messages from their boss to other employees. Because of the Internet, powerful people are less able to segregate their audiences—treating some people poorly behind the scenes and treating others nicely in public.

The concept of “trolling” might be seen as an interactional mode that shares certain, though not all, aspects of interactional vandalism. A troll is someone who disrupts the taken-for-granted purposes of an online community such as a forum, message board, or blog. As such, he or she might post items that are deliberately provocative. Such provocations might have the effect of undermining the civility that is a foundation for the kind of communication envisioned by the site’s founders. Or the controversies raised by trolls can sometimes increase traffic to the site. Some readers of a comment posted by a troll might be lured further into the interaction while others might attempt to restore normal order by dismissing the actions of the troll.

To what extent is trolling an example of interactional vandalism of the kind found in face-to-face communication on the sidewalk? Like the poor black men who act sincere as they pretend not to understand that a two-second pause is a signal to close a conversation, trolls pretend not to understand certain assumptions of the conversational

interactional vandalism

The deliberate subversion of the tacit rules of conversation.

response cries

Seemingly involuntary exclamations individuals make when, for example, being taken by surprise, dropping something inadvertently, or expressing pleasure.

personal space

The physical space individuals maintain between themselves and others.



Cultural norms frequently dictate the acceptable boundaries of personal space. In the Middle East, for example, people frequently stand closer to each other than is common in the West.

world for the specific purpose of being disruptive. Trolls will write as if they are sincere members of the group who perhaps do not understand certain things, while at a deeper level they know precisely what they are doing. In interactional vandalism on the sidewalk, a less powerful person is subverting normal interaction in order to undermine the taken-for-granted control of someone in a subordinate position. In trolling, the parties are often anonymous, so it's not always possible to know what the actual power dynamics are.

Response Cries

Some kinds of utterances are not talk but consist of muttered exclamations, or what Goffman (1981) has called **response cries**. Consider Lucy, who exclaims, "Oops!" after knocking over a glass of water. "Oops!" seems to be merely an uninteresting reflex response to a mishap, rather like blinking your eye when a person moves a hand sharply toward your face. It is not a reflex, however, as shown by the fact that people do not usually make the exclamation when alone. "Oops!" is normally directed toward others present. The exclamation demonstrates to witnesses that the lapse is only minor and momentary, not something that should cast doubt on Lucy's command of her actions.

Expressions like "oops!" or "my bad" are used only in situations of minor failure, rather than in major accidents or calamities—which also demonstrates that the exclamation is part of our controlled management of the details of social life. This may all sound contrived and exaggerated. Why bother to analyze such an inconsequential utterance in this detail? Surely we don't pay as much attention to what we say as this example suggests? Of course we don't—on a conscious level. The crucial point, however, is that we take for granted an immensely complicated, continuous control of our appearance and actions. In situations of interaction, we are never expected just to be present on the scene. Others expect, as we expect of them, that we will display what Goffman calls "controlled alertness." A fundamental part of being human is continually demonstrating to others our competence in the routines of daily life.

Personal Space

There are cultural differences in the definition of **personal space**. In Western culture, people usually maintain a distance of at least three feet when engaged in focused interaction with others; when standing side by side, they may stand closer together. In the Middle East, people often stand closer to each other than is thought acceptable in the West. Westerners visiting that part of the world might find themselves disconcerted by this unexpected physical proximity.

Edward T. Hall (1969, 1973), who has worked extensively on nonverbal communication, distinguishes four zones of personal space. Intimate distance, of up to one and a half feet, is reserved for very few social contacts. Only those involved in relationships in which regular bodily touching is permitted, such as lovers or parents and children, operate within this zone of private space. Personal distance, from one and a half to four feet, is the normal spacing for encounters with friends and close acquaintances. Some intimacy of contact is permitted, but this tends to be strictly limited. Social distance, from four to twelve feet, is the zone usually maintained in formal settings such as interviews. The fourth zone is that of public distance, beyond twelve feet, preserved by those who are performing to an audience.

In ordinary interaction, the most fraught zones are those of intimate and personal distance. If these zones are invaded, people try to recapture their space. We may stare at the intruder as if to say, "Move away!" or elbow him or her aside. When people are forced into proximity closer than they deem desirable, they might create a kind of physical boundary: A reader at a crowded library desk might physically demarcate a private space by stacking books around its edges (Hall 1969, 1973).

Eye Contact

Eye contact is yet another aspect of social interaction that illustrates important social norms and reveals (and perpetuates) power differentials. As we saw earlier in this chapter, we are guided by a powerful norm that strangers should not make eye contact. Strangers or chance acquaintances virtually never hold the gaze of another. To do so may be taken as an indication of hostile intent. It is only where two groups are strongly antagonistic to each other that strangers might indulge in such a practice—for example, when whites in the United States have been known to give a "hate stare" to blacks walking past.

Studies show that we tend to rate a person who makes eye contact as more likable, pleasant, intelligent, credible, and dominant than a person exhibiting less or no eye contact. However, excessive eye contact may make an observer feel uncomfortable in certain situations. To look too intently might be taken as a sign of mistrust. Eye contact also reveals power relations. Looking at a colleague when speaking conveys confidence and respect. Prolonged eye contact during a debate or disagreement can signal you're standing your ground. It also signifies your position in the hierarchy. People who are high status tend to look longer at people they're talking to, compared with others. Culture also guides how we look at each other. In many Eastern and some Caribbean cultures, meeting another's eyes is considered rude. Asians are more likely than persons from Europe or the United States to regard a person who makes eye contact as angry or unapproachable (Akashi et al. 2013).

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What is interactional *ambiguity*?
2. Give an example of a response cry.
3. What are the four zones of personal space?

How Do Time and Space Affect Our Interactions?

Understanding how activities are distributed in time and space is fundamental to analyzing encounters and to understanding social life in general. All interaction is *situated*—it occurs in a particular place and has a specific duration in time. Our actions over the course of a day tend to be "zoned" in time as well as in space. Thus, for example, most people spend a zone—say, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM—of their daily time working. Their weekly time is also zoned: They are likely to work on weekdays and spend weekends at home, altering the pattern of their activities on the weekend days. As we move through the temporal zones of the day, we are also often moving across space as well: To get to work, we may take a bus from one area of a city to another or perhaps commute in from the suburbs. When we



Understand that interaction is situated, that it occurs in a particular place and for a particular length of time. See that the way we organize our social actions is not unique by learning how other cultures organize their social lives.

time-space

When and where events occur.

regionalization

The division of social life into different regional settings or zones.

analyze the contexts of social interaction, therefore, it is often useful to look at people's movements across **time-space**.

The concept of **regionalization** will help us understand how social life is zoned in time-space. Take the example of a private house. A modern house is regionalized into rooms, hallways, and floors (if there is more than one story). These spaces are not just physically separate areas but are zoned in time as well. The living rooms and kitchen are used most in the daylight hours, the bedrooms at night. The interaction that occurs in these regions is bound by both spatial and temporal divisions. Some areas of the house form *back regions*, such as the den or the basement, where people can be themselves without worrying about what other people think. For instance, some people may leave their old furniture and children's tattered toys in the den or family room and may be slightly less vigilant about "keeping up appearances" in rooms that guests seldom visit. By contrast, the living room may display lovely furniture, well-appointed decorations, and sophisticated coffee-table books, so that a family can convey to others that they are dignified and respectable. At times, the whole house can become a back region. Once again, this idea is beautifully captured by Goffman (1973):

On a Sunday morning, a whole household can use the wall around its domestic establishment to conceal a relaxing slovenliness in dress and civil endeavor, extending to all rooms the informality that is usually restricted to the kitchen and bedrooms. So, too, in American middle-class neighborhoods, on afternoons the line between children's playground and home may be defined as backstage by mothers, who pass along it wearing jeans, loafers, and a minimum of make-up.

The Internet is another example of how closely forms of social life are bound up with our control of space and time. The Internet makes it possible for us to interact with people we never see or meet, in any corner of the world. Such technological change rearranges space—we can interact with anyone without moving from our chair. It also alters our experience of time because communication on the Internet is almost immediate. Until about fifty years ago, most communication across space required a duration of time. If you sent a letter to someone abroad, there was a time gap while the letter was carried by ship, train, truck, or plane to the person to whom it was written.

Today, people still write letters by hand and send cards, of course, but instantaneous communication has become basic to our social world. Our lives would be almost unimaginable without it. We are so used to being able to watch our favorite TV show online or send an email to a friend in another part of the world, at any hour of the day, that it is hard for us to imagine what life would be like otherwise.

clock time

Time as measured by the clock, in terms of hours, minutes, and seconds. Before the invention of clocks, time reckoning was based on events in the natural world, such as the rising and setting of the sun.

Clock Time

In modern societies, the zoning of our activities is strongly influenced by **clock time**. Without clocks and the precise timing of activities, and their resulting coordination across space, industrialized societies could not exist (Mumford 1973). Today the measuring of time by clocks is standardized across the globe, making possible the complex international transport systems and communications we now depend on. World standard time was first introduced in 1884 at a conference of nations held in Washington, D.C. The globe was then

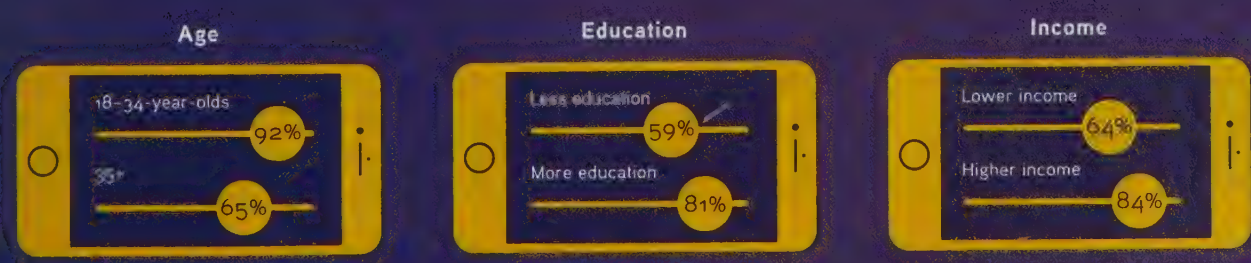
Who Owns a Smartphone?

While rates of smartphone ownership in developing countries have skyrocketed in recent years, there remains a significant digital divide, with richer countries reporting higher levels of ownership. Across the globe, an average of 43 percent of people report owning a smartphone, or a cell phone with Internet access.

Percentage of adults who own smartphones



Who Owns a Smartphone in the United States?



partitioned into twenty-four time zones, one hour apart, and an exact beginning of the universal day was fixed.

Fourteenth-century monasteries were the first organizations to try to schedule the activities of their inmates precisely across the day and week. Today, there is virtually no group organization that does not do so. The greater the number of people and resources involved, the more precise the scheduling must be. Eviatar Zerubavel (1979, 1982) demonstrated this in his study of the temporal structure of a large modern hospital. A hospital must operate on a twenty-four-hour basis, and coordinating the staff and resources is a highly complex matter. For instance, the nurses work for one time period in Ward A, another time period in Ward B, and so on, and are also called on to alternate between day- and night-shift work. Nurses, doctors, and other staff, plus the resources they need, must be integrated both in time and in space.

The Compulsion of Proximity

In modern societies, we are constantly interacting with others whom we may never see or meet. Almost all of our everyday transactions, such as buying groceries or making a bank deposit, bring us into contact—but indirect contact—with people who may live thousands of miles away. The banking system, for example, is international. Any money you deposit is a small part of the financial investments the bank makes worldwide.

Some people are concerned that the rapid advances in communications technology such as email, the Internet, and e-commerce will only increase this tendency toward indirect interactions. Our society is becoming “devoiced,” some claim, as the capabilities of technology grow ever greater. According to this view, as the pace of life accelerates, people are increasingly isolating themselves; we now interact more with our televisions and computers than with our neighbors or members of the community.

Now that email, social networking sites, online discussion groups, and messaging apps have become facts of life for many people in industrialized countries, it is important to ask, What is the nature of these interactions, and what new complexities are emerging from them? One study found that Internet use cuts into the time we spend socializing with people face-to-face, watching TV, and sleeping. Some researchers conclude that the substitution of email for face-to-face communication has led to a weakening of social ties and a disruption of techniques used in personal dialogue for avoiding conflict. Further, online communication seems to allow more room for misinterpretation, confusion, and abuse than more traditional forms of communication (Friedman and Currall 2003).

Many Internet enthusiasts disagree. They argue that online communication has many inherent advantages that cannot be claimed by more traditional forms of interaction such as the telephone and face-to-face meetings. The human voice, for example, may be far superior in terms of expressing emotion and subtleties of meaning, but it can also convey information about the speaker’s age, gender, ethnicity, or social position—information that could be used to the speaker’s disadvantage. Electronic communication, it is noted, masks all these identifying markers and ensures that attention focuses strictly on the content of the message. This can be a great advantage for women or other traditionally disadvantaged groups whose opinions are sometimes devalued in other settings (Pascoe 2000). Electronic interaction is often presented as liberating and empowering because people can create their own online identities and speak more freely than they would elsewhere. Further,



The G7 summit, a face-to-face meeting of the heads of governments of seven leading industrialized countries, is an example of what Molotch and Boden call the compulsion of proximity. Individuals, including world leaders, prefer face-to-face interactions because they provide richer information about how people think and feel.

people can communicate with those who don't share their geographic region; perhaps you have reconnected via Facebook with childhood friends who live hundreds of miles away.

Recent research shows that social networking may even enhance social integration and friendships (Hampton et al. 2011). A recent survey of teens and technology use found that 57 percent of teens between the ages of thirteen and seventeen had made new friends online (Lenhart 2015). Another survey found that persons who use social networking sites are more trusting, have more close relationships, receive more emotional and practical social support, and are more politically engaged than those who do not use such sites. For many people, online relationships are quite meaningful. Fully 40 percent of Facebook users say that they “friend” only those people whom they consider close confidants (Pew Internet and American Life Project 2013).

Who is right in this debate? How far can electronic communication substitute for face-to-face interaction? Sociologists Deirdre Boden and Harvey Molotch (1994) argue that there is no substitute for face-to-face interaction. They argue further that humans have a true need for personal interaction, which they call the “**compulsion of proximity**.” People put themselves out to attend meetings, Boden and Molotch suggest, because situations of co-presence provide much richer information about how other people think and feel, and about their sincerity, than any form of electronic communication. Only by actually being in the presence of people who make decisions affecting us in important ways do we feel able to learn what is going on and confident that we can impress them with our own views and our own sincerity. And as Manti Te'o learned, electronic communication in the absence of accompanying face-to-face communication may provide a platform for highly insincere and dishonest behavior.

compulsion of proximity

People's need to interact with others in their presence.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. How does time structure human life?
2. Is face-to-face interaction, or co-presence, an important aspect of human action? Why or why not?

How Do the Rules of Social Interaction Affect Your Life?

>
See how face-to-face interactions reflect broader social factors such as social hierarchies.

As we saw in Chapter 1, microsociology, the study of everyday behavior in situations of face-to-face interaction, and macrosociology, the study of the broader features of society like race, class, or gender hierarchies, are closely connected. We now examine a social encounter that you may experience frequently—walking down a crowded city sidewalk—to illustrate this point. The rules of social interaction can never be understood independently of categories like race, class, and gender. All of these categories shape the social interactions in our everyday life.

Women and Men in Public

Take, for example, a situation that may seem micro on its face: A woman walking down the street is verbally harassed by a group of men. In a study published as *Passing By: Gender and Public Harassment*, Carol Brooks Gardner (1995) found that in various settings, most famously the edges of construction sites, these types of unwanted interaction occur as something women frequently experience as abusive.

Although the harassment of a single woman might be analyzed in microsociological terms by looking at a single interaction, it is not fruitful to view it that simply. Such harassment is typical of street talk involving men and women who are strangers (Gardner 1995). And these kinds of interactions cannot be understood without also looking at the larger background of gender hierarchy in the United States. In this way we can see how microanalysis and macroanalysis are connected. For example, Gardner linked the harassment of women by men to the larger system of gender inequality, represented by male privilege in public spaces, women's physical vulnerability, and the omnipresent threat of rape.

The problem of street harassment was powerfully highlighted by a recent video demonstration in which an actress was filmed walking down the streets of New York City over the course of ten hours. Wearing jeans and a T-shirt and instructed by the director to have her nonverbal communication indicate lack of interest, the camera captured her being hit with a barrage of constant catcalls. Ultimately, the video went viral and helped bring massive public attention to the issue of street harassment.

Another recent controversy in Princeton, New Jersey, regarding a mall's billboard vividly displays that street harassment is more than just a micro exchange between one man (or a group of men) and one woman walking down the street. When MarketFair Mall was undergoing renovation, a sign was erected that said, "We apologize for the whistling construction workers, but man you look good! So will we soon, please pardon our dust, dirt and other assorted inconveniences." A passerby, Elizabeth Harman, saw the billboard and took offense, posting an image of the sign on Facebook. The image went viral, spurring an online petition, a series of angry blogs, and the eventual removal of the sign. As Harman, a philosophy professor, explained, "The issue of street harassment is really



Understanding a seemingly micro-level interaction such as street harassment through a macro analytical perspective, sociologists can analyze broader social issues such as gender inequality.

normalized in our society. . . . I didn't want my daughter to think that was a normal way to think about men yelling at women" (Karas 2012). Sociologist Gwen Sharp (2012) observed that street harassment (and the celebration of it through the MarketFair Mall sign) not only perpetuates the assumption that women are sexual objects to be admired but also that working-class men such as construction workers are sexist, uncouth, and unable to restrain their lustful thoughts.

Race and the Public Sphere

In his book *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (1990), sociologist Elijah Anderson noted that studying everyday life sheds light on how social order is created by the individual building blocks of infinite micro-level interactions. He was particularly interested in understanding interactions when at least one party was viewed as threatening. Anderson showed that the ways many blacks and whites interact on the streets of a northern city had a great deal to do with the structure of racial stereotypes, which is itself linked to the economic structure of society. In this way, he showed the link between micro interactions and the larger macro structures of society.

Anderson began by recalling Erving Goffman's description of how social roles and statuses come into existence in particular contexts or locations:

When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or bring into play information already possessed. . . . Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and they may expect of him. (Anderson 1990, p. 166)

Following Goffman's lead, Anderson asked, What types of behavioral cues and signs make up the vocabulary of public interaction? He concluded that the people most likely to pass inspection are those who do not fall into commonly accepted stereotypes of dangerous persons: "Children readily pass inspection, while women and white men do so more

slowly, black women, black men, and black male teenagers most slowly of all.” In demonstrating that interactional tensions derive from outside statuses such as race, class, and gender, Anderson shows that we cannot develop a full understanding of the situation by looking at the micro interactions themselves. This is how he makes the link between micro interactions and macro processes.

Anderson argues that people are streetwise when they develop skills such as “the art of avoidance” to deal with the vulnerability they feel to violence and crime. According to Anderson, whites who are not streetwise cannot distinguish among different kinds of black men (for example, middle-class youths versus gang members). They may also not know how to alter the number of paces to walk behind a suspicious person or how to bypass bad blocks at various times of day. In these ways, social science research can help you understand how a very ordinary behavior—navigating one’s way through the city streets—reveals important lessons about the nature of social interaction today.

In recent years, Anderson has updated his earlier work on social interaction. Even in a society characterized by large amounts of racism and prejudice, Anderson has found reason for optimism. In *The Cosmopolitan Canopy* (2011), he argues that there are many places where people of different backgrounds actually get along. For Anderson, the racially and ethnically diverse spaces he has studied offer “a respite from the lingering tensions of urban life as well as an opportunity for diverse peoples to come together.” They are what he calls “pluralistic spaces where people engage with one another in a spirit of civility, or even comity and goodwill.”

On the basis of in-depth observations of public areas in his long-time home of Philadelphia, Anderson reports on various important sites in the city, including the Reading Terminal Market, Rittenhouse Square, and the Galleria Mall. The first two are venues dominated by middle- and upper-middle-class norms and values, while the Galleria caters to the tastes of the black working classes and the poor. All three sites, however, are spaces in which various kinds of people meet, agree to lay down their swords, carry on their life routines, and in many cases, enjoy themselves.

Anderson begins with an ode to Philadelphia’s indoor farmer’s market—the downtown Reading Terminal. A regular at the market for decades, he paints a loving portrait of the many types of people who congregate there, including the population of Amish vendors. The patrons range from corporate executives to construction workers to senior citizens in poor health. They are all “on their best behavior” as they eat and shop for food and other items.

What is it about this space that causes people to “show a certain civility and even an openness to strangers”? To begin, the city is divided into two kinds of human beings: the open-minded people, whom he calls “cosmos” (shorthand for cosmopolitan), and the close-minded, whom he calls “ethnos” (shorthand for ethnocentric). As Anderson sees it, Reading Terminal is filled with open-minded people. Through a kind of people watching, each contributes to the creation of the cosmopolitan canopy. It is literally the sight of so many kinds of people in one another’s physical presence, as well as participation in what one sees, that reinforces the idea of a “neutral space.” Whites and minorities who have few opportunities for such interaction elsewhere can relax and move about with security. Blacks, however, understand that their status there is always provisional, meaning that at any moment they are subject to dramatic situations in which whites fail to treat them with the respect they deserve.



Reading Terminal Market in Philadelphia is an example of what Elijah Anderson refers to as a “cosmopolitan canopy,” a place where diverse groups congregate peacefully.

The dynamic that Anderson highlights over and over is the self-fulfilling nature of the interaction: The interaction and the sight of it makes it so. Most who come are probably repeat players, and they have long visualized different kinds of people getting along in the space. For newcomers, on the other hand, such visualization of tolerance is “infectious.” In the Rittenhouse Square Park and the streets surrounding it, other social cues serve to bring about similar results. There is, for example, a fountain and a statue of a goat that attracts mothers, nannies, and children. The sight of “public mothering” is a cue that indicates that this is a civil place. A sense of safety and protection underlies good behavior and, in turn, leads to a virtuous circle of other acts of goodwill. Dog walkers are also crucial, with interaction naturally occurring between them and others (including children) as they form a critical mass in the park throughout the day.

The Galleria is a different story. Anderson describes it as the “ghetto downtown,” a community of close-minded poor blacks (“ethnos”) in one mall. What makes it a canopy, albeit not a cosmopolitan one, is that various elements of the black community—the “street” and the “decent”—can coexist here. People feel free to be themselves, “loud and boisterous and frank in their comments, released from the inhibitions they might feel among whites.” The code of the street threatens to undermine the public order at any moment, but everyone is on their best behavior, with security guards reinforcing decorum. Nevertheless, Anderson stresses that through a negative feedback loop this place has a self-reinforcing negative reputation among cosmopolitan whites and blacks.

One of the great puzzles that social scientists will seek to resolve in the coming decades is whether “new” forms of social interaction, such as social networking sites, will alter gender relations and race relations. As we have seen throughout this chapter, virtual communication shares many of the same properties as face-to-face communication. For instance, we carefully impression manage in both venues. Yet we have also seen that online communication has started to chip away at hierarchies based on power and status, perhaps paving the way for a future where race and class will no longer matter as they did in the days when Anderson conducted his *Streetwise* research.

CONCEPT CHECKS

How would sociologists explain the street harassment that women often experience?

How would sociologist Elijah Anderson define *streetwise*?

Can you identify any examples of cosmopolitan canopies in your neighborhood?

The Big Picture

Social Interaction and Everyday Life in the Age of the Internet

Thinking Sociologically

1. Identify the elements important to the dramaturgical perspective. This chapter shows how the theory might be used to understand interactions between customers and service providers. How would you apply the theory to account for a plumber's visit to a client's home?
2. Smoking cigarettes is a pervasive habit found in many parts of the world and a habit that could be explained by both microsociological and macro-sociological forces. Give an example of each that would be relevant to explaining the proliferation of smoking. How might your suggested micro- and macro-level analyses be linked?
3. Think about the last photo you posted or the last status update you reported on Facebook. What impression were you trying to convey to others? How would Goffman characterize your impression-management goals?

What Is Social Interaction?

p. 107

Familiarize yourself with the study of everyday life. Know the various forms of nonverbal communication.

How Do We Manage Impressions in Daily Life?

p. 109

Learn about the ways you carefully choose to present yourself to others in daily interactions—both face-to-face and virtually.

What Rules Guide How We Communicate with Others?

p. 112

Learn the research process of ethnomethodology, the study of our conversations and how we make sense of one another.

How Do Time and Space Affect Our Interactions?

p. 117

Understand that interaction is situated, that it occurs in a particular place and for a particular length of time. See that the way we organize our conversations is not unique by learning how other cultures organize their social lives.

How Do the Rules of Social Interaction Affect Your Life?

See how face-to-face interactions reflect broader social factors.

Terms to Know

Concept Checks

social interaction • microsociology • civil
attention • agency • structure • nonverbal
communication

1. What is microsociology?
2. What are three reasons why it is important to study daily social interaction?
3. What is nonverbal communication?
4. Describe several ways that individuals communicate their emotions to one another.
5. How do email and in-person communication differ?

status • social position • impression
management • unfocused interaction • focused
interaction • encounter

1. What is impression management?
2. Compare and contrast focused and unfocused interaction.
3. Why do we segregate our audiences in daily life?

ethnomethodology • conversation analysis •
interactional vandalism • response cries •
personal space

1. What is interactional vandalism?
2. Give an example of a response cry.
3. What are the four zones of personal space?

time-space • regionalization • clock time •
compulsion of proximity

1. How does time structure human life?
2. Is face-to-face interaction, or co-presence, an important aspect of human action? Why or why not?

1. How would you describe the relationship between the social and the individual?
2. How would you describe the relationship between the social and the individual?
3. How would you describe the relationship between the social and the individual?
4. How would you describe the relationship between the social and the individual?

5

Groups, Networks, and Organizations

Nonprofit & Volunteer Sector

p. 151



The Marching 100 was long a source of great pride at Florida A&M University. Pride turned to shock and shame in 2011 when a hazing incident led to the brutal death of drum major Robert Champion. Hazing is rampant on many college campuses and shows the tremendous power of social groups.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

What are social groups?

Learn the variety and characteristics of groups, as well as the effect of groups on an individual's behavior.

How do we benefit from social networks?

Understand the importance of social networks and the advantages they confer on some people.

How do organizations function?

Know how to define an organization and understand how organizations developed over the last two centuries. Learn Max Weber's theory of organizations and view of bureaucracy.

Is bureaucracy an outdated model?

Familiarize yourself with some of the alternatives to bureaucracy that have developed in other societies or in recent times. Think about the influence of technology on how organizations operate.

How do groups and organizations affect your life?

Learn how social capital enables people to accomplish their goals and expand their influence.





Humans are social creatures. Most of us want to “belong” to some sort of group, and we cherish the friendships, the feeling of acceptance, and even the perks that go along with being a member of a group. But what are we willing to do in order to belong? Would you be willing to be beaten up? What about beating up someone else? Would you drink an entire bottle of vodka? Or stand outdoors in the January cold after being doused with cold water? Or run around in the sweltering summer heat wearing layers of heavy clothing?

Although this sounds barbaric, these types of hazing activities occur all too often on college campuses today. Hazing—or the rituals and other activities, involving harassment, abuse, or humiliation, used as a way of initiating a person into a group—occurs in an estimated 55 percent of all college fraternities and sororities today. Although some blithely view hazing as “boys being boys” or a rite of passage, others consider hazing an illegal activity that must be banished from all college campuses (Nuwer 2013).

News stories are replete with horrific incidences of hazing. In 2011, marching band members from Florida A&M University (FAMU) attacked drum major Robert Champion on a bus after a performance, paddling and beating him with musical instruments in a hazing ritual known as Crossing Bus C. The assault was so brutal that Champion died within the hour from “hemorrhagic shock caused by blunt-force trauma” (Alvarez 2013).

This senseless crime shocked the nation; the FAMU band—dubbed the Marching 100—had been one of the most celebrated in the nation. The Marching 100, like many college fraternities and sororities, had a history of hazing its members, with authorities turning a blind eye. In fact, ten years earlier, another band member had been beaten so badly that he suffered renal failure. Champion’s death, though, was the breaking point, and the university acted swiftly. The university president was forced out. The band, once the shining star of FAMU, was suspended for nearly two years. Fifteen former band members were charged with manslaughter or felony hazing (Alvarez 2013). And while most would receive probation or community service, not everyone got off easy: In January 2015, the former bus leader and accused ringleader of the hazing ritual was sentenced to more than six years in prison for his role in Champion’s death.

What would cause otherwise upstanding young men and women—many of whom are top students, star athletes, and accomplished musicians—to essentially torture their classmates? And why doesn’t one brave soul in the group stand up to stop the abuse? Why do “pledges,” those young men and women striving to join a college fraternity or sorority, subject themselves to this mistreatment?

The answers are complex but illustrate important aspects of group behavior, including conformity, or going along with the actions of the group regardless of the personal costs. In this chapter we examine the ways in which all of us—not just fraternity brothers—are group animals. We will consider different kinds of groups, the ways group size affects our behavior in groups, and the nature of leadership. We will explore how group norms promote conformity, often to disastrous ends. We also examine the role played by organizations in American society, the major theories of modern organizations, and the ways in which organizations are changing in the modern world. The increased effect of technology on organizations and the prominence of the Internet in our group life are also explored. The chapter concludes by discussing the debate over declines in social capital and social engagement in the United States today.

social group

A collection of people who regularly interact with one another on the basis of shared expectations concerning behavior and who share a sense of common identity.



What Are Social Groups?

Nearly all our important interactions occur through some type of social group. You and your roommates make up a social group, as do the members of your introductory sociology class. A **social group** is a collection of people who share a common identity and regularly interact with one another on the basis of shared expectations concerning behavior. People who belong to the same social group identify with one another, expect one another to conform to certain ways of thinking and acting, and recognize the boundaries that separate them from other groups or people. Fraternities and sororities are examples of social groups, as are sports teams, musical groups, and even book groups.

Learn the variety and characteristics of groups, as well as the effect of groups on an individual’s behavior.

Groups: Variety and Characteristics

Every day nearly all of us participate in groups and group activities. We hang out with groups of friends, study with classmates, eat dinner with family members, play team sports, and go online to meet people who share our interests (Aldrich and Marsden 1988).

But just being in one another's company does not make a collection of individuals a social group. People milling around in crowds or strolling on a beach make up a social aggregate. A **social aggregate** is a simple collection of people who happen to be together in a particular place but do not significantly interact or identify with one another. People waiting together at a bus station, for example, may be conscious of one another's presence, but they are unlikely to think of themselves as a "we"—the group waiting for the next bus to Poughkeepsie or Des Moines. By the same token, people may constitute a **social category**, sharing a common characteristic (such as gender, occupation, religion, or ethnicity) without necessarily interacting or identifying with one another. The sense of belonging to a common social group is missing.

IN-GROUPS AND OUT-GROUPS

In-groups are groups toward which one feels particular loyalty and respect—the groups that "we" belong to. **Out-groups**, on the other hand, are groups toward which one feels antagonism and contempt—"those people." The "sense of belonging" among members of the in-group is sometimes strengthened by the group's scorning the members of other groups (Sartre 1965, orig. 1948). Creating a sense of belonging in this way is especially true of racist groups, which promote their identity as "superior" by hating "inferior" groups. Jews, Catholics, African Americans, immigrants, and gay people historically—and Muslims more recently—have been the targets of such prejudice in the United States.

Most people occasionally use in-group-out-group imagery to trumpet what they believe to be their group's strengths vis-à-vis some other group's presumed weaknesses. For example, members of a fraternity or a sorority may bolster their feelings of superiority—in academics, sports, or campus image—by ridiculing the members of a different house. Similarly, a church may hold up its "truths" as the only ones, while native-born Americans may accuse immigrants—always outsiders upon arriving in a new country—of ruining the country for "real Americans."

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY GROUPS

Our lives and personalities are molded by our earliest experiences in **primary groups**, namely, our families, our peers, and our friends. Primary groups are small groups characterized by face-to-face interaction, intimacy, and a strong, enduring sense of commitment. There is also often an experience of unity, a merging of the self with the group into one personal "we." Sociologist Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929) termed such groups *primary* because he believed that they were the basic form of association, exerting a long-lasting influence on the development of our social selves (Cooley 1964, orig. 1902).

Secondary groups, by contrast, are large and impersonal and often involve fleeting relationships. Examples of secondary groups include business organizations, schools, work groups, athletic clubs, and governmental bodies. Secondary groups seldom involve intense emotional ties, powerful commitments to the group itself, or a feeling of unity. We seldom

social aggregate

A collection of people who happen to be together in a particular place but do not significantly interact or identify with one another.

social category

People who share a common characteristic (such as gender or occupation) but do not necessarily interact or identify with one another.

in-groups

Groups toward which one feels particular loyalty and respect—the groups to which "we" belong.

out-groups

Groups toward which one feels antagonism and contempt—"those people."

primary group

A group that is characterized by intense emotional ties, face-to-face interaction, intimacy, and a strong, enduring sense of commitment.

secondary group

A group characterized by its large size and by impersonal, fleeting relationships.



Sports often create in-groups and out-groups by fostering loyalty for one's own team and contempt for the other team.



reference group

A group that provides a standard for judging one's attitudes or behaviors.

feel we can “be ourselves” in a secondary group; rather, we are often playing a particular role, such as employee or student. Cooley argued that while people belong to primary groups mainly because such groups are inherently fulfilling, people join secondary groups to achieve some specific goal: to earn a living, get a college degree, or compete in sports. Secondary groups may become primary groups for some of their members. For example, when coworkers begin to socialize after hours, they create bonds of friendship that constitute a primary group.

For most of human history, nearly all interactions took place within primary groups. This pattern began to change with the emergence of larger, agrarian societies, which included such secondary groups as those based on governmental roles or occupation. Some early sociologists, such as Cooley, worried about a loss of intimacy as more and more interactions revolved around large, impersonal organizations. However, what Cooley saw as the growing anonymity of modern life might also offer an increasing tolerance of individual differences. Primary groups, which often enforce strict conformity to group standards, can be stifling (Durkheim 1964, orig. 1893; Simmel 1955). Secondary groups, by contrast, are more likely than primary groups to be concerned with accomplishing a task, rather than with enforcing conformity to group standards of behavior. As we will see in the Digital Life box, web-based crowdfunding efforts allow loosely knit collections of people who don't even know one another to accomplish important tasks, such as raising funds for a charity or creative project.

REFERENCE GROUPS

We often judge ourselves by how we think we appear to others, which Cooley termed the *looking-glass self*. Robert K. Merton (1938) elaborated on Cooley's concept by discussing reference groups as a standard by which we evaluate ourselves. A **reference group** is a group that provides a standard for judging one's own attitudes or behaviors (see also Hyman and Singer 1968). Family, peers, classmates, and coworkers are crucial reference groups. However, you do not have to belong to a group for it to be your reference group. For example, young people living thousands of miles away from the bright lights of Hollywood may still compare their looks and fashion choices with those of their favorite celebrity. Although most of us seldom interact socially with such reference groups as the glitterati, we may take pride in identifying with them, and even imitate those people who do belong to them. This is why it is critical for children—minority children in particular, whose groups are often represented in the media using negative stereotypes—to be exposed to reference groups that will shape their lives for the better.

The Effects of Size

Another significant way in which groups differ has to do with their size. Sociological interest in group size can be traced to the German sociologist Georg Simmel (1858–1918), who studied and theorized about the impact of small groups on people's behavior. Since Simmel's time, small-group researchers have conducted a number of laboratory experiments to



How do we know whether we are attractive, stylish, or financially successful? Most of us rely on others as a "reference group"—although Americans' reference groups are often unrealistic images of celebrities.

examine the effects of size on both the quality of interaction in the group and the effectiveness of the group in accomplishing certain tasks (Bales 1953, 1970; Hare, Borgatta, and Bales 1965; Homans 1950; Mills 1967).

DYADS

The simplest group, which Simmel (1955) called a **dyad**, consists of two persons. Simmel reasoned that dyads, which involve both intimacy and conflict, are likely to be simultaneously intense and unstable. To survive, they require the full attention and cooperation of both parties. If one person withdraws from the dyad, it vanishes. Dyads are typically the source of our most elementary social bonds, often constituting the group in which we are most likely to share our deepest secrets. But dyads can be very fragile. That is why, Simmel believed, a variety of cultural and legal supports for marriage—an example of a dyad—are found in societies where marriage is regarded as an important source of social stability.

TRIADS

According to Simmel, **triads**, or three-person groups, are more stable than dyads because the third person relieves some of the pressure on the other two to always get along and energize the relationship. In a triad, one person can temporarily withdraw attention from the relationship without necessarily threatening it. In addition, if two of the members have a disagreement, the third can play the role of mediator, as when you try to patch up a falling-out between two of your friends. Yet triads are not without potential problems. Alliances (sometimes termed *coalitions*) may form between two members of a triad, enabling them to gang up on the third and thereby destabilize the group.

dyad

A group consisting of two persons.

triad

A group consisting of three persons.

leader

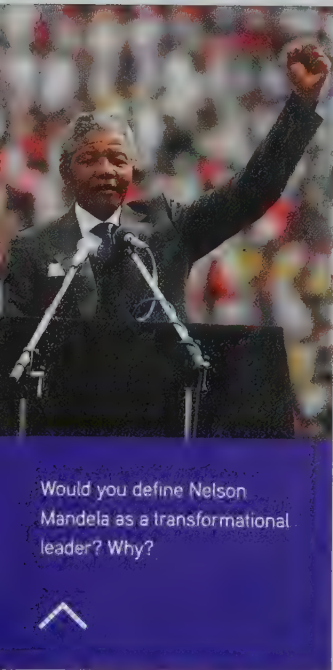
A person who is able to influence the behavior of other members of a group.

transformational leaders

Leaders who are able to instill in the members of a group a sense of mission or higher purpose, thereby changing the nature of the group itself.

transactional leaders

Leaders who are concerned with accomplishing the group's tasks, getting group members to do their jobs, and making certain that the group achieves its goals.



LARGER GROUPS

Simmel identified an important aspect of groups: As group size increases, their intensity decreases while their stability¹⁴ and exclusivity increase. Larger groups have less intense interactions, simply because a larger number of potential smaller group relationships exist as outlets for individuals who are not getting along with other members of the group. In a dyad, only a single relationship between two people is possible; in a triad, three different two-person relationships can occur. In a ten-person group, the number of possible two-person relationships explodes to forty-five. When one relationship doesn't work out to your liking, you can easily move on to another, as you probably often do at large parties.

Large groups also tend to be more stable than smaller ones because the withdrawal of some members does not usually threaten the group's survival. A marriage or romantic relationship falls apart if one person leaves, whereas a sports team or drama club routinely survives—though it may sometimes temporarily suffer from—the loss of its graduating seniors. Larger groups also tend to be more exclusive, since it is easier for their members to limit their social relationships to the group itself and avoid relationships with nonmembers.

Beyond a certain size, perhaps a dozen people, groups tend to develop a formal structure. Formal leadership roles may arise, such as president or secretary, and official rules may be developed to govern what the group does. We discuss formal organizations later in this chapter.

Types of Leadership

A **leader** is a person who is able to influence the behavior of other members of a group. All groups have leaders, even if the leader is not formally recognized as such. Some leaders are especially effective in motivating group members, inspiring them to achievements that might not ordinarily be accomplished. Such **transformational leaders** go beyond the merely routine, instilling in the members of their group a sense of mission or higher purpose and thereby changing the nature of the group itself (Burns 1978; Kanter 1983). They can also be a vital inspiration for social change in the world. For example, Nelson Mandela, the late South African leader who spent twenty-seven years in prison, successfully helped dismantle South Africa's system of apartheid, or racial segregation. He led his African National Congress party to victory and was elected president—leader—of the entire country. His leadership transcended national boundaries.

Most leaders are not as visionary as Mandela. Leaders who simply get the job done are termed **transactional leaders**. They are concerned with accomplishing the group's tasks, getting group members to do their jobs, and ensuring that the group achieves its goals. Transactional leadership is routine leadership. For example, the teacher who simply gets through the lesson plan each day—rather than making the classroom a place where students explore new ways of thinking and behaving—is exercising transactional leadership.

Conformity

Pressures to conform to the latest styles are especially strong among teenagers and young adults, for whom the need for group acceptance is often acute. Although sporting tattoos or the latest fashion trend—or rigidly conforming to corporate workplace

policies—may seem relatively harmless, conformity to group pressure can also lead to extremely destructive behavior, such as drug abuse, or even murder. For this reason, sociologists and social psychologists have long sought to understand why most people tend to go along with others, and under what circumstances they do not.

GOING ALONG WITH THE GROUP: ASCH'S RESEARCH

More than sixty years ago, psychologist Solomon Asch (1952) conducted some of the most influential studies of conformity to group pressures. In one of his classic experiments, Asch asked individual subjects to decide which of three lines of different length most closely matched the length of a fourth line (Figure 5.1).

The differences were obvious; subjects had no difficulty in making the correct match.

Asch then arranged a version of the experiment in which the subjects were asked to make the matches in a group setting, with each person calling out the answer in turn. In this setting, all but one of the subjects were actually Asch's secret accomplices, and these accomplices all practiced a deception on that one true subject. Each accomplice picked a line as a match that was clearly unequal to the fourth line. The unwitting subject, one of the last to call out an answer, felt enormous group pressure to make the same error. Amazingly, at least half the time the experiment was conducted, one-third of these subjects gave the same wrong answer as the others in the group. They sometimes stammered and fidgeted when doing so, but they nonetheless yielded to the unspoken pressure to conform to the group's decision. Asch's experiments clearly showed that many people are willing to go along with the group consensus, even if they believe it is incorrect.

Although the Asch study was conducted decades ago, its findings provide some insight into why hazing happens. Just like the participants in Asch's study who bowed to group pressure, members of the FAMU marching band might have found it difficult to stop the abuse of their drum major when they perceived (perhaps incorrectly) that the majority was in strong agreement about the rites of initiation.

OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY: MILGRAM'S RESEARCH

Another classic study of conformity was conducted by Stanley Milgram (1963). Milgram wanted to see how far a person would go when ordered by a scientist to give another person increasingly powerful electric shocks. He did so by setting up an experiment that he told the subjects was about memorizing pairs of words. In reality, it was about obedience to authority.

FIGURE 5.1

The Asch Task

In the Asch task, participants were shown a standard line (left) and then three comparison lines. Their task was simply to say which of the three lines matched the standard. When confederates gave false answers first, one-third of participants conformed by also giving the wrong answer.



(a) The Milgram experiment required participants to “shock” the confederate learner (seated). The research participant (left) helped apply the electrodes. (b) An obedient participant shocks the learner in the “touch” condition. Fewer than one-third obeyed the experimenter in this condition. (c) Afterward, all the participants were introduced to the confederate learner so they could see he was not harmed.



The male subjects who volunteered for the study were supposedly randomly divided into “teachers” and “learners.” In fact, the learners were actually Milgram’s confederates. The teacher was told to read pairs of words from a list that the learner was to memorize. Whenever the learner made a mistake, the teacher was to give him an electric shock by flipping a switch on a fake but official-looking machine. The control board on the machine indicated shock levels ranging from “15 volts—slight shock” to “450 volts—danger, severe shock.” For each mistake, the voltage of the shock was to be increased, until it eventually reached the highest level. As the experiment progressed, the learner began to scream out in pain for the teacher to stop delivering shocks. Milgram’s assistant, who was administering the experiment, exercised his authority as a scientist and ordered the teacher to continue administering shocks if the teacher tried to quit. (In reality, the learner, who was usually carefully concealed from the teacher by a screen, never received any electric shocks, and his “screams” had actually been prerecorded on a tape.)

The teacher was confronted with a major moral decision: Should he obey the scientist and go along with the experiment, even if it meant injuring another human being? Much to Milgram’s surprise, over half the subjects in the study kept on administering electric shocks. They continued even until the maximum voltage was reached and the learner’s screams had subsided into an eerie silence as he had presumably died of a heart attack. How could ordinary people so easily conform to orders that would turn them into possible accomplices to murder?

The answer, Milgram found, was deceptively simple: Ordinary citizens will conform to orders given by someone in a position of power or authority—even if those orders have horrible consequences. From this, we can learn something about Nazi atrocities during World War II, which were Milgram’s original concern. Many ordinary Germans who participated in the mass execution of Jews in Nazi concentration camps did so on the grounds that they were “just following orders.” Milgram’s research has sobering implications for anyone who thinks that only “others” will bend to authority, but “not me” (Zimbardo, Ebbeson, and Maslach 1977).

groupthink

A process by which the members of a group ignore ways of thinking and plans of action that go against the group consensus.

GROUPTHINK AND GROUP PRESSURES TO CONFORM: JANIS’S RESEARCH

The pressure to conform to group opinions may occasionally lead to bad decisions, rather than creative new solutions to problems. Irving L. Janis (1972, 1989; Janis and Mann 1977) called this phenomenon **groupthink**, a process by which the members of a group ignore those ideas, suggestions, and plans of action that go against the group consensus.

Groupthink may embarrass potential dissenters into conforming and may also produce a shift in perceptions so that alternative possibilities are ruled out without being seriously considered. Groupthink may facilitate reaching a quick consensus, but the consensus may also be ill chosen. It may even be downright dangerous. Social scientists attribute a range of bad (and in some cases, catastrophic) decisions to groupthink, including the space shuttle *Challenger* disaster in 1986 and the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 (Haig 2011; Janis and Mann 1977).

Janis engaged in historical research to see if groupthink had characterized U.S. foreign policy decisions. He examined several critical decisions, including that behind the infamous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. John F. Kennedy, then the newly elected president, inherited a plan from the previous administration to help Cuban exiles liberate Cuba from the Communist government of Fidel Castro. The plan called for U.S. supplies and air cover to assist an invasion by an ill-prepared army of exiles at Cuba's Bay of Pigs. As history now shows, the invasion was a disaster. The army of exiles, after parachuting into a swamp nowhere near their intended drop zone, was immediately defeated, and Kennedy suffered a great deal of public embarrassment.

Kennedy's advisers were smart, strong willed, and well educated. How could they have failed to voice their concerns about the proposed invasion? Janis identified a number of possible reasons. First, the advisers were hesitant to disagree with the president lest they lose his favor. Second, they did not want to diminish group harmony in a crisis situation where teamwork was all-important. Third, they faced intense time pressures and had little opportunity to consult outside experts who might have offered radically different perspectives. All these circumstances contributed to a single-minded pursuit of the president's initial ideas, rather than an effort to generate effective alternatives. To avoid groupthink, the group must ensure the full and open expression of all opinions, even strong dissent.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- What is the difference between social aggregates and social groups? Give examples that illustrate this difference.
- Describe the main characteristics of primary and secondary groups.
- When groups become large, why does their intensity decrease but their stability increase?
- What is groupthink? How can it be used to explain why some decisions made by a group can lead to negative consequences?

How Do We Benefit from Social Networks?

"Whom you know is often as important as *what* you know." This adage expresses the value of having good connections. Sociologists refer to such connections as **networks**—all the direct and indirect connections that link a person or a group with other people or groups. Your personal networks thus include people you know directly (such as your friends) as well as people you know indirectly (such as your friends' friends). The groups and organizations you belong to also may be networked. For example, all the chapters of Gamma Phi Beta or Hillel are linked, as are alumni from your college or university, thus connecting members to like-minded individuals throughout the United States and the world.

Networks serve us in many ways. You are likely to rely on your networks for a broad range of contacts, from obtaining access to your congressperson or senator to scoring a summer internship. Sociologist Mark Granovetter (1973) demonstrated that there can be enormous strength in weak ties, particularly among higher socioeconomic groups.



Understand the importance of social networks and the advantages they confer on some people.

network

A set of informal and formal social ties that links people to one another.

Upper-level professional and managerial employees are likely to hear about new jobs through connections such as distant relatives or remote acquaintances. Such weak ties can be of great benefit because relatives or acquaintances tend to have very different sets of connections from one's closer friends, whose social contacts are likely to be similar to one's own. Among lower socioeconomic groups, Granovetter argued, weak ties are not necessarily bridges to other networks and so do not really widen one's opportunities (see also Knoke 1990; Marsden and Lin 1982; Wellman, Carrington, and Hall 1988).

Most people rely on their personal networks to gain advantages, but not everyone has equal access to powerful networks. In general, whites and men have more advantageous social networks than do ethnic minorities and women. Some sociologists argue, for example, that women's business, professional, and political networks are fewer and weaker than men's, so that women's power in these spheres is reduced (Brass 1985). Yet as more and more women move up into higher-level occupational and political positions, the resulting networks can foster further advancement. One study found that women are more likely to be hired or promoted into job levels that already have a high proportion of women (Cohen, Broschak, and Haveman 1998).

The Internet as Social Network

Our opportunities to belong to and access social networks have skyrocketed in recent years due to the Internet. Until the early 1990s, when the World Wide Web was developed, there were few Internet users outside of university and scientific communities. By the middle of 2016, however, an estimated 280 million Americans were using the Internet (Internet World Stats 2016a), and while 52 percent of American adults used the Internet in 2000, 84 percent were online in 2015 (Perrin and Duggan 2015). With such rapid communication and global reach, it is now possible to radically extend one's personal networks. Fully 57 percent of American teens have made new friends online (Lenhart 2015). The Internet is especially useful for networking with like-minded people on specific issues such as politics, business, hobbies, or romance (Southwick 1996; Wellman et al. 1996). It also enables people who might otherwise lack contact with others to become part of global networks. For example, people too ill to leave their homes can join chat rooms to share common interests, people in small rural communities can now take online college courses (Lewin 2012), and long-lost high school friends can reconnect via Facebook.

The Internet fosters the creation of new relationships, often without the emotional and social baggage or constraints that go along with face-to-face encounters. In the absence of the usual physical and social cues, such as skin color or residential address, people can get together electronically on the basis of shared interests like gaming, rather than similar social characteristics. Factors such as social position, wealth, race, ethnicity, gender, and physical disability are less likely to cloud the social interaction (Coate 1994; Jones 1995; Kollock and Smith 1996). In fact, technologies like Twitter allow people from all walks of life to catch glimpses into the lives of celebrities (as well as noncelebs).

One limitation of Internet-based social networks is that not everyone has equal access to the Internet. Lower-income persons and ethnic minorities are less likely than wealthier persons and whites to have Internet access. But while a digital divide remains, the gaps have narrowed considerably in recent years. For example, in 2000, 81 percent of American adults in households earning \$75,000 or more a year used the Internet, compared to just 34 percent

Crowdfunding and the Strength of Weak Ties

Imagine that a major symphony orchestra or prominent art museum is holding a fund-raiser. You are probably imagining wealthy men and women of a certain age, dressed in tuxedos and gowns, sipping champagne and making small talk about investments. They might vacation in the Hamptons together or their children were friends at prep school. These images are perhaps an over-the-top stereotype, but one component of this description is probably true: Many of the attendees likely know one another.

But how might middle- and working-class people raise money for their favorite causes—whether it's to provide relief for hurricane victims, help the homeless, or even launch one's own company? Over the past five years, the Internet has exploded with crowdfunding sites. *Crowdfunding* refers to the collective effort of many people who pool their money to support another person or group's cause. Crowdfunding relies on many smaller donations rather than a few large ones like we might see at a museum fund-raiser attended by very wealthy people. For example, on Watsi—a global crowdfunding platform that allows people to directly fund low-cost medical care for people in developing nations—donors can give as little as \$5 to help a patient in need (LaPorte 2013).

One of the most fascinating aspects of crowdfunding is that it allows people to raise money by relying primarily on their “weak ties,” or friends of friends of friends. By spreading the word about a venture, sharing information about the weblink and the project, crowdfunding involves many participants from all walks of life. Often, these donors know one another through loose social ties; perhaps they learn about a particular charity because they belong to the same Facebook group. Other times,

though, donors to a particular project may belong to quite different social networks. They come together through crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter, GoFundMe, and Indiegogo, which provide a point of entry for making donations to specific charities and projects.

According to the consulting firm Massolution, crowdfunding platforms raised more than \$34 billion in 2015 (Taylor 2016). Different platforms cater to different types of projects. A GoFundMe campaign set up in the aftermath of the June 12, 2016, mass shooting at Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, raised more than \$7 million for the victims and their families. Faced with a daunting list of repairs to its on-campus chapel, Morehouse College turned to Indiegogo and raised more than \$5 million to restore the chapel named after Martin Luther King Jr. Other times, crowdfunding projects are purely recreational. One of the most successful crowdfunded projects to date is *Star Citizen*, an online video game; as of December 2015, the game had raised a whopping \$100 million (Prescott 2015).

The “crowds” that support these projects would hardly constitute a primary group, as most of the members are not close significant others. In most cases, they do not even consist of secondary groups because the crowd members may not even know one another. Do you think that the “crowd” that supports such projects constitutes a group? How might this type of group differ from the collection of people who attend fund-raising galas like the one described earlier? What makes crowdfunding successful? Have you ever used a crowdfunding site to raise money? What kind of people do you imagine might contribute to your project?

Crowdfunding platforms like Watsi and MedStartr help to raise money for maternal and child health programs in developing nations.



CONCEPT CHECKS

According to Granovetter, what are the benefits of weak ties? Why?

How do men's and women's weak ties differ?

Know how to define an organization, and understand how organizations developed over the last two centuries. Learn Max Weber's theory of organizations and view of bureaucracy.

organization

A large group of individuals with a definite set of authority relations. Many types of organizations exist in industrialized societies, influencing most aspects of our lives. While not all organizations are bureaucratic, there are close links between the development of organizations and bureaucratic tendencies.

of those who made less than \$30,000. By 2015, however, this nearly 50 percent gap had narrowed to 23 percent, with 74 percent of those who make less than \$30,000 per year now using the Internet (Perrin and Duggan 2015). There remains a larger gap in usage by level of education: While 95 percent of adults with a college degree are Internet users, that proportion drops to 66 percent for those with less than a high school education. However, we still see the largest gap in Internet use between young adults (ages eighteen to twenty-nine) and older adults (sixty-five and older): While 96 percent of young adults are using the Internet, the same can be said of only 58 percent of older adults (Perrin and Duggan 2015).

This pattern is not limited to the United States; rates of Internet use are creeping up across the globe, enabling individuals to connect with anyone in the world who shares their interests.

How Do Organizations Function?

People frequently band together to pursue activities that they could not otherwise accomplish by themselves. A principal means for accomplishing such cooperative actions—whether it's raising money for cancer research, winning a football game, or becoming a profitable corporation—is the **organization**, a group with an identifiable membership that engages in concerted collective actions to achieve a common purpose (Aldrich and Marsden 1988). An organization can be a small primary group, but it is more likely to be a larger, secondary one: Universities, religious bodies, and business corporations are all examples of organizations. Such organizations are a central feature of all societies, and their study is a core concern of sociology today.

Organizations tend to be highly formal in modern industrial and postindustrial societies. A **formal organization** is rationally designed to achieve its objectives, often by means of explicit rules, regulations, and procedures. As Max Weber (1979, orig. 1921) first recognized almost a century ago, there has been a long-term trend in Europe and North America toward formal organizations. This rise of formality in organizations is in part the result of the fact that formality is often a requirement for legal standing. For a college or university to be legally accredited, for example, it must satisfy explicit written standards governing everything from grading policy to faculty performance to fire safety. Today, formal organizations are the dominant form of organization throughout the entire world.

It is easy to see why organizations are so important to us today. In the premodern world, families, close relatives, and neighbors provided for most needs—food, the instruction of children, work, and leisure-time activities. In modern times, the majority of the population is much more interdependent than was ever the case before. Many of our requirements are supplied by people whom we never meet and who indeed might live many thousands of miles away. A substantial amount of coordination of activities and resources—which organizations provide—is needed in such circumstances. A downside, however, is that organizations take things out of our own hands

and put them under the control of officials or experts over whom we have little influence. For instance, we are all required to do certain things the government tells us to do—pay taxes, abide by laws, go off to fight wars—or face punishment.

Theories of Organizations

Max Weber developed the first systematic interpretation of the rise of modern organizations. Organizations, he argued, are ways of coordinating the activities of human beings, or the goods they produce, in a stable manner across space and time. Weber emphasized that the development of organizations depends on the control of information, and he stressed the central importance of writing in this process: An organization needs written rules in order to function and files in which its “memory” is stored. Weber saw organizations as strongly hierarchical, with power tending to be concentrated at the top.

Was Weber right? If he was, it matters a great deal to us all. For Weber detected a clash as well as a connection between modern organizations and democracy that he believed had far-reaching consequences for social life.

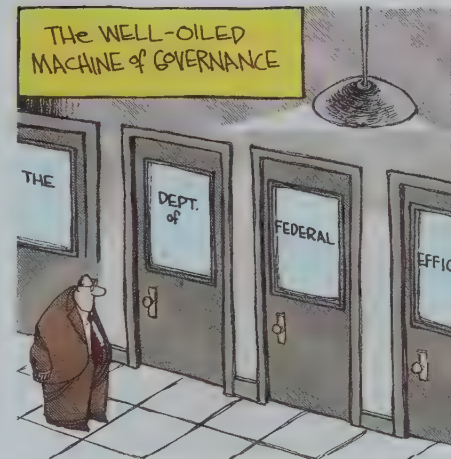
BUREAUCRACY

All large-scale organizations, according to Weber, tend to be bureaucratic in nature. The word *bureaucracy* was coined by Monsieur de Gournay in 1745, who combined the word *bureau*, meaning both an office and a writing table, with the suffix *cracy*, derived from the Greek verb meaning “to rule.” **Bureaucracy** is thus the rule of officials. The term was first applied only to government officials, but it was gradually extended to refer to large organizations in general. Perceptions of “bureaucracy” range from highly negative—fraught with red tape, inefficiency, and wastefulness—to quite positive—a model of carefulness, precision, and effective administration.

Weber’s account of bureaucracy steers between these two extremes. He argued that the expansion of bureaucracy is inevitable in modern societies; bureaucratic authority is the only way of coping with the administrative requirements of large-scale social systems. Yet he also conceded that bureaucracy exhibits a number of major failings that have important implications for the nature of modern social life.

To study the origins and nature of the expansion of bureaucratic organizations, Weber constructed an ideal type of bureaucracy. *Ideal* here refers not to what is most desirable, but to a pure form of bureaucratic organization. An **ideal type** is an abstract description constructed by accentuating certain features of real cases in order to pinpoint their most essential characteristics. Weber (1921) listed several characteristics of the ideal type of bureaucracy:

1. **A clear-cut hierarchy of authority, such that tasks in the organization are distributed as “official duties.”** Each higher office controls and supervises the one below it in the hierarchy, thus making coordinated decision making possible.
2. **Written rules govern the conduct of officials at all levels of the organization.** The higher the office, the more the rules tend to encompass a wide variety of cases and demand flexibility in their interpretation.



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Bureaucracies are often perceived as inefficient and fraught with red tape.

formal organization

Means by which a group is rationally designed to achieve its objectives, often using explicit rules, regulations, and procedures.

bureaucracy

A type of organization marked by a clear hierarchy of authority and the existence of written rules of procedure and staffed by full-time, salaried officials.

ideal type

A “pure type,” constructed by emphasizing certain traits of a social item that do not necessarily exist in reality. An example is Max Weber’s ideal type of bureaucratic organization.



A visit to the DMV clearly shows the integral role that organizations such as the government—and their corresponding rules and regulations—play in our lives.

3. **Officials are full time and salaried.** Each job in the hierarchy has a definite and fixed salary attached to it. Promotion is possible on the basis of capability, seniority, or a mixture of the two.
4. **There is a separation between the tasks of an official within the organization and his or her life outside.**
5. **No members of the organization own the material resources with which they operate.** The development of bureaucracy, according to Weber, separates workers from the control of their means of production; officials do not own the offices they work in, the desks they sit at, or the office machinery they use.

Weber believed that the more an organization approaches the ideal type of bureaucracy, the more effective it will be in pursuing the objectives for which it was established. Yet he recognized that bureaucracy could be inefficient and accepted that many bureaucratic jobs are dull, offering little opportunity for the exercise of cre-

ative capabilities. While Weber feared that the bureaucratization of society could have negative consequences, he concluded that bureaucratic routine and the authority of officialdom over our lives are prices we pay for the technical effectiveness of bureaucratic organizations.

Since Weber's time, the bureaucratization of society has become more widespread. Critics of this development who share Weber's initial concerns have questioned whether the efficiency of rational organizations comes at a price greater than Weber could have imagined. The most prominent of these critiques refers to the "McDonaldization of society," discussed later in this chapter.

formal relations

Relations that exist in groups and organizations, laid down by the norms, or rules, of the official system of authority.

informal networks

Relations that exist in groups and organizations developed on the basis of personal connections; ways of doing things that depart from formally recognized modes of procedure.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL RELATIONS WITHIN BUREAUCRACIES

Weber's analysis of bureaucracy gave prime place to **formal relations** within organizations, or the relations between people as stated in the rules of the organization. Weber had little to say about the informal connections and small-group relations that may exist in all organizations. But in bureaucracies, informal ways of doing things often allow for a flexibility that couldn't otherwise be achieved.

Informal networks tend to develop at all levels of organizations. At the very top, personal ties and connections may be more important than the formal situations in which decisions are supposed to be made. For example, meetings of boards of directors and shareholders supposedly determine the policies of business corporations. In practice, a few members of the board often really run the corporation, making their decisions informally and expecting the board to approve them. Informal networks of this sort can also stretch across different corporations. Business leaders from different firms frequently consult one another in an informal way and may belong to the same clubs and social circles.

John Meyer and Brian Rowan (1977) argue that formal rules and procedures in organizations are usually quite distant from the practices actually adopted by the organizations' members. Formal rules, in their view, are often "myths" that people profess to follow but

that have little substance in reality. They serve to legitimize—to justify—ways in which tasks are carried out, even while these ways may diverge greatly from how things are supposed to be done, according to the rules.

Deciding how far informal procedures generally help or hinder the effectiveness of organizations is not a simple matter. Systems that resemble Weber’s ideal type tend to give rise to a forest of unofficial ways of doing things. This is partly because the flexibility that is lacking ends up being achieved by unofficial tinkering with formal rules. For those in dull jobs, informal procedures often also help create a more satisfying work environment. Informal connections between officials in higher positions may be effective in ways that aid the organization as a whole. On the other hand, these officials may be more concerned with advancing or protecting their own interests than furthering those of the overall organization.

BUREAUCRACY AND DEMOCRACY

The diminishing of democracy with the advance of modern forms of organization was another problem that worried Weber a great deal (see also Chapter 13). What especially disturbed him was the prospect of rule by faceless bureaucrats. How can democracy be anything other than a meaningless slogan in the face of the increasing power bureaucratic organizations are wielding over us? After all, Weber reasoned, bureaucracies are necessarily specialized and hierarchical. Those near the bottom of the organization inevitably find themselves reduced to carrying out mundane tasks and have no power over what they do; power passes to those at the top. Weber’s student Robert Michels (1967, orig. 1911) invented a phrase to refer to this loss of power that has since become famous: In large-scale organizations, and more generally a society dominated by organizations, he argued, there is an “iron law of oligarchy.” Oligarchy means rule by the few. According to Michels, the flow of power toward the top is simply an inevitable part of an increasingly bureaucratized world—hence the term *iron law*.

Was Michels right? It surely is correct to say that large-scale organizations involve the centralizing of power. Yet there is good reason to suppose that the iron law of oligarchy is not quite as hard-and-fast as Michels claimed. Unequal power is not just a function of size. In modest-sized groups there can be marked differences of power. In a small business, for instance, where the activities of employees are directly visible to the directors, much tighter control might be exerted than in offices in larger organizations. Further, in many modern organizations, power is also quite often openly delegated downward from superiors to subordinates. In many large companies, corporate heads are so busy coordinating different departments, coping with crises, and analyzing budget and forecast figures that they have little time for original thinking.

GENDER AND ORGANIZATIONS

Until some two decades ago, organizational studies did not devote very much attention to the question of gender. The rise of feminist scholarship in the 1970s, however, led to

iron law of oligarchy

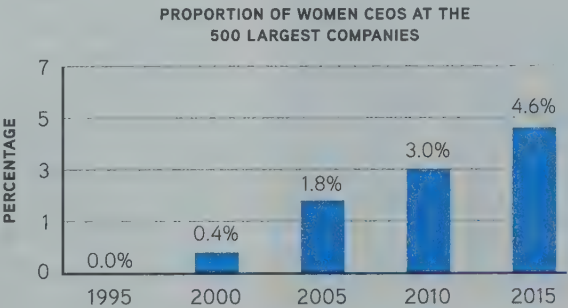
A term coined by Weber’s student Robert Michels meaning that large organizations tend toward centralization of power, making democracy difficult.

oligarchy

Rule by a small minority within an organization or society.

FIGURE 5.2

Women in Corporate America



Source: Catalyst 2016a



Indra Nooyi, CEO and chairwoman of Pepsico, was named one of the fifty most powerful women in business by *Fortune* magazine in 2015. As women climb the corporate ladder, will they change the methods as well as the face of management?

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What role do organizations play in contemporary society?
2. What does the term *bureaucracy* mean?
3. Describe five characteristics of an ideal type of bureaucracy.
4. Explain how modern organizations have developed in a gendered way.

examinations of gender relations in all the main institutions in society, including organizations and bureaucracy. Feminist sociologists, most notably Rosabeth Moss Kanter in her classic book *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977), focused on the imbalance of gender roles within organizations and the ways in which modern organizations themselves had developed in a specifically gendered way.

Feminists have argued that the emergence of the modern organization and the bureaucratic career depended on a particular gender configuration. They point to two main ways in which gender is embedded in the very structure of modern organizations. First, bureaucracies are characterized by occupational gender segregation. As women began to enter the labor market in greater numbers, they tended to be segregated into categories of occupations that were low paying and involved routine work. These positions were subordinate to those occupied by men and did not provide opportunities for women to be promoted. Women were used as a source of cheap, reliable labor but were not granted the same opportunities as men to build careers.

Second, the idea of a bureaucratic career was in fact a male career in which women played a crucial supporting role. In the workplace, women performed the routine tasks—as clerks, secretaries, and office managers—thereby freeing up men to advance their careers. Men could concentrate on obtaining promotions or landing big accounts because the female support staff handled much of the busywork. In the domestic sphere, women also supported the bureaucratic career by caring for the home, the children, and the man's day-to-day well-being. Women allowed male bureaucrats to work long hours, travel, and focus solely on their work without concern about personal or domestic issues.

As a result of these two tendencies, early feminist writers argued, modern organizations have developed as male-dominated preserves in which women are excluded from power, denied opportunities to advance their careers, and victimized on the basis of their gender through sexual harassment and discrimination.

Women have made tremendous strides in politics, work, education, and most other domains since the 1970s. However, concerns about unequal pay, discrimination, and the male hold on power persist today. Further, women in corporate power may not necessarily implement policies that help other women up the corporate ladder. For example, in February 2013, Marissa Mayer, newly appointed president and CEO of Yahoo, banned telecommuting in an effort to boost collaboration and productivity. This highly controversial policy change was criticized for making life harder for working mothers. Just a few months later, however, in April 2013, Yahoo changed its parental leave policy, increasing paid leave for both moms and dads and providing new parents with cash bonuses. This new parental leave policy may help ensure that working women (and especially mothers) can remain in and ultimately ascend the ranks at their corporate employers.

Is Bureaucracy an Outdated Model?

For quite a long while in the development of Western societies, Weber's model held well. In government, hospital administration, universities, and business organizations, bureaucracy seemed to be dominant. Although informal social groups always develop in bureaucratic settings and tend to function effectively in the workplace, it seemed as though the future might be just what Weber had anticipated: constantly increasing bureaucratization.

Bureaucracies still exist aplenty in the West, but Weber's idea that a clear hierarchy of authority, with power and knowledge concentrated at the top, is the only way to run a large organization is starting to look archaic. Numerous organizations are overhauling themselves to become less, rather than more, hierarchical. Traditional bureaucratic structures are now believed to stifle innovation and creativity in cutting-edge industries. Departing from rigid vertical command structures, many organizations are turning to "horizontal," collaborative models in order to become more flexible and responsive to fluctuating markets. In this section we examine some of the main forces behind these shifts, including globalization and the growth of information technology, and consider some of the ways in which modern organizations are reinventing themselves in light of changing circumstances.

The Transformation of Management

Traditional Western forms of management are hierarchical and authoritarian, whereas corporations in Japan, for example, typically focus on management-worker relations and try to ensure that employees at all levels feel a personal attachment to the company. The Japanese emphasis on teamwork, consensus-building approaches, and broad-based employee participation has been demonstrated to yield more productive and competitive workers. As a result, in the 1980s, many Western organizations began to introduce new management techniques in order to rival the productivity and competitiveness of their Japanese counterparts.

Two popular branches of management theory—human resource management and the corporate culture approach—have since been adopted by Western organizations. **Human resource management** is a style of management that regards a company's workforce as vital to its economic competitiveness: If the employees are not completely dedicated to the firm and its product, the firm will never be a leader in its field. To generate employee enthusiasm and commitment, the entire organizational culture must be retooled so that workers feel they have an investment in the workplace and in the work process.

The second management trend—creating a distinctive **corporate culture**—is closely related to human resource management. To promote loyalty to the company and pride in its work, the company's management works with employees to build an organizational culture involving rituals, events, or traditions unique to that company. These cultural activities are designed to draw all members of the firm—from the most senior managers to the newest employee—together in order to strengthen group solidarity. Company picnics,



Familiarize yourself with some of the alternatives to bureaucracy that have developed in other societies or in recent times. Think about the influence of technology on how organizations operate.

human resource management

A style of management that regards a company's workforce as vital to its economic competitiveness.

corporate culture

An organizational culture involving rituals, events, or traditions that are unique to a specific company.



For many, the word *corporate* conjures up images of a boring gray office. Yet, firms like Google are creating their own corporate cultures, offering perks like yoga classes and free food.

information technology

Forms of technology based on information processing and requiring microelectronic circuitry.

casual Fridays, and company-sponsored community service projects are examples of techniques for building a corporate culture.

Google, for example, has a distinctive corporate culture that is designed to help foster creativity and collaboration. The company encourages employees to design their own desks to fit their personal work styles. Scooters are kept on hand in the office so employees can zoom quickly to the other side of the building for a quick conversation with coworkers. Employees can take breaks at Lego stations or grab a bite at gourmet cafeterias that serve free breakfast, lunch, and dinner. These quirky perks help Google to define and uphold its own unique culture. “The philosophy is very simple,” said Google engineering director Craig Neville-Manning. “Google’s success depends on innovation and collaboration. Everything we did was geared toward making it easy to talk” (Stewart 2013).

Technology and Modern Organizations

The development of **information technology**—computers and electronic communication media such as the Internet—is another factor currently influencing organizational structures (Attaran 2004; Bresnahan, Brynjolfsson, and Hitt 2002; Castells 2000, 2001; Kanter 1991; Kobrin 1997; Zuboff 1988). Since data can be processed instantaneously in any part of the world linked to a computer-based communications system, there is no need for physical proximity between those involved. As a result, the introduction of new technology has allowed many companies to reengineer their organizational structure.

As we discussed earlier in the chapter, Marissa Mayer was roundly criticized for banning telecommuting at Yahoo. Telecommuting is an example of how large organizations have become more decentralized as the more routine tasks disappear,

reinforcing the tendency toward smaller, more flexible types of enterprises (Burris 1998). A good deal of office work, for instance, can be carried out by telecommuters who use the Internet and smartphones to do their work at home or somewhere other than their employer’s primary office. In 2014, 3.7 million people, or 2.5 percent of the workforce, worked from home at least half the time (Global Workplace Analytics 2015). Many who telecommute are “contract commuters” who work on contract, are self-employed, or are business owners, and the remaining are “employee telecommuters” who work from home for their employers. Telecommuters in the United States are typically males around forty years old who have college or advanced degrees and work in professional or managerial positions (WorldatWork 2011).

Telecommuting poses both advantages and disadvantages for workers and their employers. One explanation for why telecommuting increases productivity is that it



New technology has the power to reshape organizational structures. Telecommuting has allowed large organizations to become less centralized and more flexible.

eliminates time spent by workers commuting to and from the office, permitting greater concentration of energy on work-related tasks (Hartig, Johansson, and Kylin 2003). However, these flexible new work arrangements have repercussions. First, the employees lose the human side of work; computer terminals are not an attractive substitute for face-to-face interaction with colleagues and friends at work. The flexibility of telework creates new types of stress stemming from isolation, distraction, and conflicting demands of work and home responsibilities (Ammons and Markham 2004; Raghuram and Wiesenfeld 2004). Nearly 59 percent of telecommuters say that they work longer hours because they are working at home, though employers view this increased productivity as a primary benefit of telecommuting (International Telework Association and Council 2004).

On the other hand, management cannot easily monitor the activities of employees not under direct supervision (Dimitrova 2003; Kling 1996). While this may create problems for employers, it allows employees greater flexibility in managing their nonwork roles, thus contributing to increased worker satisfaction (Davis and Polonko 2001). Telecommuting also creates new possibilities for older workers and those with physical limitations to remain independent, productive, and socially connected (Bouma et al. 2004; Bricout 2004).

The growth of telecommuting is sparking profound changes in many social realms. It is restructuring business management practices and authority hierarchies within businesses (Illegems and Verbeke 2004; Spinks and Wood 1996), as well as contributing to new trends in housing and residential development that prioritize spatial and technological requirements for telework in homes, which are built at increasing distances from city centers (Hartig et al. 2003).

The experiences of telecommuters clearly show how organizational adaptations to new technologies can have both positive and negative consequences for workers. While computerization has resulted in a reduction in hierarchy, it has created a two-tiered occupational structure composed of technical “experts” and less-skilled production or clerical

workers. In these restructured organizations, jobs are redefined based more on technical skill than rank or position. For expert professionals, traditional bureaucratic constraints are relaxed to allow for creativity and flexibility, but other workers have limited autonomy (Burris 1993). Although professionals benefit more from this expanded autonomy, computerization makes production and service workers more visible and vulnerable to supervision (Wellman et al. 1996; Zuboff 1988).

Granted, the computerization of the workplace does have positive effects. It has made some mundane tasks associated with clerical jobs more interesting and flexible. And, as in the case of telecommuting, computerization can contribute to greater flexibility for workers to manage both their personal and professional lives.

The “McDonaldization” of Society

Not everyone agrees that our society and its organizations are moving away from the Weberian view of rigid, orderly bureaucracies. The idea that we are witnessing a process of debureaucratization, they argue, is overstated.



In a contribution to the debate over debureaucratization, George Ritzer (1993) has developed a vivid metaphor to express his view of the transformations taking place in industrialized societies. He argues that although some tendencies toward debureaucratization have indeed emerged, on the whole what we are witnessing is the “McDonaldization” of society. According to Ritzer, McDonaldization is “the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurants are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world.” Ritzer uses the four guiding principles for McDonald’s restaurants—efficiency, calculability, uniformity, and control through automation—to show that our society is becoming ever more rationalized with time.

If you have ever visited McDonald’s restaurants in two different locations, you will have noticed that there are very few differences between them. The interior decoration may vary slightly and the language spoken will most likely differ from country to country, but the layout, the menu, the procedure for ordering, the staff uniforms, the tables, the packaging, and the “service with a smile” are virtually identical. The McDonald’s system is deliberately constructed to maximize efficiency and minimize human responsibility and involvement in the process. Except for certain key tasks such as taking orders and pushing the start and stop buttons on cooking equipment, the restaurants’ functions are highly automated and largely run themselves.

Ritzer argues that society as a whole is moving toward this highly standardized and regulated model for getting things done. Ritzer, like Weber before him, is fearful of the harmful effects of bureaucratization on the human spirit and creativity. He argues that McDonaldization is making social life more homogeneous, more rigid, and less personal.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. How has the Japanese model influenced the Western approach to management?
2. Explain how the development of information technology has changed the ways people live and work.
3. According to George Ritzer, what are the four guiding principles used in McDonald’s restaurants? What does he mean by the “McDonaldization” of society?

How Do Groups and Organizations Affect Your Life?

Social Capital: The Ties That Bind

Most people join organizations to gain connections and increase their influence. The time and energy invested in an organization can yield valuable rewards. Parents who belong to the PTA, for example, are more likely to be able to influence school policy than those who do not belong. The members know whom to call, what to say, and how to exert pressure on school officials.

Sociologists call these benefits of organizational membership **social capital**, the social knowledge and connections that enable people to accomplish their goals and extend their influence (Coleman 1988, 1990; Loury 1987; Putnam 1993, 1995, 2000). Social capital is a broad concept and encompasses useful social networks, a sense of mutual obligation and trustworthiness, an understanding of the norms that govern



Learn how social capital enables people to accomplish their goals and expand their influence.

social capital

The social knowledge and connections that enable people to accomplish their goals and extend their influence.

effective behavior, and other social resources that enable people to act effectively. College students often become active in student government or the campus newspaper partly because they hope to learn social skills and make connections that will pay off when they graduate. They may, for example, get to interact with professors, administrators, or even successful alumni, who will then hopefully go to bat for them when they are looking for a job or applying to graduate school. Differences in social capital mirror larger social inequalities. In general, men have more capital than women, whites more than nonwhites, the wealthy more than the poor.

Robert Putnam (2000), a political scientist and author of the famous book *Bowling Alone*, distinguishes two types of social capital: *bridging*, which is outward looking and inclusive, and *bonding*, which is inward looking and exclusive. Bridging social capital unifies people across social cleavages, as exemplified by interfaith religious organizations or the civil rights movement, which brought blacks and whites together in the struggle for racial equality. Bonding social capital reinforces exclusive identities and homogeneous groups; it can be found in ethnic fraternal organizations, church-based women's reading groups, and elite country clubs.

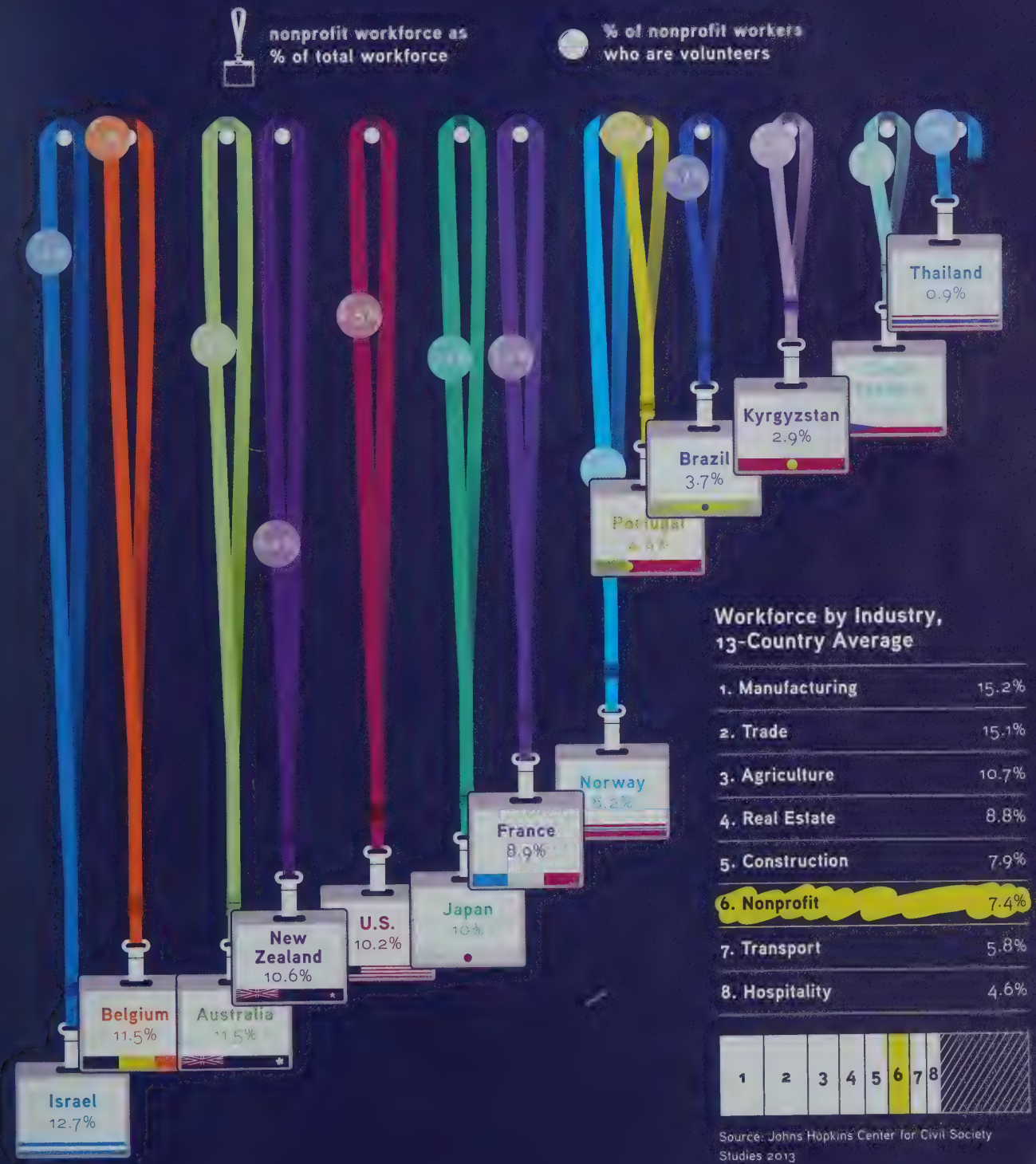
People who actively belong to organizations are more likely to feel connected; they feel engaged, able to somehow make a difference. Democracy flourishes when social capital is strong. Historically, declines in organizational membership, neighborliness, and trust in organizations and corporations have been paralleled by a decline in democratic participation and trust in the government.

Although scholars have bemoaned the fact that political involvement, club membership, and other forms of social and civic engagement that bind Americans to one another eroded significantly in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the high levels of voter turnout, especially among young voters, in the presidential elections of 2008 and 2012 provide a glimmer of optimism. In the 2008 and 2012 elections, 62 and 59 percent of eligible voters went to the polls, respectively. Both figures represent high levels of participation relative to presidential elections conducted over the last forty-four years. Even more telling, however, is the stark increase in the turnout of youthful voters. Fully 52 percent of persons between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine voted in the 2008 presidential election and 50 percent voted in 2012. Contrast those proportions with turnout rates of youthful voters of just 37 percent in 1996, 41 percent in 2000, and 48 percent in 2004 (Nonprofit Voter Engagement Network 2013).

Other indicators of social participation do not tell such an encouraging story. Attendance at public meetings concerning education or civic affairs has dropped sharply since the 1970s. Confidence in the U.S. government has also waned, especially upon the public's discovery in June 2013 that the National Security Agency was collecting and monitoring private citizens' telephone records and Internet use. Polls in July 2013 showed that more than half of Americans believe that the federal government's monitoring program is too much of an intrusion into their privacy. Even more pessimistic are recent surveys asking Americans "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?" In October 2015, one national poll found that just 3 percent said "just about always," while 16 percent said "most of the time" (Pew Research Center 2015d).

Nonprofit & Volunteer Sector

The nonprofit sector plays a key economic role worldwide. In countries such as the United States, Israel, and Australia, the nonprofit workforce—including paid workers and volunteers—accounts for more than 10 percent of the total workforce, making it one of the largest employers of any industry.



Source: Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies 2013

However, trust in the U.S. government ebbs and flows as the world around us changes. For instance, following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, researchers witnessed a resurgence of trust, with those saying that they trust the government some of the time doubling to nearly 60 percent (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2002). In times of crisis, Americans tend to pull together and social cohesion increases—even if just temporarily.

Some sociologists believe that another indicator of the weakening social ties in the United States is membership in clubs and social organizations. Research on declining membership in organizations such as the Sierra Club and the National Organization for Women is even more discouraging. The vast majority of these organizations' members simply pay their annual dues and receive a newsletter. Very few members actively participate, failing to develop the social capital Putnam regards as an important underpinning of democracy. Many of the most popular organizations today, such as twelve-step programs or weight loss groups, emphasize personal growth and health rather than collective goals to benefit society as a whole.

There are undoubtedly many reasons for these declines. For one, women, who were traditionally active in volunteer organizations, are more likely to hold a job than ever before. Furthermore, the commuting that results from flight to the suburbs uses up time and energy that might have been available for civic activities. But the principal source of declining civic participation, according to Putnam, is simple: television. The many hours Americans spend at home alone watching TV have replaced social engagement in the community.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What is social capital?
2. Describe the difference between bridging social capital and bonding social capital.

Conclusion

The primary groups of your earliest years were crucial in shaping your sense of self—a sense that changed very slowly thereafter. Throughout life, groups also instill in their members norms and values that enable and enrich social life. You may have found that close-knit, democratic groups with fair-minded leaders are better equipped to achieve their goals than less-close-knit groups or those with dictatorial or narrow-minded leaders.

Although groups remain central in our lives, group affiliation in the United States is rapidly changing. As you have seen in this chapter, conventional groups appear to be losing ground in our daily life. For example, today's college students are less likely to join civic groups and organizations than were their parents, a decline that may well signal a weaker commitment to their communities. Some sociologists worry that this signals a weakening of society itself, which could bring about social instability. Yet others argue that group life has been redefined, as young people belong to virtual groups and communities via social networking websites like Facebook and LinkedIn.

The global economy and information technology are also redefining group life in many diverse ways. For instance, your parents are likely to spend much of their careers in a handful of long-lasting, bureaucratic organizations; you are much more likely to be part of a larger number of networked, “flexible” ones. As we just noted, many of your group

affiliations are probably created through the Internet; in the future, your social ties may be created through other forms of communication that today can barely be envisioned. It will become increasingly easy to connect with like-minded people anywhere, creating geographically dispersed groups that span the planet—and whose members may never meet one another face-to-face.

How will these trends affect the quality of your social relationships? For nearly all of human history, most people interacted exclusively with others who were close at hand. The Industrial Revolution, which facilitated the rise of large, impersonal bureaucracies where people knew one another only casually if at all, changed social interaction. Today, the information revolution is once again changing human interaction. Tomorrow's groups and organizations could provide a renewed sense of communication and social intimacy—or they could spell further isolation and social distance.

The Big Picture

Groups, Networks, and Organizations

Thinking Sociologically

1. According to Georg Simmel, what are the primary differences between dyads and triads? Explain, according to his theory, how the addition of a child would alter the relationship between spouses. Does the theory fit this situation?
2. The advent of computers and the computerization of the workplace has changed our organizations and relationships with coworkers. Explain how you see modern organizations changing with the adaptation of newer information technologies.

Learning Objectives

What Are Social Groups?

p. 130

Learn the variety and characteristics of groups, as well as the effect of groups on an individual's behavior.

How Do We Benefit from Social Networks?

p. 137

Understand the importance of social networks and the advantages they confer on some people.

How Do Organizations Function?

p. 140

Know how to define an organization and understand how organizations developed over the last two centuries. Learn Max Weber's theory of organizations and view of bureaucracy.

Is Bureaucracy an Outdated Model?

p. 145

Familiarize yourself with some of the alternatives to bureaucracy that have developed in other societies or in recent times. Think about the influence of technology on how organizations operate.

How Do Groups and Organizations Affect Your Life?

p. 149

Learn how social capital enables people to accomplish their goals and expand their influence

Terms to Know

Concept Checks

social group • social aggregate • social category • in-groups • out-groups • primary groups • secondary groups • reference group • triads • leader • transformational leaders • transactional leaders • groupthink

1. What is the difference between social aggregates and social groups? Give examples that illustrate this difference.
2. Describe the main characteristics of primary and secondary groups.
3. When groups become large, why does their intensity decrease but their stability increase?
4. What is groupthink? How can it be used to explain why some decisions made by a group lead to negative consequences?

network

1. According to Granovetter, what are the benefits of weak ties? Why?
2. How do men's and women's weak ties differ?

organization • formal organization • bureaucracy • ideal type • formal relations • formal networks • iron law of oligarchy • oligarchy

1. What role do organizations play in contemporary society?
2. What does the term *bureaucracy* mean?
3. Describe five characteristics of an ideal type of bureaucracy.
4. Explain how modern organizations have developed in a gendered way.

human resource management • corporate culture • information technology

1. How has the Japanese model influenced the Western approach to management?
2. Explain how the development of information technology has changed the ways people live and work
3. According to George Ritzer, what are the four guiding principles used in McDonald's restaurants? What does he mean by the "McDonaldization" of society?

social capital

1. What is social capital?
2. Describe the difference between bridging social capital and bonding social capital

6

Conformity, Deviance, and Crime

Incarceration Rates

p. 179

Protesters and police gather on the one-year anniversary of the fatal shooting of eighteen-year-old Michael Brown. Ferguson, Missouri, was just one of many cities rocked by a police shooting of an unarmed black man.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

What is deviant behavior?

Learn how sociologists define deviance and how it is closely related to social power and social class. See the ways in which conformity is encouraged.

Why do people commit deviant acts?

Know the leading sociological, psychological, and biological theories of deviance and how each is useful in understanding crime.

How do we document crime?

Recognize the usefulness and limitations of crime statistics. Learn some important differences between men and women related to crime. Familiarize yourself with some of the varieties of crime.

Whose lives are affected by crime?

Understand why members of some social groups are more likely to commit or be the victims of crime.

How can crime be reduced?

Consider the ways in which individuals and governments can address crime.

How do crime and deviance affect your life?

Understand the costs and functions of crime and deviance.



At 12:01 p.m. on August 9, 2014, Officer Darren Wilson was driving down Canfield Drive in Ferguson, a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri, when he came across two black men walking in the street. By 12:04 p.m., when other officers arrived on the scene, one of the two men—eighteen-year-old Michael Brown—was dead. What exactly transpired between Wilson and Brown during those three minutes is anything but clear, but ultimately, in November of the same year, a St. Louis grand jury decided not to indict the twenty-eight-year-old officer for Brown's death.

One of the most controversial phenomena in recent American life has been a series of violent encounters between police and citizens of African American communities. Brown's death, along with other high-profile incidents in Staten Island, New York; Cleveland, Ohio; and Baltimore, Maryland, sparked nationwide protests—and inspired a movement. Born online, Black Lives Matter—which draws its name from a Twitter hashtag posted in the wake of George

Zimmerman's acquittal in the 2012 shooting death of Trayvon Martin—gained momentum in Ferguson, Missouri, where it held its first in-person protest after Brown was shot and killed. With dozens of chapters across the country, the movement has found its way onto college campuses, the campaign trail, even into the White House (Altman 2015).

This string of police shootings of unarmed black men raises countless questions for sociologists, including questions about crime, deviance, and violence. Has the incidence of such violence increased in recent years, or has the rise of cell phones with video capability made it possible to document behaviors that have long been prevalent but difficult to prove? Why does the criminal justice system fail to live up to the ideal of treating all equally? How do cultural factors contribute to the perpetuation and acceptance of violence? Can we ever say that murder is “justifiable”?

Sociologists are not the only ones who are captivated by such important questions. Americans are simultaneously fascinated and horrified by crime and often search long and hard for answers to the question, “Why would someone do such a thing?” The popularity of true crime shows like *Making a Murderer*, *America's Most Wanted*, *American Crime Story*, *Snapped*, *48 Hours*, and *Cold Case Files* reveals our fascination with criminals and their victims. While savage crimes grab national headlines, more mundane crimes like car theft and vandalism are far more common, as we will learn later in this chapter.

Crime and punishment are tightly woven into the fabric of life in the United States. The U.S. rate of incarceration is five to eight times higher than those of Canada and the countries of Western Europe. The United States is home to less than 5 percent of the world's population but almost a quarter of the world's prisoners (Walmsley 2016). The high rate of imprisonment in the United States in recent decades is due in part to “three strikes” laws, which became popular in the 1990s. These laws require state courts to hand down mandatory and often lengthy prison sentences to persons who have been convicted of a serious criminal offense three or more times. Yet, as we will see later in this chapter, not all people who commit a criminal offense are treated the same by agents of the criminal justice and legal systems.

In 2014, the number of prisoners held in federal and state correctional facilities was just over 1.5 million. Blacks and Latinos are overrepresented among the incarcerated: Blacks account for 36 percent of the total prison population yet just 13 percent of the overall U.S. population. Hispanics make up just 17 percent of the U.S. population but 22 percent of the prison population (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2015b).

Rates of imprisonment, in turn, have a profound impact on U.S. society. When individuals are in prison, they are not part of the labor force and thus are not counted in the rates of unemployment reported by the government. As a result, estimates of unemployment among some subgroups, such as African American men, may be understated. At the same time, incarceration increases the long-term chances of unemployment even after someone is released from prison (Western and Beckett 1999).

The study of crime is one of the most important in sociology. But criminal behavior—whether dealing drugs or committing murder—is just one category of a much larger field of study called “deviance” or “deviant behavior.” Deviants are those individuals who do not live by the rules that the majority of us follow. Some do so by choice; others are incapable of following the rules because they lack the resources to do so. Sometimes they're violent criminals, drug addicts, or down-and-outs who don't fit in with what most people would define as normal standards of acceptability. These are the cases that seem easy to identify.

n o r m s

Rules of conduct that specify appropriate behavior in a given range of social situations. A norm either prescribes a given type of behavior or forbids it. All human groups follow norms, which are always backed by sanctions of one kind or another—varying from informal disapproval to physical punishment.

Yet things are not quite as they appear—a lesson sociology often teaches us, for it encourages us to look beyond the obvious. The notion of the deviant, as we shall see, is actually not an easy one to define.

We have learned in previous chapters that social life is governed by rules or norms. **Norms**, which we discussed in Chapter 2, are clearly defined and established principles or rules people are expected to observe; they represent the dos and don'ts of society. However, some norms are more powerful and important than others. Early twentieth-century sociologist William Graham Sumner identified two types of norms. **Mores** (pronounced “morays”) are norms that are widely adhered to and have great social and moral significance. **Folkways**, by contrast, are the norms that guide our everyday actions. For example, cutting in front of someone in line at a coffee shop would be the violation of a folkway, whereas harassing the hardworking barista would be the violation of a more.

Norms affect every aspect of our lives. Orderly behavior on the highway, for example, would be impossible if drivers didn't observe the rule of driving on the right. No deviants here, you might think, except perhaps for the drunken or reckless driver. If you did think this, you would be incorrect. When we drive, most of us are not merely deviants but criminals. Most of us regularly drive at well above the legal speed limit, and some of us even text while driving—assuming there isn't a police car in sight. In such cases, breaking the law is normal behavior!

We are all rule breakers as well as conformists. We are all also rule creators. Most American drivers may break the law on the freeway, but in fact they've evolved informal rules that are superimposed on the legal rules. When the legal speed limit on the highway is 65 miles per hour, most drivers don't go above 75 or so, and they drive slower when passing through urban areas. When we begin the study of deviant behavior, we must consider which rules people are observing and which they are breaking. Nobody breaks all rules, just as no one conforms to all rules. As we shall see throughout this chapter, understanding who is or is not deviant, and why, is a fascinating question at the core of sociology.

What Is Deviant Behavior?

The study of deviant behavior is one of the most intriguing yet complex areas of sociology. It teaches us that none of us is quite as normal as we might like to think. It also helps us see that people whose behavior might appear incomprehensible or odd can be viewed as rational beings when we understand why they act as they do. The study of deviance, like other fields of sociology, directs our attention to social power, which encompasses gender, race, and social class. When we look at deviance from or conformity to social rules or norms, we always have to bear in mind the question, “Whose rules?” As we shall see, social norms are strongly influenced by divisions of power and class.

What Is Deviance?

Deviance may be defined as nonconformity to a given set of norms that are accepted by a significant number of people in a community or society. No society can be divided up in a simple way between those who deviate from norms and those who conform to them. Most of us on some occasions violate generally accepted rules of behavior. Although a

mores

Norms that are widely adhered to and have great moral or social significance. Violations are generally sanctioned strongly.

folkways

Norms that guide casual or everyday interactions. Violations are sanctioned subtly or not at all.

deviance

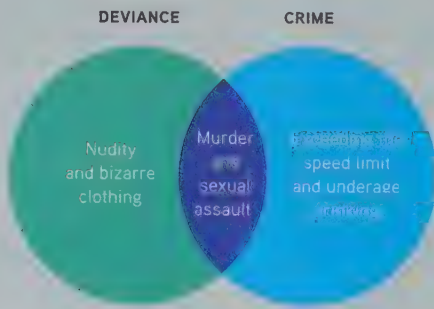
Modes of action that do not conform to the norms or values held by most members of a group or society. What is regarded as deviant is as variable as the norms and values that distinguish different cultures and subcultures from one another.



Learn how sociologists define deviance and how it is closely related to social power and social class. See the ways in which conformity is encouraged.

FIGURE 6.1

Intersection of Deviance and Crime



large share of all deviant behavior (such as committing assault or murder) is also criminal and violates the law, many deviant behaviors—ranging from bizarre fashion choices to joining a religious cult—are not criminal. By the same token, many behaviors that are technically “crimes,” such as underage drinking or exceeding the speed limit, are not considered deviant because they are quite normative (see Figure 6.1). Sociologists tend to focus much of their research on behaviors that are both criminal and deviant, as such behaviors have importance for the safety and well-being of our nation.

Although most of us associate the word *deviant* with behaviors that we view as dangerous or unsavory, the same deviant act can also be the

basis of membership in conventional society. Kevin Mitnick has been described as the “world’s most celebrated computer hacker.” To computer hackers everywhere, Mitnick is a path-breaking genius whose five-year imprisonment in a U.S. penitentiary was unjust and unwarranted—proof of how misunderstood computer hacking has become with the spread of information technology. To U.S. authorities and high-tech corporations, Mitnick is one of the world’s most dangerous men. A recent study estimates that hackers are responsible for more than 40 percent of all data breaches (Symantec Corporation 2016). Mitnick was captured by the FBI in 1995 and later convicted of downloading source code and stealing software allegedly worth millions of dollars from companies such as Motorola and Sun Microsystems. As a condition of his release from prison in January 2000, Mitnick was barred from using any communications technology other than a landline telephone. He successfully fought this legal decision and gained access to the Internet.

Today, the very same skills that made Mitnick a reviled deviant thought to threaten the very stability of the information age have led to a burgeoning new career in what he calls “ethical hacking.” As the founder of a consulting company, he tries to help governments and corporations test their security.

Deviance does not refer only to individual behavior; it concerns the activities of groups as well. Heaven’s Gate was a religious group whose beliefs and practices were different from those of the majority of Americans. The cult was established in the early 1970s when Marshall Herff Applewhite made his way around the West and Midwest of the United States preaching his beliefs, ultimately advertising on the Internet his belief that civilization was doomed and that the only way people could be saved was to kill themselves so their souls could be rescued by a UFO. On March 26, 1997, thirty-nine members of the cult followed his advice in a mass suicide at a wealthy estate in Rancho Santa Fe, California.

The Heaven’s Gate cult represents an example of a **deviant subculture**. Its members were able to survive fairly easily within the wider society, supporting themselves by running a website business and recruiting new members by sending email messages to people they thought might be interested in their beliefs. They had plenty of money and lived together in an expensive home in a wealthy Southern California suburb.

deviant subculture

A subculture whose members hold values that differ substantially from those of the majority.

Norms and Sanctions

We most often follow social norms because, as a result of socialization, we are accustomed to doing so. Individuals become committed to social norms through interactions with people who obey the law and mainstream values. Through these interactions, we learn self-control. The more numerous and frequent our interactions, the fewer opportunities we have to deviate from conventional norms. And, over time, the longer that we interact in ways that are conventional, the more we stand to lose by not conforming (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990).

All social norms are accompanied by sanctions that promote conformity and protect against nonconformity. A **sanction** is any reaction from others to the behavior of an individual or group that is meant to ensure that the person or group complies with a given norm. Sanctions may be positive (the offering of rewards for conformity) or negative (punishment for behavior that does not conform). They can also be formal or informal. Formal sanctions are applied by a specific body of people or an agency to ensure that a particular set of norms is followed, such as a speeding ticket or expulsion from school for cheating. Informal sanctions are less organized and more spontaneous reactions to nonconformity, such as when a student is teasingly accused by friends of being a nerd for deciding to stay home and study rather than go to a party.

The main types of formal sanctions in modern societies are those represented by the courts and prisons. The police, of course, are the agency charged with bringing offenders to trial and possible imprisonment. **Laws** are norms defined by governments as principles that their citizens must follow; sanctions are used against people who do not conform to them. Where there are laws, there are also **crimes**, since crime can most simply be defined as any type of behavior that breaks a law.

sanction

A mode of reward or punishment that reinforces socially expected forms of behavior.

laws

Rules of behavior established by a political authority and backed by state power.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- How do sociologists define deviance?
- Is all crime deviant? Is all deviance criminal? Why?
- Contrast positive and negative sanctions.

Why Do People Commit Deviant Acts?

One of the most vexing puzzles asked by social scientists and lay people alike is “Why are people deviant?” Part of the morbid allure of TV shows like *Snapped* is that we are truly puzzled and seek answers when we learn about the vicious beatings of innocent victims. Answers to the question vary widely, however, depending on one’s academic discipline and even, within sociology, one’s theoretical approach. We will briefly review biological and psychological explanations for deviance and then turn to the three sociological approaches that have been developed to interpret and analyze deviance: functionalist theories, interactionist theories, and conflict theories.

The Biological View of Deviance

Some of the first attempts to explain crime emphasized biological factors. The Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, working in the 1870s, believed that criminal types could be identified by the shape of the skull. He accepted that social learning could influence the



Know the leading sociological, psychological, and biological theories of deviance and how each is useful in understanding crime.

crimes

Any actions that contravene the laws established by a political authority.

development of criminal behavior, but he regarded most criminals as biologically degenerate or defective. Lombroso's ideas were later thoroughly discredited, but similar views have repeatedly been suggested.

Another theory distinguished three main types of human physique and claimed that one type was directly associated with delinquency. Muscular, active types (mesomorphs) were considered more likely to become delinquent than those of thin physique (ectomorphs) or more fleshy people (endomorphs) (Glueck and Glueck 1956; Sheldon et al. 1949).

Most biological theories have been widely criticized on methodological grounds. Even if there were a correlation between body type and delinquency, this would not necessarily reveal that one's body type "causes" criminal behavior. For instance, people who engage in criminal activities may need to develop more muscular physiques in order to protect themselves on the streets. Moreover, nearly all studies in this field have been restricted to delinquents in reform schools, and it may be that the tougher, athletic-looking delinquents are more likely to be sent to such schools than fragile-looking, skinny ones.

More recent, methodologically rigorous research has sought to rekindle the argument that deviance has a biological or genetic basis. In a study of New Zealand children, researchers investigated whether a child's propensity for aggressive behavior was linked to biological factors present at birth (Moffitt 1996). Rather than viewing biology as deterministic, this new breed of research emphasizes that biological factors, when combined with certain social factors such as home environment, could lead to social situations involving crime. This perspective, which emphasizes gene-environment interaction, reasons that one's genes may "select" or draw a person into a particular behavior, such as aggression. Yet at the same time, the social environment may strengthen or weaken the link between genetics and deviant behavior. For instance, even if a baby is born with a genetic predisposition for alcoholism, that baby would not likely become a problem drinker if his or her social environment provides few opportunities to drink.

The Psychological View of Deviance

Like biological interpretations, psychological theories of crime associate criminality with particular personality types. Some have suggested that in a minority of individuals, an amoral, or psychopathic, personality develops. **Psychopaths** are withdrawn, emotionless characters who delight in violence for its own sake.

Individuals with psychopathic traits do sometimes commit violent crimes, but there are major problems with the concept of the psychopath. It isn't at all clear that psychopathic traits are inevitably criminal. Nearly all studies of people said to possess these characteristics have been of convicted prisoners, and their personalities inevitably tend to be presented negatively. If we describe the same traits positively, the personality type sounds quite different, and there seems to be no reason that people of this sort should be inherently criminal. Such people might be explorers, spies, gamblers, or just bored with the routines of day-to-day life. They might be prepared to contemplate criminal adventures but could be just as likely to look for challenges in socially respectable ways.

Psychological theories of criminality can at best explain only some aspects of crime. While some criminals may possess personality characteristics distinct from characteristics of the remainder of the population, it is highly improbable that the majority of criminals do. There are all kinds of crimes, and it is implausible that those who commit them share some specific psychological characteristics. Some crimes are carried out by lone individuals,

psychopath

A specific personality type; such individuals lack the moral sense and concern for others held by most normal people.

whereas others are the work of organized groups. It is not likely that the psychological makeup of people who are loners will have much in common with that of the members of a close-knit gang. Observational studies also can't discount the possibility that becoming involved with criminal groups influences people's outlooks, rather than that the outlooks actually produce criminal behavior in the first place.

Both biological and psychological approaches to criminality presume that deviance is a sign of something "wrong" with the individual rather than with society. They see crime and deviance as caused by factors outside an individual's control, embedded either in the body or in the mind. Often, scholars working in this tradition consider deviance to be caused by biological factors that require treatment, such as mental illness or a genetic tendency toward violence. These early approaches to criminology came under great criticism from later generations of scholars, who argued that any satisfactory account of the nature of crime must be sociological, for what crime is depends on the social institutions of a society.

Sociological Perspectives on Deviance

Contemporary sociological thinking about crime emphasizes that definitions of conformity and deviance vary based on one's social context. Modern societies contain many different subcultures, and behavior that conforms to the norms of one particular subculture may be regarded as deviant outside it; for instance, there may be strong pressure on a gang member to prove himself or herself by stealing a car. Moreover, there are wide divergences of wealth and power in society that greatly influence opportunities open to different groups. Theft and burglary, not surprisingly, are carried out mainly by people from the poorer segments of the population; embezzling and tax evasion are by definition limited to persons in positions of some affluence.

FUNCTIONALIST THEORIES

Functionalist theories see crime and deviance as resulting from structural tensions and a lack of moral regulation within society. If the aspirations held by individuals and groups in society do not coincide with available rewards, this disparity between desires and fulfillment will lead to deviant behavior.

Crime and Anomie: Durkheim and Merton As we saw in Chapter 1, the notion of **anomie** was first introduced by Émile Durkheim, who suggested that in modern societies, social norms may lose their hold over individual behavior. Anomie exists when there are no clear standards to guide behavior in a given area of social life. Under such circumstances, Durkheim believed, people feel disoriented and anxious; anomie is therefore one of the social factors influencing dispositions to suicide.

Durkheim saw crime and deviance as social facts; he believed both to be inevitable and necessary elements in modern societies. According to Durkheim, people in the modern age are less constrained by social expectations than they were in traditional societies. Because there is more room for individual choice in the modern world, nonconformity is inevitable. Durkheim recognized that modern society would never be in complete consensus about the norms and values that govern it.

Deviance is also necessary for society, according to Durkheim; it fulfills two important functions. First, deviance has an adaptive function. By introducing new ideas and challenges into society, deviance is an innovative force. It brings about

anomie

A concept first brought into wide usage in sociology by Durkheim, referring to a situation in which social norms lose their hold over individual behavior.

change. Second, deviance promotes boundary maintenance between “good” and “bad” behaviors in society. A criminal act can ultimately enhance group solidarity and clarify social norms.

Deviance can also contribute to the stability of society. In his classic essay on prostitution, functionalist theorist Kingsley Davis (1937) wrote that even though prostitution is illegal, it is functional for society because it allows married men to fulfill their sexual urges with a new partner without threatening their marriages. By contrast, a married man who forms an emotional attachment with a woman with whom he is having a “legal” though clandestine relationship can threaten both his and her marriages. Prostitution, Davis argued, indirectly contributes to the stability of the family.

Early functionalist perspectives on crime and deviance helped shift attention from explanations focused on the problems of individuals to explanations focused on social forces. Durkheim’s notion of anomie was drawn on by American sociologist Robert K. Merton (1957), who constructed a highly influential theory of deviance that located the source of crime within the very structure of American society. In what became known as “strain theory,” Merton modified the concept of anomie to refer to the strain put on individuals’ behavior when accepted norms conflict with social reality. In American society—and to some degree in other industrial societies—generally held values emphasize material success, and the means of achieving success are supposed to be self-discipline and hard work. Accordingly, it is believed that people who work hard can succeed regardless of their starting point in life. This idea is not in fact valid because most of the disadvantaged have very few conventional opportunities for advancement, such as a high-quality education. Yet those who do not “succeed” find themselves condemned for their apparent inability to make material progress. In this situation, there is great pressure to try to get ahead by any means, legitimate or illegitimate. According to Merton, then, deviance is a by-product of economic inequalities.

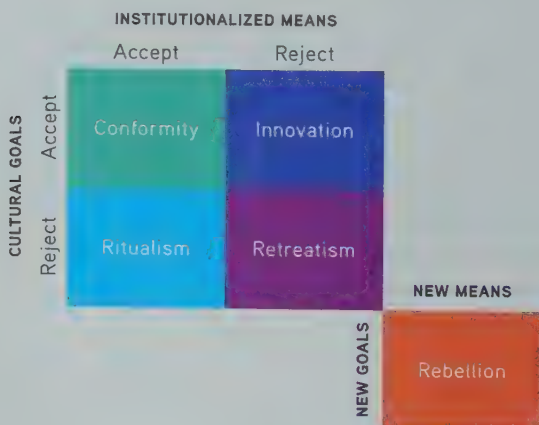
Merton identifies five possible reactions to the tensions between socially endorsed values and the limited means of achieving them (see Figure 6.2). *Conformists* accept both

societal values and the conventional means of realizing them, regardless of whether they meet with success. The majority of the population falls into this category. *Innovators* accept socially approved values but use illegitimate or illegal means to follow them. Criminals who acquire wealth through illegal activities exemplify this type.

Ritualists conform to socially accepted standards although they have lost sight of the values behind these standards. They follow rules for their own sake without a broader end in view, in a compulsive way. A ritualist might remain in a boring job even though it has no career prospects and provides few rewards. *Retreatists* have abandoned the competitive outlook altogether, thus rejecting both the dominant values and the approved means of achieving them. An example would be the members of a self-supporting commune. Finally, *rebels* reject both the existing

FIGURE 6.2

Merton’s Deviance Typology





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The Playboys gang is an example of a subcultural group that has adopted norms encouraging criminal behavior such as drug trafficking.

values and the means of pursuing them but wish actively to substitute new values and reconstruct the social system. The members of radical political and religious groups, such as the Heaven's Gate cult, fall into this category.

Merton's writings addressed one of the main puzzles in the study of criminology: At a time when society as a whole is becoming more affluent, why do crime rates continue to rise? By emphasizing the contrast between rising aspirations and persistent inequalities, Merton points to a sense of **relative deprivation**, or the recognition that one has less than his or her peers, as an important element in deviant behavior.

Subcultural Explanations Later researchers located deviance in terms of subcultural groups that adopt norms that encourage or reward criminal behavior. Like Merton, Albert Cohen saw the contradictions within American society as the main cause of crime. However, Cohen saw the responses occurring collectively, through subcultures, while Merton emphasized individual responses. In *Delinquent Boys* (1955), Cohen argued that boys in the lower working class who are frustrated with their positions in life often join together in delinquent subcultures, such as gangs. These subcultures reject middle-class values and replace them with norms that celebrate defiance, such as delinquency and other acts of nonconformity.

Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin (1960) argued further that such gangs arise in subcultural communities where the chances of achieving success legitimately are slim, such as among deprived ethnic minorities. Cloward and Ohlin's work emphasizes connections between conformity and deviance: Individuals follow rules when they have the opportunity to do so, and break rules when they do not. As a result, they develop subcultures with deviant values in response to the lack of legitimate opportunities for success as defined by the wider society. This lack of opportunity is the differentiating factor between those who engage in criminal behavior and those who do not.

Functionalist theories rightly emphasize connections between conformity and deviance in different social contexts. We should be cautious, however, about the idea that people

relative deprivation

The recognition that one has less than his or her peers.

in poorer communities aspire to the same level of success as more affluent people. Most tend to adjust their aspirations to what they see as the reality of their situation. Merton, Cohen, and Cloward and Ohlin can all be criticized for presuming that middle-class values have been accepted throughout society. It would also be wrong to suppose that a mismatch of aspirations and opportunities is confined to the less privileged. There are pressures toward criminal activity among other groups, too, as indicated by the so-called white-collar crimes of embezzlement, fraud, and tax evasion.

INTERACTIONIST THEORIES

Sociologists studying crime and deviance in the interactionist tradition focus on deviance as a socially constructed phenomenon. They reject the idea that there are types of conduct that are inherently “deviant.” Rather, interactionists ask how behaviors initially come to be defined as deviant and why certain groups and not others are labeled as deviant.

Learned Deviance: Differential Association One of the earliest writers to suggest that deviance is learned through interaction with others was Edwin H. Sutherland. In 1949, Sutherland advanced a notion that influenced much of the later interactionist work: He linked crime to what he called **differential association**. Differential association theory argues that we learn deviant behavior in precisely the same way we learn about conventional behavior: from our contacts with primary groups such as peers, family members, and coworkers. The term *differential* refers to the ratio of deviant to conventional social contacts. We become deviant when exposed to a higher level of deviant persons and influences, compared with conventional influences. In a society that contains a variety of subcultures, some individuals have greater exposure to social environments that encourage illegal activities.

Labeling Theory One of the most important interactionist approaches to understanding criminality is **labeling theory**. An early work based on labeling theory is Howard S. Becker's (1963) study of marijuana smokers. In the early 1960s, marijuana use was a marginal activity carried on by subcultures rather than the lifestyle choice—that is, an activity accepted by many in the mainstream of society—it is today (Hathaway 1997). Becker found that becoming a marijuana smoker depended on one's acceptance into the subculture, close association with experienced users, and one's attitudes toward nonusers. Labeling theorists like Becker interpret deviance not as a set of characteristics of individuals or groups but as a process of interaction between deviants and nondeviants. In other words, it is not the act of marijuana smoking that makes one a deviant but the way others react to marijuana smoking.

While other sociological perspectives are focused on why people are deviant, labeling theorists seek to understand why some people become tagged with a deviant label. In short, persons with the greatest social and economic power tend to place labels on those with less social power. Further, the labels that create categories of deviance thus express the power structure of society; such rules are framed by the wealthy for the poor, by men for women, by older people for younger people, and by ethnic majorities for minority groups. For example, many children wander into other people's gardens, steal fruit, or play truant. In an affluent neighborhood, these might be regarded by parents, teachers, and police alike as relatively innocent pastimes of childhood. In poor areas, they might be seen as evidence of tendencies toward juvenile delinquency.

differential association

An interpretation of the development of criminal behavior proposed by Edwin H. Sutherland, according to whom criminal behavior is learned through association with others who regularly engage in crime.

labeling theory

An approach to the study of deviance that suggests that people become “deviant” because certain labels are attached to their behavior by political authorities and others.



According to interactionists, it's not the act of smoking marijuana that makes one a deviant, but the way others react to marijuana smoking.

Once a child is labeled a delinquent, he or she is stigmatized as a deviant and is likely to be considered untrustworthy by teachers and prospective employers. The child then relapses into further criminal behavior, widening the gulf with orthodox social conventions. Edwin Lemert (1972) called the initial act of rule breaking **primary deviance**. **Secondary deviance** occurs when the individual comes to accept the label and sees himself or herself as deviant. The “self-fulfilling prophecy” may occur, where the labeled person begins to behave in such a way that perpetuates the deviant behavior. Research has shown that how we think of ourselves and how we believe others perceive us influence our propensity for committing crime. One study of a random national sample of young men showed that such negative self-appraisals are strongly tied to levels of criminality; in other words, the perception that one is deviant may in fact motivate deviant behavior (Matsueda 1992).

Labeling theory is important because it begins from the assumption that no act is intrinsically deviant. Rather, to be “deviant,” one must be labeled as such. In the case of criminal activity, definitions of criminality are established by the powerful through the formulation of laws and their interpretation by police, courts, and correctional institutions. Critics of labeling theory have sometimes argued that certain acts, such as murder, rape, and robbery, are consistently prohibited across virtually all cultures. This view is surely incorrect. Even within our own culture, killing is not always regarded as murder. In a highly controversial case, George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer who shot and killed an unarmed seventeen-year-old high school student named Trayvon Martin, was ultimately found not guilty of murder by a Florida jury. The jury ruled that Zimmerman acted in self-defense and was therefore protected under the state’s stand-your-ground law, which permits an individual to use deadly force when faced with the risk of great bodily harm. To provide another example, in times of war, killing of the enemy is positively approved.

We can more convincingly criticize labeling theory on other grounds. First, in emphasizing the active process of labeling, labeling theorists neglect the processes that lead to

primary deviance

According to Edwin Lemert, the actions that cause others to label one as a deviant.

secondary deviance

According to Edwin Lemert, following the act of primary deviance, secondary deviation occurs when an individual accepts the label of deviant and acts accordingly.

acts defined as deviant. Labeling certain activities as deviant is not completely arbitrary; differences in socialization, attitudes, and opportunities influence how far people engage in behavior likely to be labeled deviant. For instance, children from deprived backgrounds are on average more likely to steal from shops than richer children are. It is not the labeling that leads them to steal in the first place so much as their background. Second, it is not clear whether labeling actually does have the effect of increasing deviant conduct. Delinquent behavior tends to increase following a conviction, but is this the result of the labeling itself? Other factors, including increased interaction with other delinquents or learning about new criminal opportunities, may be involved.

Control Theory Control theory posits that crime occurs as a result of an imbalance between impulses toward criminal activity and the social or physical controls that deter it. Core assumptions are that people act rationally and that, given the opportunity, everyone would engage in deviant acts. Many types of crime, it is argued, are a result of “situational decisions”—a person sees an opportunity and is motivated to act.

One of the best-known control theorists, Travis Hirschi, has argued that humans are fundamentally rational beings who make calculated decisions about whether to engage in criminal activity by weighing the potential benefits and risks of doing so. In *Causes of Delinquency* (1969), Hirschi claims that there are four types of bonds that link people to society and law-abiding behavior: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. *Attachment* refers to emotional and social ties to persons who accept conventional norms, such as a peer group of students who value good grades and hard work. *Commitment* refers to the rewards obtained by participating in conventional activities and pursuits. For example, a high school dropout has little to lose by being arrested, whereas a dedicated student may lose his or her chance of going to college. *Involvement* refers to one's participation in conventional activities such as paid employment, school, or community activities. Finally, *beliefs* involve upholding morals and values that are consistent with conventional tenets of society.

When sufficiently strong, these four elements help maintain social control and conformity by rendering people unfree to break rules. If these bonds with society are weak, however, delinquency and deviance may result. Hirschi's approach suggests that delinquents are often individuals whose low levels of self-control are a result of inadequate socialization at home or at school (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990).

CONFLICT THEORY

Adherents of conflict theory seek to identify why people commit crime. Conflict theorists draw on elements of Marxist thought to argue that deviance is deliberately chosen and often political in nature. Conflict theorists reject the idea that deviance is “determined” by factors such as biology, personality, anomie, social disorganization, or labels. Rather, individuals purposively engage in deviant behavior in response to the inequalities of the capitalist system. For example, many of the protesters who were arrested at Occupy Wall Street rallies were engaging in political acts that challenged the social order.

Conflict theorists frame their analysis of crime and deviance in terms of the structure of society and the preservation of power among the ruling class. For example, they argue that laws are tools used by the powerful to maintain their own privileged positions. They reject the idea that laws are neutral and are applied evenly across the population. Instead, they claim that as inequalities increase between the ruling class and the working class,

law becomes an ever-more-important instrument for the powerful to maintain order. This dynamic can be seen in the workings of the criminal justice system, which has become increasingly oppressive toward working-class “offenders” or in tax legislation that disproportionately favors the wealthy.

This power imbalance is not restricted to the creation of laws, however. The powerful also break laws, but they are rarely caught. These crimes on the whole are much more significant than the everyday crime and delinquency that attract the most attention. But fearful of the implications of pursuing white-collar criminals, law enforcement instead focuses its efforts on less powerful members of society such as prostitutes, drug users, and petty thieves (Chambliss 1988; Pearce 1976). Studies by Chambliss, Pearce, and others have played an important role in widening the debate about crime and deviance to include questions of social justice, power, and politics. They emphasize that crime occurs at all levels of society and must be understood in the context of inequalities and competing interests among social groups.

Theoretical Conclusions

Whether someone engages in a criminal act or comes to be regarded as a criminal is influenced fundamentally by social learning and social surroundings. The way in which crime is understood directly affects the policies developed to combat it. For example, if crime is seen as the product of deprivation or social disorganization, policies might be aimed at reducing poverty and strengthening social services. If criminality is seen as freely chosen by individuals, attempts to counter it will take a different form. Now let’s look directly at the nature of the criminal activities occurring in modern societies, paying particular attention to crime in the United States.

How Do We Document Crime?

Crime statistics are a constant focus of attention in the media. Most TV and newspaper reporting is based on official statistics on crime, collected by the police and published by the government. Most of these reports are based on two sources: Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) and victimization studies. Each has its own limitations and offers only a partial portrait of crime in American life.

Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) contain official data on crime that is reported to law enforcement agencies across the country that then provide the data to the FBI (see Figure 6.3). UCR focus on “index crimes,” which include serious crimes such as murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, robbery, forcible rape, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. Critics of UCR note that the reports do not accurately reflect crime rates because they include only those crimes reported to law enforcement agencies; they don’t, for example, include crimes reported to other agencies, such as the IRS. Further, the index crimes do not include less serious crimes. Some argue

CONCEPT CHECKS

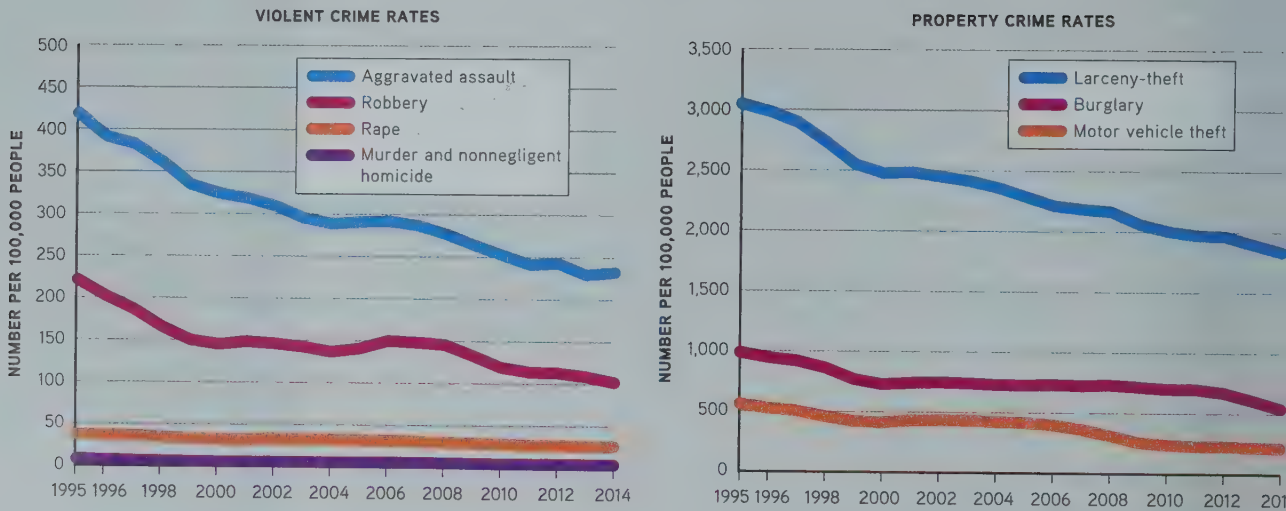
1. What are the main similarities and differences between biological and psychological views of deviance?
2. How do Merton’s and Durkheim’s definitions of anomie differ?
3. According to subcultural explanations, how does criminal behavior get transmitted from one group to another?
4. What is the core idea behind differential association theory?
5. What are two criticisms of labeling theory?
6. What are the root causes of crime according to conflict theorists?



Recognize the usefulness and limitations of crime statistics. Learn some important differences between men and women related to crime. Familiarize yourself with some of the varieties of crime.

FIGURE 6.3

Crime Rates in the United States, 1995–2014



Note: The murder and nonnegligent homicides that occurred as a result of the events of September 11, 2001, are not included in this table.

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation 2015e

Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)

Documents that contain official data on crime that is reported to law enforcement agencies that then provide the data to the FBI.

that by excluding crimes that are traditionally committed by middle-class persons, such as fraud and embezzlement, UCR reify the belief that crime is an activity of ethnic minorities and the poor.

Because the UCR program focuses narrowly on crimes reported to the police, criminologists also rely on self-reports, or reports provided by the crime victims themselves. This second source of data is essential, as some criminologists think that about half of all serious crimes, such as robbery with violence, go unreported. The proportion of less serious crimes, especially small thefts, that don't come to the attention of the police is even higher. Since 1973, the Census Bureau has been interviewing households across the country to find out how many members were the victims of particular crimes over the previous six months. This procedure, which is called the National Crime Victimization Survey, has confirmed that the overall rate of crime is higher than the reported crime index. Crimes where victims may feel stigmatized are most likely to go unreported. For instance, in 2014, only 34 percent of rape or sexual assault victimizations were reported, compared with 61 percent of robberies and 60 percent of burglaries (Truman and Langton 2015).

Public concern in the United States tends to focus on crimes of violence—murder, assault, and rape—even though only about 12 percent of all crimes are violent (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2015e). To put this in perspective, roughly 1.2 million violent crimes occurred in the United States in 2014 compared with 8.3 million property offenses, including vandalism and home break-ins. In general, whether indexed by police statistics or by the National Crime Victimization Survey, violent crime, burglary, and car theft are

more common in cities than in the suburbs surrounding them, and they are more common in the suburbs than in smaller towns.

Beginning in the 1990s, crime rates began to decline nationwide. In 2011, the FBI announced that crime rates had reached a forty-year low—even in the aftermath of the recession of 2008, bucking the conventional wisdom that poor economic conditions lead to elevated crime rates. Incredibly, rates of murder, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery dropped considerably, though certain cities (such as New York) experienced some increases in violent crime. That said, these increases pale in comparison to comparable figures in the 1990s (Oppel 2011).

Criminologists nationwide have offered a number of explanations for this decline. Some have suggested that better economic conditions and lower unemployment lead to decreased crime rates, though lower crime rates following the recent recession present a challenge to this theory. Others argue that citizens have become more adept at protecting themselves against crime through the use of sophisticated home security systems, while policing has become more targeted and disciplined, with police now using “hot-spot policing” to station officers around areas in which they know crime rates are relatively high. Still more scholars have suggested that the drop in crime may be related to decreasing cocaine and illegal drug usage or lower levels of lead in Americans’ blood, which has been linked to higher levels of aggression in children (Wilson 2011).

The United States has relatively high rates of violent crime compared to other industrialized nations. One reason often given to explain the relatively high violent crime rate is the widespread availability of handguns and other firearms. The belief that one has a personal right to “bear arms” is widespread in American culture. But gun control laws alone would not be sufficient to tackle violent crime in the United States. Switzerland has very low rates of violent crime, yet firearms are easily accessible. All Swiss males are members of the citizen army and keep weapons in their homes, including rifles, revolvers, and sometimes other automatic weapons, plus ammunition; and gun licenses in Switzerland are easy to obtain (Bachmann 2012).

The most likely explanation for the high level of violent crime in the United States is a combination of the availability of firearms, the general influence of the “frontier tradition,” and the subcultures of violence in large cities. Violence by frontiersmen and vigilantes is an honored part of American history; Daniel Boone, Davey Crockett, and other folk heroes are almost always depicted with a rifle in hand (Charles River Editors 2013). Also, some of the first established immigrant areas in cities developed their own informal modes of neighborhood control, backed by violence or the threat of violence. Similarly, young people in African American and Hispanic communities today have developed subcultures of manliness and honor associated with rituals of violence, and some belong to gangs whose everyday life is one of drug dealing, territory protection, and violence (Venkatesh 2008). Many states uphold a stand-your-ground law, which allows a person to use deadly force in self-defense without first attempting to retreat. This controversial law is believed by many social scientists to normalize or justify the use of guns and violence (Vedantam and Schultz 2013).

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What are the main sources of crime data in the United States?
2. Contrast Uniform Crime Reports and the National Crime Victimization Survey.
3. Describe crime trends in the 1970s through today.
4. How would sociologists explain the high rate of violent crime in the United States?



Understand why members of some social groups are more likely to commit or be the victims of crime.

Whose Lives Are Affected by Crime?

Are some individuals or groups more likely to commit crimes or to become the victims of crime? Criminologists say yes; research and crime statistics show that crime and victimization are not random occurrences across the population. Men, young persons, and African Americans are more likely than women, older persons, and whites to be both crime victims and perpetrators. Young African American men face a triple disadvantage in the United States: Being young, black, and male are all associated with an elevated death rate due to murder.

Emerging evidence suggests that sexual minorities, including gays, lesbians, and transgender persons, may also have a higher-than-average risk of crime victimization, including hate crimes. A **hate crime** is a criminal act motivated by some bias, such as racism, sexism, or homophobia. In 2014, 5,479 hate crimes were reported in the United States. Roughly half were racially motivated, 19 percent resulted from sexual orientation bias, 19 percent by religious bias, 12 percent stemmed from ethnicity/national origin bias, and 1.5 percent were prompted by disability bias (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2015a).

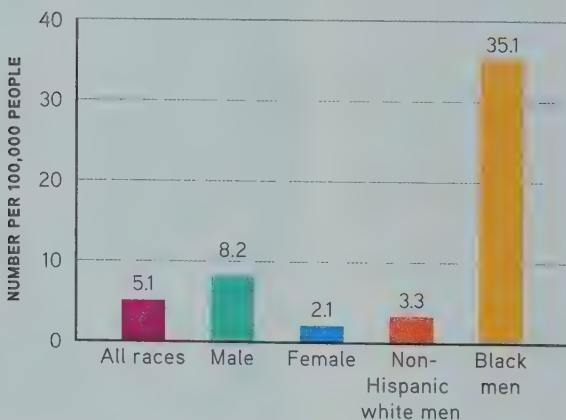
The likelihood of someone becoming a victim of crime is not linked only to their personal characteristics. Rather, victimization rates also vary based on where a person lives. Individuals living in poor inner-city neighborhoods run a much greater risk of becoming victims of crime than residents of more affluent suburban areas. That ethnic minorities are concentrated disproportionately in inner-city regions appears to be a significant factor in their higher rates of victimization.

hate crime

A criminal act by an offender who is motivated by some bias, such as racism, sexism, or homophobia.

FIGURE 6.4

Homicide Death Rates, 2013



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2016i

Gender and Crime

Sociological studies of crime and deviance have traditionally ignored half the population. Feminists have been correct in criticizing criminology for being a male-dominated discipline in which women are largely invisible in both theoretical considerations and empirical studies. Since the 1970s, many important feminist works have drawn attention to the way in which criminal transgressions by women occur in different contexts from those by men and to how women's experiences with the criminal justice system are influenced by certain gendered assumptions about appropriate male and female roles. Feminists have also highlighted the prevalence of violence against women, both at home and in public.

The statistics on gender and crime are startling. Of all crimes reported in 2014, an overwhelming 73 percent of arrestees were men (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2015d). Men drastically outnumber women in prison, not

only in the United States but in all industrialized countries. Women made up only 7 percent of the American prison population in 2014. Men and women also vary in the types of crimes they commit; women rarely engage in violent crime and instead tend to commit less serious offenses. Petty thefts like shoplifting and public order offenses such as public drunkenness and prostitution are typical female crimes. Recent research by feminist scholars, however, reveals that violence is not exclusively a characteristic of male criminality. By studying girl gangs, female terrorists, and women prisoners, scholars have demonstrated that women do in fact participate in violent crime (albeit less often than men). Moreover, men and women are often quite similar in their motivations for turning to criminal behavior.

One thing is clear, though: Female rates of criminality are consistently lower than those of men. A controversial argument set forth in the 1950s proposed that the gender gap in crime may be less vast than statistics suggest. Otto Pollak (1950) argued that women's crimes may go undetected or unreported, or they may be treated more leniently by (male) police officers, who adopt a "chivalrous" attitude toward them. There is some evidence that female lawbreakers often avoid coming before the courts because they are able to persuade the police or other authorities to see their actions in a particular light. They invoke what has been called the "gender contract"—the implicit contract between men and women whereby to be a woman is to be erratic and impulsive, on the one hand, and in need of protection on the other (Worrall 1990).

Yet differential treatment alone could hardly account for the vast difference between male and female rates of crime. The reasons are almost certainly the same as those that explain gender differences in other spheres. "Male crimes" remain "male" because of differences in socialization and because men's activities and involvements are still more nondomestic than those of most women. Further, control theory may also offer insights. Because women are usually the primary caregivers to their children and other relatives, they may have attachments and commitments that deter them from engaging in deviant acts. Imprisonment would have very high and undesirable costs both to women and to their kin. As the boundaries between men's and women's social roles increasingly blur, criminologists have predicted that gender equality will reduce or eliminate the differences in criminality between men and women. As of yet, however, crime remains a gendered phenomenon.

Youth and Crime

Popular fear about crime centers on offenses such as theft, burglary, assault, and rape—street crimes that are largely seen as the domain of young working-class males. Media coverage often focuses on moral breakdown among young people and highlights such issues as vandalism, school truancy, and drug use to illustrate the increasing permissiveness in society. This equation of youth with criminal activity is not a new one, according to some sociologists. Young people are often taken as an indicator of the health and welfare of society itself.



Although women still comprise a small proportion of the prison population—7 percent in 2014—the number of incarcerated women has risen significantly over the past quarter century.



Official crime statistics do reveal high rates of offense among young people: Nearly a quarter (24 percent) of all offenders arrested for criminal offenses in 2014 were age twenty-one or younger. For both males and females, the share of arrests peaks around age eighteen or nineteen and declines thereafter (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2015c). Control theory has been used to explain this pattern, called the *age-crime curve*. As young people gradually transition into adulthood, they acquire those social attachments and commitments that make “conventional” behavior rewarding. As they marry, have children, find jobs, and set up their own homes, the “cost” of deviance rises; rational actors would not want to risk losing their families and homes and thus avoid deviant acts.

Although criminologists have demonstrated persuasively that most youthful deviants go on to lead perfectly happy, healthy, law-abiding lives, widespread panic about youth criminality persists. Importantly, this panic may not accurately reflect social reality. An isolated event involving young people and crime can be transformed symbolically into a full-blown crisis of childhood, demanding tough law-and-order responses. The high-profile mass murders at Columbine High School in 1999, Virginia Tech University in 2007, Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012, and Umpqua Community College in 2015 are examples of how moral outrage can deflect attention from larger societal issues. Columbine was a watershed event in media portrayals of youth crime, and some have speculated that it led to “copycat” school killings in high schools across the United States. Even though the number of murders committed on school and university grounds has declined over the past quarter century, attention to these high-profile mass murders has led many to think that all youth are potential violent threats.

Similar caution can be expressed about the popular view of drug use by teenagers. Every year, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services conducts the National Survey of Drug Use and Health about drug-use habits. In 2014, it surveyed more than 65,000 people over the age of twelve and found that 9 percent of respondents between the ages of twelve and seventeen were current users of illicit drugs—the most common of which was marijuana—compared to 22 percent of respondents ages eighteen to twenty-five. While it did find an increase in drug use overall in 2014, most of this rise was driven by increased use of marijuana, which many states have legalized or decriminalized in recent years. According to the survey, 7 percent of young people between the ages of twelve and seventeen and 20 percent of young adults ages eighteen to twenty-five had used marijuana in the past month (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2015). Trends in drug use have shifted away from hard drugs, such as heroin and cocaine, and toward combinations of substances such as amphetamines, prescription drugs like Oxycontin, alcohol, and Ritalin and other stimulants. The war on drugs, some have argued, criminalizes large segments of the youth population who are generally law abiding (Muncie 1999).

Taking illegal drugs, like other forms of socially deviant behavior, is often defined in racial, class, and cultural terms; different drugs come to be associated with different groups and behaviors. When crack cocaine appeared in the 1980s, it was quickly defined by the media as the drug of choice for black inner-city kids who listened to hip-hop. Perhaps as a result, jail sentences for crack possession were set at higher levels than sentences for possession of cocaine, which was associated more with white and suburban users. Ecstasy has, until recently, had similar white and middle- or upper-class associations.

Crimes of the Powerful

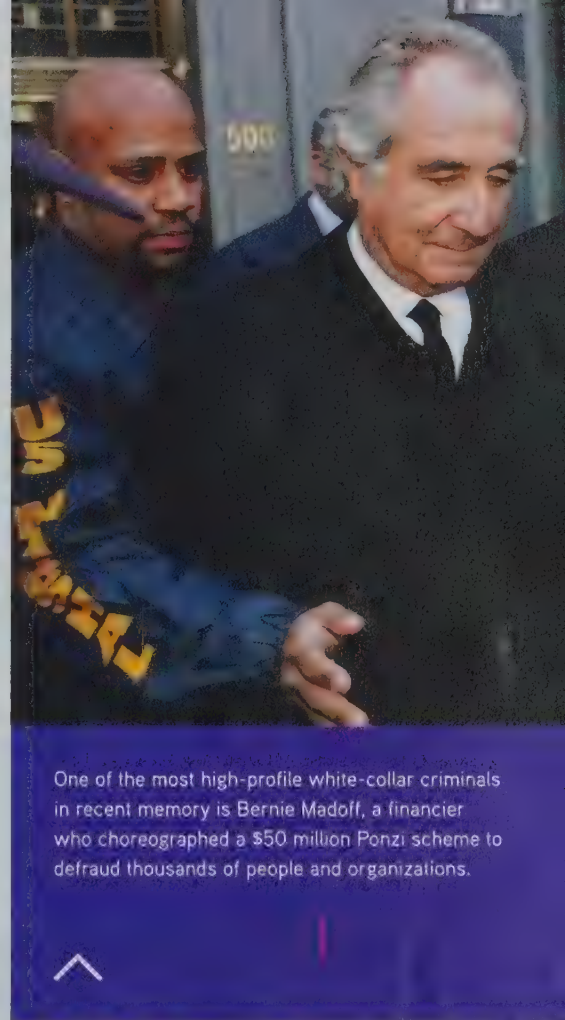
Although there are connections between crime and poverty, it would be a mistake to assume that crime is concentrated among the poor. Crimes carried out by people in positions of power and wealth can have farther-reaching consequences than the often petty crimes of the poor. One of the most devastating events of the early twenty-first century was the discovery that then-trusted investment adviser Bernie Madoff had defrauded his clients—many of them senior citizens and charitable organizations—robbing them of more than \$18 billion. Madoff had run an elaborate Ponzi scheme, which left many of his investors destitute and nearly bankrupted charitable organizations such as the Elie Wiesel Foundation and Stony Brook University Foundation (Creswell and Thomas 2009). This case revealed just how devastating the effects of white-collar crime can be.

The term **white-collar crime**, first introduced by Edwin Sutherland (1949), refers to crime carried out by people in professional jobs. This category of criminal activity includes tax fraud, antitrust violations, illegal sales practices, securities and land fraud, embezzlement, the manufacture or sale of dangerous products, and illegal environmental pollution, as well as straightforward theft. The distribution of white-collar crimes is even harder to measure than that of other types of crime; most do not appear in the official statistics at all.

Efforts to detect white-collar crime are ordinarily limited, and it is only on rare occasions that those who are caught go to jail. Although the authorities regard white-collar crime in a more tolerant light than crimes of the less privileged, it has been calculated that the amount of money involved in white-collar crime in the United States is forty times greater than the amount involved in crimes against property, such as robberies, burglaries, larceny, forgeries, and car thefts (President's Commission on Organized Crime 1986). Some forms of white-collar crime, moreover, affect more people than lower-class criminality. An embezzler might rob thousands—or today, via computer fraud, millions—of people.

CORPORATE CRIME

Corporate crime refers to criminal offenses committed by large corporations across the globe. Pollution, product mislabeling, and violations of health and safety regulations affect much larger numbers of people than petty criminality does. Both quantitative and qualitative studies of corporate crime have concluded that a large number of corporations do not adhere to the legal regulations that apply to them (Slapper and Tombs 1999). Corporate crime is not confined to a few bad apples but is instead pervasive and widespread. Studies have revealed six types of violations linked to large corporations: administrative (paperwork or noncompliance), environmental (pollution, permit violations), financial (tax violations, illegal payments), labor (working conditions, hiring practices), manufacturing (product safety, labeling), and unfair trade practices (anticompetition, false advertising).



One of the most high-profile white-collar criminals in recent memory is Bernie Madoff, a financier who choreographed a \$50 million Ponzi scheme to defraud thousands of people and organizations.

white-collar crime

Criminal activities carried out by those in white-collar, or professional, jobs.

corporate crime

Offenses committed by large corporations in society, including pollution, false advertising, and violations of health and safety regulations.

Sometimes there are obvious victims, as in environmental disasters such as the 1984 spill at the Bhopal chemical plant in India and the health dangers posed to women by silicone breast implants. One of the most devastating examples in recent years was the collapse of an eight-story commercial building, Rana Plaza, in Bangladesh in April 2013. The death toll topped 1,100, with an additional 2,500 injured people rescued from the building. Rana Plaza housed several garment manufacturers. Although building inspectors had found cracks in the building days earlier and recommended that the building be evacuated and shut down, many of the garment workers were forced to return to work the following day. Managers at some of the companies even threatened to withhold a month's pay from workers who refused to come to work (Manik and Yardley 2013).

As the Rana Plaza tragedy demonstrates, the hazards of corporate crime are all too real. But very often, victims of corporate crime do not see themselves as such. This is because in "traditional" crimes, the proximity between victim and offender is much closer; it is difficult not to realize that you have been mugged! In the case of corporate crime, greater distances in time and space mean that victims may not realize they have been victimized or may not know how to seek redress for the crime.

The effects of corporate crime are often experienced unevenly within society. Those who are disadvantaged by other types of socioeconomic inequalities tend to suffer disproportionately. For example, safety and health risks in the workplace tend to be concentrated most heavily in low-paying occupations. Many of the risks from health care products and pharmaceuticals have had a greater impact on women than on men, as is the case with contraceptives or fertility treatments with harmful side effects (Slapper and Tombs 1999).

The collapse of Rana Plaza in Bangladesh, which killed at least 1,100 and injured another 2,500, is a tragic example of corporate crime.



Organized Crime

Organized crime refers to forms of activity that have some of the characteristics of orthodox business but that are illegal. Organized crime embraces illegal gambling, drug dealing, prostitution, large-scale theft, and protection rackets, among other activities. In *End of Millennium* (1998), Manuel Castells argues that the activities of organized crime groups are becoming increasingly international in scope. The coordination of criminal activities across borders—with the help of new information technologies—is becoming a central feature of the new global economy. Involved in activities ranging from the narcotics trade to counterfeiting to smuggling immigrants and human organs, organized crime groups are now operating in flexible international networks rather than within their own territorial realms. According to Castells, criminal groups set up strategic alliances with one another. The international narcotics trade, weapons trafficking, the sale of nuclear material, and money laundering have all become linked across borders and crime groups. The flexible nature of this networked crime makes it relatively easy for crime groups to evade the reach of law-enforcement initiatives.

Despite numerous campaigns by governments and police, the narcotics trade is one of the most rapidly expanding international criminal industries, with an annual growth rate of more than 10 percent in the 1980s and early 1990s and an extremely high level of profit. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2013) has estimated that the annual value of global trade in illegal drugs is higher than annual global trade in coffee, grains, or meat. Heroin networks stretch across Asia, particularly South Asia, and are also located in North Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. Supply lines also pass through Vancouver and other parts of Canada; from those places, drugs are commonly supplied to the United States.

organized crime

Criminal activities carried out by organizations established as businesses.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 Contrast the following two explanations for the gender gap in crime: behavioral differences and biases in reporting.
- 2 What is the age-crime curve, and what factors have contributed to this pattern?
- 3 What are some of the consequences of white-collar crime?
- 4 Give one example of an activity classified as organized crime.

How Can Crime Be Reduced?

Despite the limitations of official crime statistics, they do provide laypersons with a snapshot of criminal activity in their neighborhoods. However, citizens often perceive themselves to be at greater risk of falling victim to crime than crime statistics would predict. Regardless of whether these fears are accurate, both individuals and governments feel strongly that crime and victimization must be curtailed. In fact, one of the central tasks of social policy in modern states has been controlling crime and delinquency. Which policies and practices are most effective? And why?

Are Prisons the Answer?

Today the United States already locks up more people (nearly all men) per capita than any other country and has by far the most punitive justice system in the world. The so-called prison boom began in the 1970s, with the number of inmates nearly



Consider the ways in which individuals and governments can address crime.

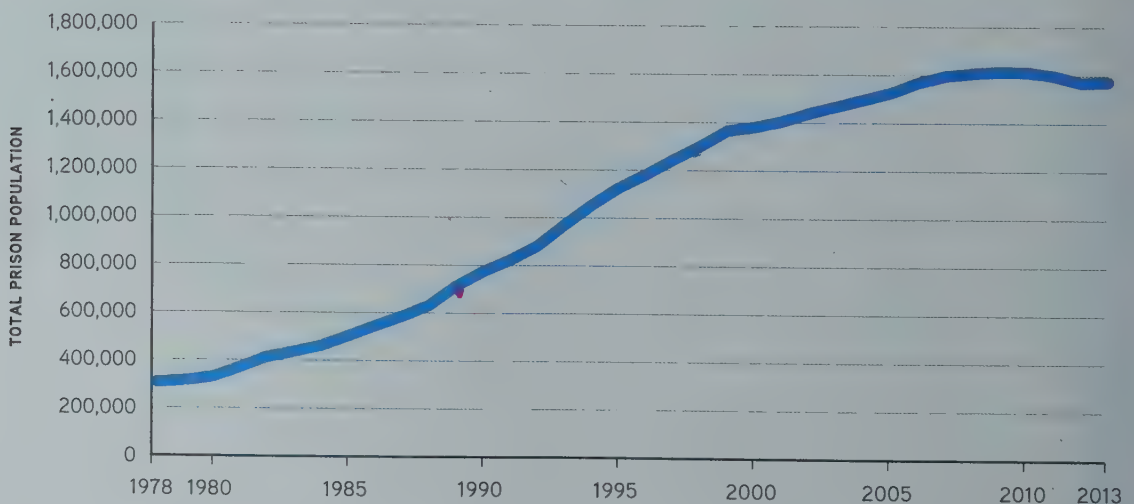
quintupling—from roughly 100 inmates per 100,000 residents for most of the twentieth century to 486 inmates per 100,000 residents by 2004 (Pager 2007). In 2014, more than 6.8 million people were under the supervision of the U.S. correctional system, including more than 1.5 million people in state or federal prison, 744,600 people in local jails, and another 4.7 million on probation or parole (see Figure 6.5; U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2016).

The price of imprisoning an individual is enormous: It costs an average of \$29,000 to keep a prisoner in the federal prison system for one year (Palazzolo 2013). It has also become partially privatized, with private companies building and administering prisons to accommodate the growing inmate population. Some argue that this is not money well spent: Only about a fifth of all serious crimes result in arrest—and this is of crimes known to the police, an underestimate of the true rate of crime. And no more than half of the arrests for serious crimes result in a conviction. Even so, America's prisons are so overcrowded that the average convict serves only a third of his or her sentence.

While we might suppose that imprisoning large numbers of people or stiffening sentences would deter individuals from committing crimes, there is little evidence to support this supposition. In fact, sociological studies have demonstrated that prisons can easily become schools for crime. The rate of relapse into crime, otherwise known as *recidivism*, is greater than 50 percent within three years of release from prison. Instead of preventing people from committing crimes, prisons often actually make them more hardened criminals. This pattern is consistent with the key theme of differential association theory, discussed earlier. Deviance is learned from deviant peers. The more harsh and oppressive prison conditions are, the more likely inmates are to be

FIGURE 6.5

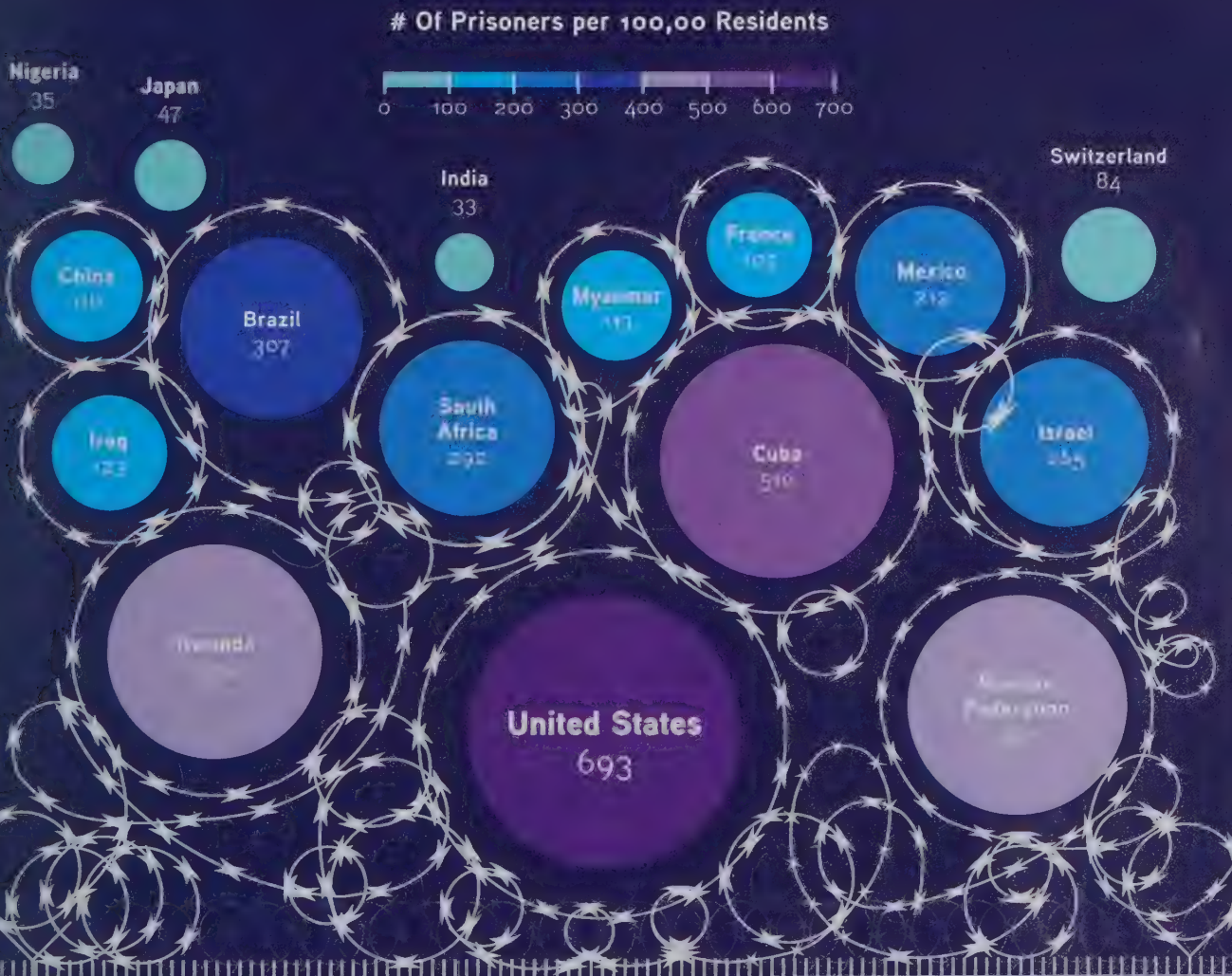
State and Federal Prison Populations



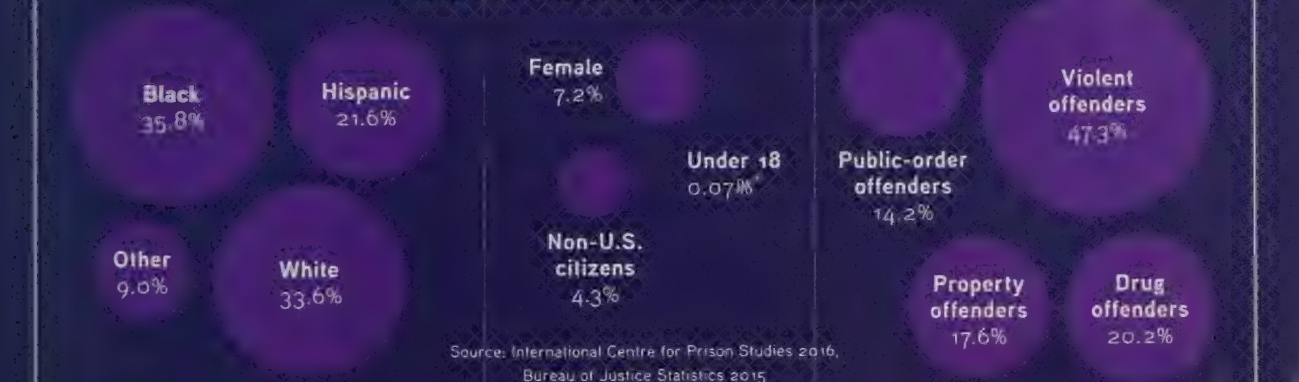
Source: U.S. Bureau of Statistics 2015a

Incarceration Rates

More than 10.3 million people are currently being held in penal institutions across the globe. Although the United States is home to less than 5 percent of the global population, it accounts for more than 20 percent of the world's prisoners.



Who's in Prison in the United States?



Source: International Centre for Prison Studies 2016,
Bureau of Justice Statistics 2015

brutalized by the experience. Yet if prisons were made into attractive and pleasant places to live, would they have a deterrent effect?

Although prisons do keep some dangerous men (and a tiny minority of dangerous women) off the streets, evidence suggests that we need to find other means to deter crime. A sociological interpretation of crime makes clear that there are no quick fixes. The causes of crime, especially violent crimes, are bound up with structural conditions of American society, including widespread poverty, the condition of the inner cities, and the deteriorating life circumstances of many young men.

Mass incarceration has had a particularly deleterious effect on black communities. African Americans make up around 36 percent of the current prison population, though they represent only 13 percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2015b). In *The New Jim Crow*, legal scholar Michelle Alexander (2012) argues that mass incarceration creates a kind of caste system in the United States. According to Alexander, understanding mass incarceration means understanding not only the criminal justice system, but also the entire structure of policies and practices that stigmatize and marginalize those who are considered criminals.

The Mark of a Criminal Record

An experiment by sociologist Devah Pager (2003) showed the long-term consequences of prison on the lives of felons. Pager had pairs of young black and white men apply for real entry-level job openings throughout the city of Milwaukee. The applicant pairs were matched by appearance, by interpersonal style, and, most important, by all job-related characteristics such as education level and prior work experience. In addition to varying the race of the applicant pairs, Pager also had applicants alternate presenting themselves to employers as having criminal records. One member of each of the applicant pairs would check the box “yes” on the applicant form in answer to the question “Have you ever been convicted of a crime?” The pair alternated each week which young man would play the role of the ex-offender. The experimental design allowed Pager to make the applicant pairs identical on all job-relevant characteristics so that she could know for sure that any differences she saw were the result of discrimination against felons, rather than other qualifications or weaknesses of the applicant.

Pager’s study revealed some striking findings. First, whites were much preferred over blacks, and nonoffenders were much preferred over ex-offenders. Whites with a felony conviction were half as likely to be considered by employers as equally qualified nonoffenders. For blacks the effects were even larger: Black ex-offenders were only one-third as likely to receive a call back compared with nonoffenders. Even more surprising was the comparison of these two effects: Blacks with no criminal history fared no better than whites with a felony conviction. These results suggest that the experience of being a black male in America today is comparable with the experience of being a convicted white criminal, at least in the eyes of Milwaukee employers. For those who believe that race no longer represents a major barrier to opportunity, these results represent a powerful challenge. Being a black felon is a particularly tough obstacle to overcome.

The Death Penalty

Like its mass incarceration rates, the use of capital punishment (the death penalty) makes the United States an unusual case compared to other liberal democratic nations. It remains

one of the last Western countries to legally permit the practice. In 2013, there were 2,979 inmates on death row in the United States, with just five states—California, Florida, Texas, Pennsylvania, and Alabama—accounting for 60 percent of inmates sentenced to death (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2014). While death sentences are occasionally handed down, they are rarely carried out, due to lengthy appeals.

Support for capital punishment remains high in the United States, though it has been declining in the last two decades (See Figure 6.6): In 2015, approximately 56 percent of adults surveyed said they believed in capital punishment, while 38 percent opposed it. This represents a significant shift from 1996, when 78 percent of those surveyed supported the death penalty and just 18 percent were opposed (Pew Research Center 2015h). Although American support of capital punishment is thought to be unusual in an international political climate that has increasingly condemned the use of the death penalty, the differences may not be as great as some would think. Even in countries that have eliminated the death penalty, the majority tend to support it. The difference is not really popular opinion but the structure of the government. European constitutions give leaders the right to impose their views on the majority, while in the United States, these policies are made on a state-by-state basis. The idea of states' rights is so popular in the United States that even the Supreme Court has deferred to the states on the issue of capital punishment (Garland 2010).

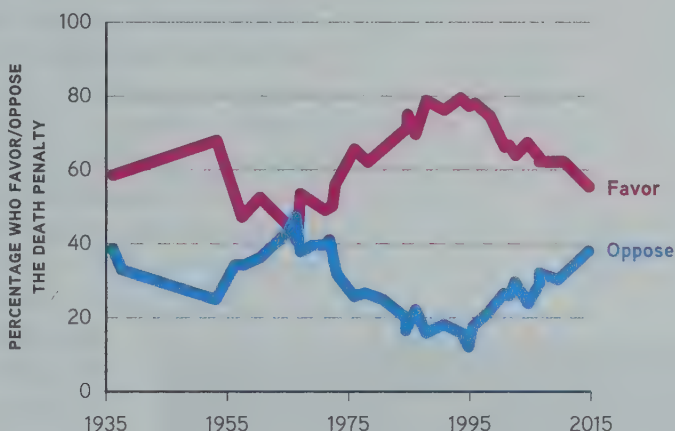
Policing

Some sociologists and criminologists have suggested that visible policing techniques, such as patrolling the streets, are reassuring for the public. Such activities are consistent with the perception that the police are actively engaged in controlling crime, investigating offenses, and supporting the criminal justice system. But sociologists also suggest that we need to reassess the role of policing in the early twenty-first century. Although maintaining law and order, interacting with citizens, and providing services are part of contemporary policing, they represent only a fraction of what the police actually do. Policing, sociologists argue, is now less about controlling crime and more about detecting and managing risks. Most of all, it is about communicating knowledge about risk to other institutions in society that demand that information (Ericson and Haggerty 1997).

According to this view, police are first and foremost “knowledge workers.” As such, the vast majority of police time is spent on activities aimed at processing information, drafting reports, or communicating data. The “simple” case of an automobile accident in Ontario, Canada, illustrates this point. A police officer is called to the scene of an

FIGURE 6.6

Support for the Death Penalty in the United States



Note: Proportion of people who favor/oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder.

Source: Pew Research Center 2015h

automobile accident involving two vehicles. No one has been killed, but there are minor injuries and one of the drivers is drunk. The investigation takes one hour; the drunk driver is charged with the impaired operation of a motor vehicle causing bodily harm and with operating a motor vehicle after drinking excess alcohol. The driver's license is automatically suspended for twelve hours.

Following this routine investigation, the officer spends three hours writing up sixteen separate reports documenting the incident. The officer is required to provide information for the provincial motor registry about the vehicle and people involved; the automobile industry must be informed about the vehicles involved in the accident; the insurance companies need information about the case; the public health system requires details on any injuries; the criminal courts require police information for the prosecution; and the police administration needs reports on the incident for internal records and national databases.

This example reveals how the police are a key node in a complicated information circuit of institutions that are all in the business of risk management. With the help of new forms of technology, police work is increasingly about mapping and predicting risk within the population. This emphasis on information collection and processing can be frustrating for police, especially those who entered the force because they wanted to interact with people—not paper files and computers.

In recent years, several high-profile court cases have attracted mainstream media attention around “stop and frisk” policies in major American cities. These policies work to put a visible police presence in communities with high crime rates by temporarily detaining and questioning individuals at an officer’s discretion. In a decision declaring New York’s “stop and frisk” policy to be unconstitutional, U.S. district judge Shira A. Scheindlin declared that the frequent stops made by New York police were in violation of the Fourth Amendment, which protects citizens from unreasonable searches and seizures. Judge Scheindlin’s decision asks us to consider the effects of such policies in communities where individuals of color—overwhelmingly young men of color—are targeted by police officials on a near daily basis.

In *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys* (2011), sociologist Victor Rios describes the lives of young black and Hispanic men in Oakland, California. Rios documents the strain that temporary detainment policies like stop and frisk place on heavily policed communities, and how young men respond to the pervasive presence of police and other authority figures in their schools and neighborhoods. For the men in Rios’s study, negative interactions with police officers are a regular occurrence. These policies affect not only their daily lives but also the way in which they perceive themselves and their long-term life trajectories. Punitive policing created a culture of mistrust and resistance to authority, and even those who



In 2013, a U.S. district judge for the Southern District of New York ruled that the NYPD's "stop and frisk" policy was discriminatory and unconstitutional.

seldom broke the rules were perceived negatively by others in their community. In this setting, teachers and potential employers often interpreted innocuous behavior as acts of deviance or criminal activity and denied the young men access to the resources that could have helped them grow in positive ways.

Today, governments eager to appear decisive on crime favor work to increase the number and resources of the police. But it is not clear that a greater police presence translates into lower crime rates. In the United States, official statistics on violent crime rates and number of police cast doubt on such a link.

Crime and Community

Preventing crime and reducing fear of crime are both important paths to rebuilding strong communities. One of the most significant innovations in criminology in recent years has been the discovery that the decay of day-to-day civility relates directly to criminality. Although sociologists and criminologists in earlier decades focused almost exclusively on serious crime—robbery, assault, and other violent crime—they have since discovered that minor crimes and public disorder have a powerful effect on neighborhoods. When asked to describe their problems, residents of troubled neighborhoods mention seemingly minor concerns such as abandoned cars, graffiti, youth gangs, and similar phenomena.

People act on their anxieties about these issues: They move out of these neighborhoods (if they can afford to), buy heavy locks for their doors and bars for their windows, abandon public places like parks, and even avoid healthy behaviors like jogging and walking, out of fear. As they withdraw physically, they also withdraw from roles of mutual support with fellow citizens, thereby relinquishing the social controls that formerly helped to maintain civility within the community.

The recognition that even seemingly small acts of crime and disorder can threaten a neighborhood is based on the **broken windows theory** (Wilson and Kelling 1982). This sociological theory evolved from an innovative study conducted by the social psychologist Philip Zimbardo. He abandoned cars without license plates and with their hoods up in two entirely different social settings: the wealthy community of Palo Alto, California, and a poor neighborhood in the Bronx, New York. In both places, the cars were vandalized once passersby, regardless of class or race, sensed that the cars were abandoned and that “no one cared” (Zimbardo 1969). Any sign of social disorder in a community, even one unrepaired broken window, is a sign that no one cares. Breaking more windows—that is, committing more serious crimes—is a rational response by criminals to this situation of social disorder. Minor acts of deviance can lead to a spiral of crime and social decay.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the broken windows theory served as the basis for new policing strategies that aggressively focused on minor crimes such as traffic violations and drinking or using drugs in public. Studies have shown that proactive policing directed at maintaining public order can have a positive effect on reducing more serious crimes such as robbery (Sampson and Cohen 1988). However, one flaw of the broken windows theory is that the police are left to identify “social disorder” however they wish. Without a systematic definition of disorder, the police are authorized to see almost anything as a sign of disorder and anyone as a threat. In fact, as crime rates fell throughout the 1990s, the number

broken windows theory

A theory proposing that even small acts of crime, disorder, and vandalism can threaten a neighborhood and render it unsafe.

of complaints of police abuse and harassment went up, particularly by young, urban, black men who fit the “profile” of a potential criminal. In response to these limitations, criminologists and policymakers have developed alternative strategies to crime prevention, including community policing, target hardening, and shaming.

COMMUNITY POLICING

One idea that has grown in popularity in recent years is that the police should work closely with citizens to improve local community standards and civil behavior, using education, persuasion, and counseling instead of incarceration. **Community policing** implies not only drawing in citizens themselves but changing the characteristic outlook of police forces. A renewed emphasis on crime prevention rather than law enforcement can go hand in hand with the reintegration of policing within the community and reduce the siege mentality that develops when police have little regular contact with ordinary citizens.

In order to work, partnerships among government agencies, the criminal justice system, local associations, and community organizations have to be inclusive; all economic and ethnic groups must be involved (Kelling and Coles 1997). Government and business can act together to help repair urban decay. One model is the creation of urban enterprise zones, which provide tax breaks for corporations that participate in strategic planning and invest in designated areas. To be successful, such schemes demand a long-term commitment to social objectives.

Emphasizing these strategies does not mean denying the links between unemployment, poverty, and crime. Rather, the struggle against these social problems should be coordinated with community-based approaches to crime prevention. These approaches can in fact contribute directly and indirectly to furthering social justice. Where social order has decayed along with public services, other opportunities, such as new jobs, decline as well. Improving the quality of life in a neighborhood can revive them.

TARGET HARDENING

Community policing is just one strategy that falls under a larger set of strategies that criminologists call **target hardening**. Consistent with the core notions of control theory, this practice makes it more difficult for criminals to commit crimes by minimizing their opportunities to do so. Rather than changing the criminal, the best policy is to take practical measures to control the criminal's ability to commit crime by promoting the use of crime-detering technologies and practices like community policing, private security services, car alarms, house alarms, guard dogs, and even gated communities.

Target-hardening techniques have gained favor among politicians in recent years and appear to have been successful in some contexts in curtailing crime. But criticisms of such an approach can also be made. These tactics do not address the underlying causes of crime but instead are aimed at protecting and defending certain elements of society from its reach. There is another unintended consequence of such policies: As popular crime targets are “hardened,” patterns of crime may simply shift from one domain to another. Target-hardening approaches run the risk of displacing criminal offenses from better-protected areas to more vulnerable ones. Neighborhoods that are poor or lacking in social cohesion may well experience a growth in crime and delinquency as target hardening in affluent regions increases.

community policing

A renewed emphasis on crime prevention rather than law enforcement to reintegrate policing within the community.

target hardening

Practical measures used to limit a criminal's ability to commit crime, such as community policing and use of house alarms.

Using Cameras to Police the Police

In recent years video technology on cell phones has led to an increased awareness of police misconduct. Although the government generates many statistics to monitor the police, including records of stops and frisks, these forms of official data ultimately rely on the police to process complaints. But if you're a resident of a heavily policed community, you want the police to be accountable independent of internal processes for reporting and resolving complaints.

In light of a string of high-profile cases of police brutality, there has been an explosion of efforts to record police-civilian interactions using cell phones and cameras. Watchdog groups known as "cop-watches" have sprung up in communities across the United States with the goal of documenting—and exposing—instances of police misconduct. We Copwatch is a Berkeley-based group that trains people on best practices for monitoring the police. After the shooting death of Michael Brown, the group jumped onto the scene, donating cameras to residents of the apartment complex in Ferguson, Missouri, near the spot where Brown was killed and hosting informational sessions (Rentz and Donovan 2015; Sanburn 2014). Groups like Cop Block, Communities United Against Police Brutality, and Peaceful Streets Project are similarly dedicated to holding police officers accountable through the use of video technology and educating civilians about their civil rights when it comes to interacting with law enforcement.

Numerous apps have been developed to make it easier for people to document police abuse. The American Civil Liberties Union's Mobile Justice app allows users to discreetly record both video and audio and even send a copy of the recording directly to the ACLU. "You have the right to film the police, and everyone should feel empowered to exercise that right," said Udi Ofer, executive director of ACLU-NJ (American Civil Liberties Union 2015). With the Cop Watch Video Recorder app, created by the Network for the Elimination of Police Violence, users can set the app to automatically upload recordings to YouTube. And while most apps are focused on recording police encounters gone wrong, Five-O aims to capture the good with the bad. The app, which was developed by three teenagers from Atlanta, prompts users to rate officers with whom they've interacted and provide details of their encounters in order to collect data that can then be used to promote positive change (*The Economist* 2015a).

These apps have both fans and critics. Some opponents maintain that civilian video-graphers can interfere with police work and scare off witnesses and that video often omits important context (Calvert and Bauerlein 2015). Other opponents cite privacy concerns. Whereas advocates say that these new technologies can help prevent police brutality, even those within the movement are sometimes skeptical. They point to the many cases in which videos were used to bring cops to trial, only to result in jury verdicts that exonerated the police. Yet, advocates argue that it's not merely about jury verdicts; these technologies put police on notice and change the balance of power in significant ways. Some cops have been known to retaliate, grabbing cameras or even finding ways to arrest the people taking videos. Courts, however, have generally upheld a person's constitutional right to film police activity.

Have you ever been afraid in the presence of a police officer? Have you ever used a cop-watch app? Would you? Do you think cop-watches and recording apps are effective ways to hold police accountable for their actions? Some police departments, including the NYPD, are implementing body camera programs in order to increase transparency and accountability. Do you think all police officers should have to wear body cameras?



On July 17, 2014, Staten Island resident Eric Garner was placed in a chokehold and dragged to the ground by police officers attempting to arrest him. The fatal encounter was recorded on a cell phone and Garner's last words, "I can't breathe," became a rallying cry for the Black Lives Matter movement.

shaming

A way of punishing criminal and deviant behavior based on rituals of public disapproval rather than incarceration. The goal of shaming is to maintain the ties of the offender to the community.

SHAMING AS PUNISHMENT

In recent years, **shaming**, a form of punishing criminal and deviant behavior that attempts to maintain the ties of the offender to the community, has grown in popularity as an alternative to incarceration. According to some criminologists, the fear of being shamed within one's community is an important deterrent to crime. As a result, the public's formal disapproval could achieve the same deterrent effect as incarceration without the high costs of building and maintaining prisons.

Criminologist John Braithwaite (1996) has described two types of shaming: stigmatizing and reintegrative. Stigmatizing shaming is the process whereby a criminal is labeled as a threat to society and is treated as an outcast. The labeling process has potentially damaging consequences, as we learned earlier in this chapter. A negative label may trigger others' efforts to marginalize the individual, perhaps leading to future criminal behavior and higher crime rates. Reintegrative shaming, by contrast, involves rather than marginalizes the offender. People central to the criminal's immediate community—such as family members, employers and coworkers, and friends—are brought into court to state their condemnation of the offender's behavior. At the same time, these people accept responsibility for reintegrating the offender back into their community. The goal is to rebuild the social bonds of the individual to the community as a means of deterring future criminal conduct.

Japan, with one of the lowest crime rates in the world, has been quite successful in implementing this approach. The process is largely based on a voluntary network of over 500,000 local crime-prevention associations dedicated to facilitating reintegration into the community and on a criminal justice system that is encouraged to be lenient for this purpose. As a result, in Japan only 5 percent of persons convicted for a crime serve time in prison, as compared with 30 percent in the United States. Though reintegrative shaming is not a standard practice in the American criminal justice system, it is a familiar practice in other social institutions such as the family. A parent may express disapproval of a child's naughty behavior and try to make the child feel ashamed, but the parent may also reassure the child that he or she is a loved member of the family.

Could reintegrative shaming succeed in the United States? Skeptics say these tactics are soft on crime, that Americans are too individualistic to participate in community-based policing, and that high-crime areas are less community oriented. However, community networks have been successful in working with the police to prevent crime. These social bonds could also be fostered to increase the power of shame and reintegrate offenders into local networks of community involvement.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. How does imprisonment affect the life chances of ex-cons?
2. Why has the U.S. prison population grown so steeply over the past three decades?
3. What are the primary tasks that police officers do each day?
4. Name at least two specific ways that community members can combat local crime.

How Do Crime and Deviance Affect Your Life?

The Costs of Crime

Crime can take a toll on the financial and emotional well-being of even those people whose only contact with the criminal justice system is watching reruns of *Law and Order* or *CSI*. As we learned earlier in the chapter, corporate crime can affect everything from

Understand the costs and functions of crime and deviance.

the quality of the food we eat to the safety of the cars we drive and the cleanliness of the air we breathe. Even those of us who live in safe and quiet neighborhoods may find our lives touched by the criminal acts of corporations, in the form of air pollution or tainted foods or medicines.

Our lives are also affected by the high fiscal costs of street crime. Maintaining local, state, and national criminal justice systems is costly—and growing costlier by the minute. As we learned earlier in this chapter, the number of people behind bars in the United States has climbed steadily in the past decade due in part to policies like the “three strikes” laws. State government is having a difficult time finding enough money to house, feed, and provide medical care to these growing numbers of inmates. Spending on corrections has risen dramatically over the past three decades. For example, spending has varied between 2.5 and 2.9 percent of state outlays over the last decade, with states spending \$48.5 billion in 2010 as compared with \$15 billion in 1982 (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2012c).

Lawmakers have few options for footing this large bill. Tax hikes are one option, but that would mean higher income taxes, property taxes, and sales taxes for everyone. In the absence of tax hikes, lawmakers may find themselves forced to cut back on other important social programs, including transportation, education, and health care (Pew Center on the States 2008). Corrections accounted for 3.1 percent of total state expenditures in 2015, and if this proportion increases, it could touch the lives of Americans using the many other state programs that compete for valuable tax dollars (National Association of State Budget Officers 2016).

The Functions of Deviance

The deviant acts of others also affect our personal behaviors in powerful ways. As noted earlier, deviants help us understand what is considered “right” and “wrong” among our peers, friends, and community members. Most of us try very hard to avoid the sanctions that result from doing “wrong,” and we make our daily choices accordingly. For example, most of us don’t want to be socially ostracized, so we may choose clothes, hobbies, romantic partners, and even our future career paths in order to fit in with peers. To be considered “deviant” often means being treated as a social outcast.

At a more serious level, though, most of us know what the punishments are for even minor violations such as speeding or running a red light. By learning about the fees and punishments levied on those who break the rules, most of us will behave in accordance with the law to avoid having our driver’s license suspended or spending a night in jail. Public punishments—whether locking horse thieves into “stocks” in town squares and making an adulteress wear a scarlet letter *A* around her neck in the colonial United States, or publicizing the names and addresses of registered sex offenders and televising “perp walks” in the contemporary United States—are designed not only to punish the “guilty” but also to prevent others from behaving in a similar way. These public humiliations affect us because they make us rethink whether it’s really worthwhile to try to get away with a crime.

The Big Picture

Conformity, Deviance, and Crime

Thinking Sociologically

1. Briefly summarize several leading theories explaining crime and deviance presented in this chapter: differential association, anomie, labeling, conflict, and control theories. Which theory appeals to you? Explain why.
2. Explain how differences in power and social influence can play a significant role in defining and sanctioning deviant behavior.
3. What do you consider the most harmful consequences of violent crimes? Of white-collar crimes? How do you think the "average" American views each of these different types of crimes?

Learning Objectives

What Is Deviant Behavior?

p. 159

Learn how sociologists define deviance and how it is closely related to social power and social class. See the ways in which conformity is encouraged.

Why Do People Commit Deviant Acts?

p. 161

Know the leading sociological, psychological, and biological theories of deviance and how each is useful in understanding crime.

How Do We Document Crime?

p. 169

Recognize the usefulness and limitations of crime statistics. Learn some important differences between men and women related to crime. Familiarize yourself with some of the varieties of crime.

Whose Lives Are Affected by Crime?

p. 172

Understand why members of some social groups are more likely to commit or be the victims of crime.

How Can Crime Be Reduced?

p. 177

Consider the ways in which individuals and governments can address crime.

How Does Crime and Deviance Affect Your Life?

Understand the costs and functions of crime and deviance

Terms to Know

Concept Checks

norms • mores • folkways

deviance • deviant subculture • sanction • crime

1. How do sociologists define deviance?
2. Is all crime deviant? Is all deviance criminal? Why?
3. Contrast positive and negative sanctions.

schizophrenia • anomie • relative deprivation • differential association • labeling theory • primary deviance • secondary deviance • control theory • conflict theory

1. What are the main similarities and differences between biological and psychological views of deviance?
2. How do Merton's and Durkheim's definitions of anomie differ?
3. According to subcultural explanations, how does criminal behavior get transmitted from one group to another?
4. What is the core idea behind differential association theory?
5. What are two criticisms of labeling theory?
6. What are the root causes of crime according to conflict theorists?

Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)

1. What are the main sources of crime data in the United States?
2. Contrast Uniform Crime Reports and the National Crime Victimization Survey.
3. Describe crime trends in the 1970s through today.
4. How would sociologists explain the high rate of violent crime in the United States?

street crime • white-collar crime • corporate crime • organized crime

1. Contrast the following two explanations for the gender gap in crime: behavioral differences and biases in reporting.
2. What is the age-crime curve, and what factors have contributed to this pattern?
3. What are some of the consequences of white-collar crime?
4. Give one example of an activity classified as organized crime.

broken windows theory • community policing • target hardening • shaming

1. How does imprisonment affect the life chances of ex-cons?
2. Why has the U.S. prison population grown so steeply over the past three decades?
3. What are the primary tasks that police officers do each day?
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7

Stratification, Class, and Inequality



Income Inequality

p. 207



Thanks to her own tenacity in the face of social and economic barriers, Viviana Andazola Marquez managed to overcome a difficult childhood, leaving behind motels for Yale University. What does her story say about mobility in American society?

THE BIG QUESTIONS

What is social stratification?

Learn about social stratification and how social background affects one's life chances. Become acquainted with the most influential theories of stratification.

How is social class defined in the United States?

Understand the social causes and consequences of social class in U.S. society, as well as the complexities and challenges of defining class.

What are the causes and consequences of social inequality in the United States?

Recognize why and how the gap between rich and poor has increased in recent decades. Understand social mobility, and think about your own mobility.

How does poverty affect individuals?

Learn about poverty in the United States today, explanations for why it exists, and means for combating it. Learn how people become marginalized in a society and the forms that this marginalization takes.

How does social inequality affect your life?

Learn how changes in the American economy have led to growing inequalities since the 1970s.





When she was a middle-school student in Thornton, Colorado, Viviana Andazola Marquez struggled to find a place to do her homework, traveling around town in search of open Wi-Fi networks. Her single mother, an undocumented Mexican immigrant, struggled to make ends meet, and Viviana and her three siblings often found themselves homeless. Because of her mother's legal status, not even homeless shelters welcomed Viviana and her family. As a result, Viviana spent her early teenage years negotiating for late payment with motel managers and sleeping on the floors of kind-hearted strangers.

Viviana's life reached a low point when she was thirteen. Her mother was arrested for disturbing the peace, jailed for two weeks by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, then placed under house arrest for six months. Viviana was forced to grow up fast. As she put it in a recent interview, "I saw so many examples of what my life could end up being. . . . I thought one way or another, I have to leave this place" (Bronner 2015). Viviana started researching which colleges and universities offered the best financial aid packages for students with no financial resources

whatsoever. Viviana set her sights high: Harvard, Yale, Princeton. Her college essay—which was reprinted in the *New York Times*—tells a powerful story of endless struggle:

After a frustrating drive through the neighborhood and careful identification of a network, success is stated simply: Connected. It is a brief moment of victory, but short-lived as I race against the clock to complete my stack of assignments. Sure, it would be ideal to have my own Wi-Fi, but I'd be satisfied if my family obtained a home first. Every day there is a new challenge; it is a game of adaptation: I beat each situation before it beats me. Just as in any game, I endure losses and gains.... I moved myself around the game board. I carried my family on my back.

(Viviana Andazola Marquez, “Students and Money, in Their Own Words.” From *The New York Times*, May 9, 2014, © 2014 *The New York Times*. All rights reserved. Used by permission and protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States. The printing, copying, redistribution, or retransmission of this Content without express written permission is prohibited.)

Clearly her story struck a chord: Viviana was offered full scholarships to Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. She’s now at Yale—class of 2018—making her not only the first in her family to attend college, but the first from her entire school district ever to attend an Ivy League university. She plans to major in history—or chemistry—or perhaps both. And even though she has financial aid, Viviana works two jobs, sending money home to help support her family (Bronner 2015).

For most Americans, one’s socioeconomic background powerfully shapes one’s future. Yet in Viviana’s case, early life poverty didn’t stop her from excelling in high school and eventually going on to an Ivy League university. How did she transcend her roots? Viviana was smart, tenacious, and determined to escape her circumstances in order to live a better life. She also had strong support from her middle and high schools, including advisers and teachers who not only mentored and encouraged her but sometimes even picked her up and drove her to school from wherever she had spent the night (Bronner 2015).

While such a combination of factors may sometimes enable a person to overcome great obstacles and rise out of poverty and even homelessness, as we shall see in this chapter this is far more likely to be the exception than the rule. Understanding the complex interplay of personal effort and social circumstance—of biography and history—remains one of the key challenges of sociological understanding.

Sociologists speak of **social stratification** to describe inequalities among individuals and groups within human societies. Often we think of stratification in terms of wealth or property, but it can also occur on the basis of other attributes, such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, or religious affiliation. An important area of research in social stratification is social mobility, or one’s movement up or down social class strata; an extreme example of this is Viviana Andazola Marquez. The three key aspects of social stratification are class, status, and power (Weber 1947). Although they frequently overlap, this is not always the case. The “rich and famous” often enjoy high status; their wealth often provides political influence and sometimes direct access to political power. Yet there are exceptions. While often wealthy and powerful, drug lords, for example, usually enjoy low status.

In this chapter, we focus on stratification in terms of inequalities based on wealth and income, status, and power. In later chapters, we will look at the ways in which gender (Chapter 9) and ethnicity and race (Chapter 10) all play a role in stratification.

social stratification

The existence of structured inequalities among groups in society in terms of their access to material or symbolic rewards.

What Is Social Stratification?

All socially stratified systems share three characteristics:

1. **The rankings apply to social categories of people who share a common characteristic such as gender or ethnicity.** Women may be ranked differently from men, wealthy people differently from the poor. This does not mean that individuals from a particular category cannot change their rank; however, it does mean that the category continues to exist even if individuals move out of it and into another category.
2. **People's life experiences and opportunities depend heavily on how their social category is ranked.** Being male or female, black or white, upper class or working class makes a big difference in terms of your life chances—often as big a difference as personal effort or good fortune.
3. **The ranks of different social categories tend to change very slowly over time.** In U.S. society, for example, only during the last half-century have women begun to achieve economic equality with men (see Chapter 9). Similarly, only since the 1970s have significant numbers of African Americans begun to obtain economic and political equality with whites—even though slavery was abolished nearly a century and a half ago and discrimination was declared illegal in the 1950s and 1960s (see Chapter 10).

As you saw in Chapter 2, stratified societies have changed throughout human history. The earliest human societies, which were based on hunting and gathering, had very little social stratification—mainly because there were few resources to be divided up. The development of agriculture produced considerably more wealth and, as a result, a great increase in stratification. Social stratification in agricultural societies came to resemble a pyramid, with a large number of people at the bottom and a successively smaller number of people as one moves toward the top. Today, advanced industrial societies are extremely complex; their stratification is more likely to resemble a teardrop, with a large number of people in the middle and lower-middle ranks (the so-called middle class), a slightly smaller number of people at the bottom, and very few people as one moves toward the top.

But before turning to stratification in modern societies, let's first review the three basic systems of stratification: slavery, caste, and class.

Slavery

Slavery is an extreme form of inequality in which certain people are owned as property by others. Sometimes slaves have been deprived of almost all rights by law, as was the case on Southern plantations in the United States. In other societies, their position was more akin to that of servants. For example, in the ancient Greek city-state of Athens, some slaves occupied positions of great responsibility.

Systems of slave labor have tended to be unstable, because slaves have historically fought back against their subjection. Slavery also is not economically efficient, as it requires constant supervision and often involves severe punishment, which impedes worker



Learn about social stratification and how social background affects one's life chances. Become acquainted with the most influential theories of stratification.

slavery

A form of social stratification in which some people are owned by others as their property.

caste system

A social system in which one's social status is determined at birth and set for life.

endogamy

The forbidding of marriage or sexual relations outside one's social group.

productivity. Moreover, from about the eighteenth century on, many people in Europe and America came to see slavery as morally wrong. Today, slavery is illegal in every country of the world, but it still exists in some places. Recent research has documented that people are still taken by force and held against their will—from enslaved brickmakers in Pakistan to sex slaves in Thailand and domestic slaves in France. The United States is not immune to such injustice. News reports of teenage girls coerced into prostitution, maids locked up and forced to work by wealthy clients, and a recent case of immigrants forced to work at convenience stores underscore that marginalized persons who lack social power can still be exploited at the hands of cruel individuals (CNN 2013).

Caste Systems

A **caste system** is a social system in which one's social status is given for life. This means that all individuals must remain at the social level of their birth throughout their lifetime. In this system, social status is based on personal characteristics—such as perceived race or ethnicity (often based on such physical characteristics as skin color), parental religion, or parental caste—that are accidents of birth and are therefore believed to be unchangeable. Caste societies can be seen as a special type of class society—in which

class position is ascribed at birth, rather than achieved through personal accomplishment. In caste systems, intimate contact with members of other castes is strongly discouraged. Such “purity” of a caste is often maintained by rules of **endogamy**, marriage within one's social group as required by custom or law.

Before modern times, caste systems were found throughout the world. In modern times, caste systems have typically been found in agricultural societies that have not yet developed industrial capitalist economies, such as rural India or South Africa prior to the end of white rule in 1992. The Indian caste system, for example, reflects Hindu religious beliefs and is more than 2,000 years old. According to Hindu beliefs, there are four major castes, each roughly associated with broad occupational groupings. Below the four castes are those known as the “untouchables” or Dalits (oppressed people), who—as their name suggests—are to be avoided at all costs. Untouchables are limited to the worst jobs in society, such as removing human waste, and they often resort to begging. India made it illegal to discriminate on the basis of caste in 1949, but aspects of the caste system remain in full force today, particularly in rural areas.

The few remaining caste systems in the world are being challenged further by globalization. For example, as India's modern capitalist economy brings people of different castes together, whether in the same workplace, airplane, or restaurant, it is increasingly difficult to maintain the rigid barriers required to sustain the caste system.



Women from the Dalit caste (also known as “untouchables”) earn a living as sewage scavengers in the slums of Ranchi, India.

Class

The concept of class is most important for analyzing stratification in industrialized societies like the United States. Everyone has heard of class, but most people in everyday talk use the word in a vague way. As employed in sociology, it has some precision.

A social **class** is a large group of people who occupy a similar economic position in the wider society. The concept of life chances, introduced by Max Weber, is the best way to understand what class means. Your **life chances** are the opportunities you have for achieving economic prosperity. A person from a humble background, for example, has less chance of ending up wealthy than someone from a more prosperous one. And the best chance an individual has of being wealthy is to start off as wealthy in the first place.

The United States, it has been said, is the land of opportunity. For some, this is so. There are many examples of people who have risen from humble means to positions of great wealth and power. And yet there are many more cases of people who have not, including a disproportionate share of women and minorities. The idea of life chances is important because it emphasizes that although class is a powerful influence on what happens in our lives, it is not completely determining. Class divisions affect which neighborhoods we live in, what lifestyles we follow, and even which romantic partners we choose (Mare 1991; Massey 1996). Yet they don't fix people for life in specific social positions, as the older systems of stratification did. A person born into a caste position has no opportunity of escaping from it; the same isn't true of class.

Class systems differ from slavery and castes in four main respects:

1. **Class systems are fluid.** Unlike the other types of strata, classes are not established by legal or religious provisions. The boundaries between classes are never clear-cut. There are no formal restrictions on intermarriage between people from different classes.
2. **Class positions are in some part achieved.** An individual's class is not simply assigned at birth, as is the case in the other types of stratification systems. Social mobility—movement upward and downward in the class structure—is relatively common.
3. **Class is economically based.** Classes depend on inequalities in the possession of material resources. In the other types of stratification systems, noneconomic factors (such as race in the former South African caste system) are generally most important.
4. **Class systems are large-scale and impersonal.** In the other types of stratification systems, inequalities are expressed primarily in personal relationships of duty or obligation—between slave and master or lower- and higher-caste individuals. Class systems, by contrast, operate mainly through large-scale, impersonal associations such as pay or working conditions.

ARE CLASS BOUNDARIES WEAKENING?

The story of Viviana Andazola Marquez might lead us to believe that social class boundaries are permeable, where the daughter of an undocumented immigrant, who bounced from

class

Although it is one of the most frequently used concepts in sociology, there is no clear agreement about how the term should be defined. Most sociologists use the term to refer to socioeconomic variations among groups of individuals that create variations in their material prosperity and power.

life chances

A term introduced by Max Weber to signify a person's opportunities for achieving economic prosperity.

motel to motel, could ultimately end up at an Ivy League university. Although Viviana's case is certainly inspiring, is it common? Is it unique to the United States and societies with fluid class strata? How much does social class mold our lives, and has its impact changed over time? Stratification scholars currently grapple with two important debates about the declining importance of social class. First, they ask whether caste systems will give way to class systems against the backdrop of globalization. Second, scholars question whether inequality is declining in class-based societies due in part to educational expansion and other social policies.

To address the first question, there is some evidence that globalization will hasten the end of legally sanctioned caste systems throughout the world. Most official caste systems have already given way to class-based ones in industrial capitalist societies. Modern industrial production requires that people move about freely, work at whatever jobs they are suited or able to do, and change jobs frequently according to economic conditions. The rigid restrictions found in caste systems interfere with this necessary freedom. Nonetheless, elements of caste systems persist even in advanced industrial societies. For example, some Indian immigrants to the United States seek to arrange traditional marriages for their children along caste lines, while the relatively small proportion of U.S. marriages that are interracial suggests the strength of racial barriers. In 2013, only 6 percent of all marriages were between members of different races. This proportion, however, jumps to 12 percent for newlyweds (Wang 2015).

To address the second question, some evidence suggests that at least until recently, mature capitalist societies have been increasingly open to movement between classes, thereby reducing the level of inequality. For example, studies of European countries, the United States, and Canada suggested that inequality peaked in these places before World War II, declined through the 1950s, and remained roughly the same through the 1970s (Berger 1986; Nielsen 1994). Lowered postwar inequality was due in part to economic expansion in industrial societies, which created opportunities for people at the bottom to move up, and because of government health insurance, welfare, and other programs aimed at reducing inequality. As you will see later in this chapter and in Chapter 13 (where we discuss the changing nature of the American economy), however, this trend has reversed in recent years: Inequality has actually been increasing in the United States since the 1970s.

means of production

The means whereby the production of material goods is carried on in a society, including not just technology but the social relations among producers.

bourgeoisie

People who own companies, land, or stocks (shares) and use these to generate economic returns, according to Marx.

proletariat

People who sell their labor for wages, according to Marx.

Theories of Stratification in Modern Societies

In this section, we look at some broad theories regarding stratification. Karl Marx and Max Weber developed the most influential theoretical approaches to studying stratification. Most subsequent theories of stratification are heavily indebted to their ideas.

MARX: MEANS OF PRODUCTION AND THE ANALYSIS OF CLASS

For Marx, the term *class* refers to people who stand in a common relationship to the **means of production**—the means by which they gain a livelihood. In modern societies, the two main classes are the bourgeoisie and proletariat. The **bourgeoisie**, or capitalists, own the means of production. Members of the **proletariat**, or proletarians, by contrast, earn their living by selling their labor to the capitalists. The relationship between classes, according to Marx, is an exploitative one. In the course of the working day, Marx

Does the Digital Divide Still Matter?

Only a few years ago the digital divide was a chasm—a large gap in Internet use that reflected differences in socioeconomic status. At the turn of the millennium, only 34 percent of those with an annual income under \$30,000 used the Internet, compared with 81 percent of households earning more than \$79,000. An even larger gap resulted from differences in education, with barely one out of every five high school dropouts using the Internet, compared with nearly four out of every five college graduates (Rainie 2015).

By 2015 these gaps had narrowed considerably. While nearly all households earning more than \$75,000 today use the Internet, three-quarters of those earning under \$30,000 do so as well. The educational gap has fallen by a comparable amount, and even 60 percent of those over sixty-five are now online. The Internet has become as commonplace as the telephone (Rainie 2015).

Or has it? Not all forms of Internet use are equal. While almost two-thirds of American adults now own smartphones, there remains a sizeable age gap in ownership, as well as smaller (but significant) gaps based on education and income. For example, 85 percent of young adults (those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine) own smartphones, compared with only 27 percent of adults over sixty-five. Gaps remain between college grads (78 percent of whom own smartphones) and those with a high school education or less (52 percent), and between those with household incomes of over \$75,000 (84 percent) and those earning under \$30,000 (50 percent); 44 percent of the latter, in fact, report having lost their service at one time because of financial constraints (Smith 2015a).

Such disparities matter because Americans are increasingly relying on smartphones for more than texting their friends or posting photos on Instagram. For example, more than half (53 percent) of young adults report having used a smartphone in a job search, and those who are college educated or have higher incomes are the most likely to do so. While it may not come as a surprise that most job-seeking smartphone use is for such basic activities as browsing job listings or contacting employers, nearly half have also used their smartphones to actually fill out a job application. Interestingly, those who lack a college education are far more likely to use their smartphone to fill out a job application (61 percent) than those who have a college degree (37 percent). Similarly, a third of those with a high school education (or less) rely on their smartphone to create a résumé or cover letter, compared with only one-tenth of those with college degrees. The reason for these differences is simple: Job-seekers who never went to college are far less likely to have broadband Internet at home (Smith 2015b).

The proliferation of smartphones may indeed level the playing field, enabling poorer, less-educated adults to compensate for lack of broadband access. On the other hand, since those who are lower on the socioeconomic ladder are also less likely to own a functioning smartphone, they can be disadvantaged when seeking a job. Moreover, there are clear challenges to using a smartphone to fill out a job application, assemble a résumé, or write an effective job letter. The digital divide may be narrowing, but inequalities remain.

Although more people now have access to the Internet thanks to smartphones, how might the use of these technologies differ according to someone's income and education?



surplus value

In Marxist theory, the value of a worker's labor power left over when an employer has repaid the cost of hiring the worker.

status

The social honor or prestige that a particular group is accorded by other members of a society. Status groups normally display distinct styles of life—patterns of behavior that the members of a group follow. Status privilege may be positive or negative.

pariah groups

Groups that suffer from negative status discrimination—they are looked down on by most other members of society.

power

The ability of individuals or the members of a group to achieve aims or further the interests they hold. Power is a pervasive element in all human relationships. Many conflicts in society are struggles over power, because how much power an individual or group is able to obtain governs how far they are able to put their wishes into practice.

reasoned, workers produce more than is actually needed by employers to repay the cost of hiring them. This **surplus value** is the source of profit, which capitalists are able to put to their own use. A group of workers in a clothing factory, say, might be able to produce a hundred suits a day. Selling half the suits provides enough income for the manufacturer to pay the workers' wages. Income from the sale of the remainder of the garments is taken as profit.

Marx believed that the maturing of industrial capitalism would bring about an increasing gap between the wealth of the capitalist minority and the poverty of the large proletarian population. In his view, the wages of the working class could never rise far above subsistence level, while wealth would pile up in the hands of those owning capital. In addition, laborers would face work that is physically wearing and mentally tedious, as is the situation in many factories. At the lowest levels of society, particularly among those frequently or permanently unemployed, there would develop an "accumulation of misery, agony of labor, slavery, ignorance, brutality, moral degradation" (Marx 1977, orig. 1864).

Marx was right about the persistence of poverty in industrialized countries and in anticipating that large inequalities of wealth and income would endure. He was wrong in supposing that the income of most of the population would remain extremely low. Most people in Western countries today are much better off materially than comparable groups in Marx's day.

WEBER: CLASS, STATUS, AND POWER

There are three main differences between Weber's theory and Marx's. First, according to Weber, class divisions derive not only from control or lack of control of the means of production but also from economic differences that have nothing directly to do with property. Such resources include especially people's skills and credentials, or qualifications. Those in managerial or professional occupations earn more and enjoy more favorable conditions at work, for example, than people in blue-collar jobs. The qualifications they possess—such as degrees, diplomas, and the skills they have acquired—make them more "marketable" than others without such qualifications.

Second, Weber distinguished another aspect of stratification besides class, which he called "status." According to Weber, **status** refers to differences among groups in the social honor, or prestige, they are accorded by others. Status distinctions can vary independent of class divisions. Social honor may be either positive or negative. For instance, doctors and lawyers have high prestige in American society. **Pariah groups**, on the other hand, are negatively privileged status groups subject to discrimination that prevents them from taking advantage of opportunities open to others. For example, members of the "untouchables" caste in India would be treated as pariahs; they are relegated to low-paying work and historically were barred from entering the homes of higher-caste persons. Possession of wealth normally tends to confer high status, but there are exceptions to this principle, such as Hollywood starlets who earn high salaries but lack the education or refinement typically associated with "status." Importantly, status depends on people's subjective evaluations of social differences, whereas class is an objective measure.

Third, Weber recognized that social classes also differ with respect to their **power**, or ability to enact change, command resources, or make decisions. Power is distinct from

status and class, but these three dimensions often overlap. For example, on most college campuses, the president or provost has much greater power to change campus policies than a cafeteria worker does. Weber's writings on stratification are important because they show that other dimensions of stratification besides class strongly influence people's lives. Most sociologists hold that Weber's scheme offers a more flexible and sophisticated basis for analyzing stratification than that provided by Marx.

DAVIS AND MOORE: THE FUNCTIONS OF STRATIFICATION

Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore (1945) provided a functionalist explanation of stratification, arguing that it has beneficial consequences for society. They claimed that certain positions or roles in society, such as brain surgeons, are functionally more important than others, and these positions require special skills for their performance. However, only a limited number of individuals in any society have the talents or experience appropriate to these positions. To attract the most qualified people, rewards need to be offered, such as money, power, and prestige. Davis and Moore determined that because the benefits of different positions in any society must be unequal, then all societies must be stratified. They concluded that social stratification and social inequality are functional for society because they ensure that the most qualified people, attracted by lucrative rewards, fill the roles that are most important to a smoothly functioning society.

Davis and Moore's theory suggests that a person's social position is based solely on his or her innate talents and efforts. Not surprisingly, their theory has been criticized by other sociologists. The United States is not entirely a meritocratic society. Those at the top tend to have unequal access to economic and cultural resources, such as the highest-quality education, which help the upper classes transmit their privileged status from one generation to the next. For those without access to these resources, even those with superior talents, social inequality is a barrier to reaching their full potential.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What are the three shared characteristics of socially stratified systems?
2. How is the concept of class different from that of caste?
3. According to Karl Marx, what are the two main classes, and how do they relate to each other?
4. What are the three main differences between Max Weber's and Karl Marx's theories of social stratification?
5. How does social stratification contribute to the functioning of society? What is wrong with this argument?

How Is Social Class Defined in the United States?

Social class in the United States is typically defined by some combination of one's income, wealth, educational attainment, and occupational status. In this section, we describe each of these attributes and describe how they are distributed throughout the U.S. population. We also compare and contrast the five major social class groups in the United States. One's income, wealth, education, and occupational status also vary widely based on personal characteristics like ethnicity and race, as well as gender. We will delve further into gender stratification and race in Chapters 9 and 10, respectively. We will also show how inequalities vary starkly throughout the globe in Chapter 8.



Understand the social causes and consequences of social class in U.S. society, as well as the complexities and challenges of defining class.

income

Payment, usually derived from wages, salaries, or investments.

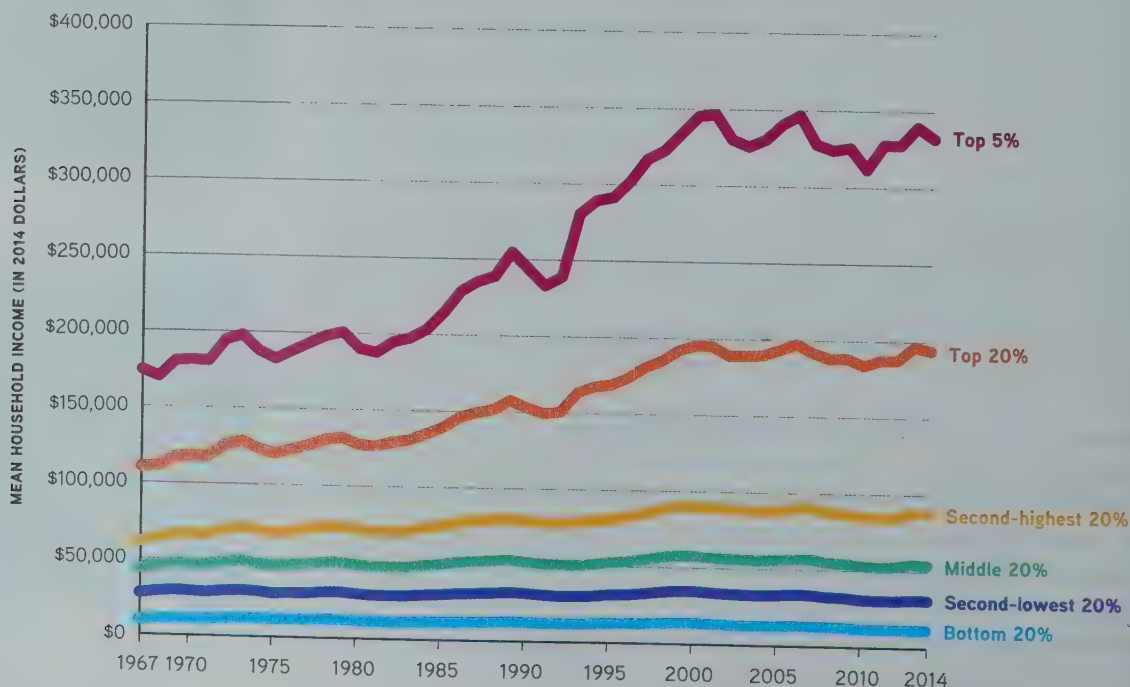
Income

Income refers to wages and salaries earned from paid occupations, plus unearned money (or interest) from investments. One of the most significant changes occurring in Western countries over the past century has been the rising real income of the majority of the working population. (Real income is income excluding increases owing to inflation, which provides a fixed standard of comparison from year to year.) One of the most important reasons for this is increasing productivity—output per worker—through technological development in industry. Another reason is almost everything we consume is now made in countries where wages are extremely low, keeping costs (and therefore prices) down.

Even though real income has risen in the past century, these earnings have not been distributed evenly across all groups. In 2014, the top 5 percent of all households in the United States received 21.9 percent of total income, the top 20 percent obtained 51.2 percent, and the bottom 20 percent received only 3.1 percent. This gap between the top and bottom tiers of the U.S. class structure has grown dramatically since the 1970s. The average household earnings (calculated at 2014 dollars), meaning the combined incomes of all persons living in a single household, of the bottom 20 percent of people in the United States was essentially unchanged from \$11,872 in 1977 to \$11,676 in 2014 (see Figure 7.1). During the same period, the richest 20 percent saw their incomes grow by 54 percent, while for the richest 5 percent of the population, income rose by more than 70 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015g).

FIGURE 7.1

Mean Household Income by Income Group, 1967–2014



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015g

Wealth

Wealth is usually measured in terms of net worth: all the assets one owns (for example, cash; savings and checking accounts; investments in stocks, bonds, and real estate properties) minus one's debts (for example, home mortgages, credit card balances, loans that need to be repaid). While most people earn their income from their work, the wealthy often derive the bulk of theirs from interest on their investments, some of them inherited. Some scholars argue that wealth—not income—is the real indicator of social class. While income can vary from year to year based on the number of hours one worked or whether one took leave or was temporarily laid off, wealth tends to be a more enduring measure that is less susceptible to annual fluctuations.

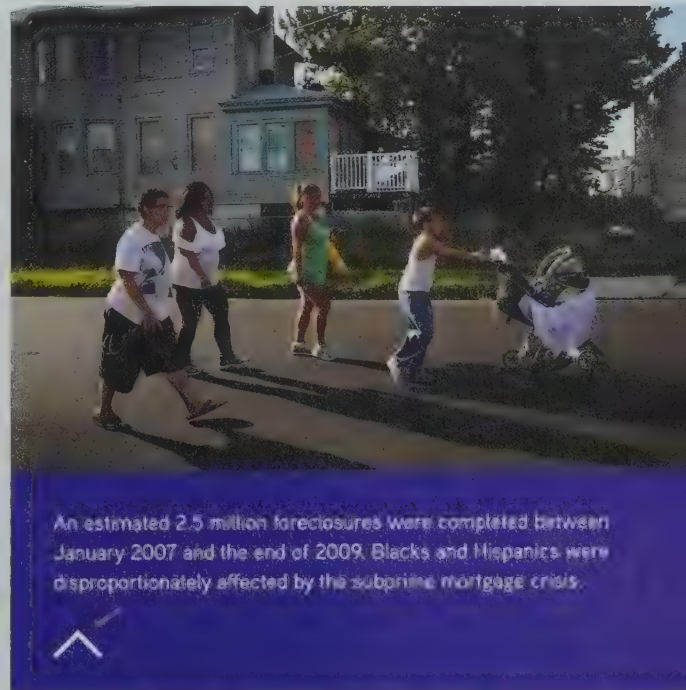
Today, the average net worth of the bottom 90 percent of American families is only \$84,000, while the average net worth of the top 1 percent has grown to \$13.8 million, and that of the top 0.1 percent, \$72.8 million. Stated somewhat differently, the wealthiest 0.1 percent of Americans (160,000 families) have as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent (145 million families) (Saez and Zucman 2014). There are significant differences in wealth by race. The median net worth of white households was \$141,190 in 2013, compared to \$13,700 for Hispanic households, and \$11,000 for black households (Kochhar and Fry 2014).

What are some of the reasons for the racial disparity in wealth? Do blacks simply have less money with which to purchase assets? To some degree, the answer is yes. The old adage “It takes money to make money” is a fact of life for those who start with little or no wealth. Since whites, on average, have enjoyed higher incomes and levels of wealth than blacks, many whites are able to accrue even more wealth, which they then are able to pass on to their children (Conley 1999).

But family advantages are not the only factors. Oliver and Shapiro (1995) argued that it is easier for whites to obtain assets even when they have fewer resources than blacks because discrimination plays a major role in the racial gap in home ownership. Blacks are rejected for mortgages 60 percent more often than whites, even when they have the same qualifications and creditworthiness. When blacks do receive mortgages, they are more likely to take “subprime” mortgage loans, which charge much higher interest rates. Subprime lenders focus on minority communities, whereas the prime lenders are unable or unwilling to lend in those communities (Avery and Canner 2005). In 2006, of those who took out home loans, 30 percent of blacks took out subprime loans, compared with 24 percent of Hispanics and 18 percent of whites. Blacks and Hispanics were therefore especially hard hit by the recent recession; many were forced to default on their mortgage payments and in many cases lost their homes. These issues are particularly important because home ownership constitutes American families' primary means for accumulating wealth.

wealth

Money and material possessions held by an individual or group.





Educational attainment is a key factor in occupational status.

Education

Sociologists also believe that education, or the number of years of schooling a person has completed, is an important dimension of social stratification. As we will see later in this chapter, how much education one receives is often influenced by the social class of one's parents. Although Viviana, the daughter of a homeless single mother, went on to attend Yale, her case is the exception to the rule.

Education is one of the strongest predictors of one's occupation, income, and wealth later in life. In 2012 the median income of Millennials between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-two with bachelor's degrees was \$45,500, compared with \$28,000 for those with a high school diploma (Pew Research Center 2014b). Yet, even college graduates are highly stratified with respect to their earnings potential: Persons whose undergraduate degrees required quantitative skills, such as engineering and computer science, tend to have the highest lifetime earnings while those with degrees that train students to work with children or provide counseling tend to have the lowest earnings (Hershbein and Kearney 2014). A recent study compared 171 college majors and found that petroleum engineering had the highest median annual salary in 2009, \$120,000, while counseling psychology majors earned the least, at \$29,000 per year (Carnevale, Strohl, and Melton 2011).

The economic benefits of a college education have increased considerably over time: In 1966, for example, the income gap between those with a college degree and those with a high school diploma was only 24 percent, compared to 63 percent in 2012 (Pew Research Center 2014b). The typical college graduate will earn more than twice as much as a typical high school graduate over his or her working life—nearly \$1.2 million for a college graduate compared to \$580,000 for a high school graduate (Hershbein and Kearney 2014). Although this growing “wage premium” has encouraged more Americans to go to college—33 percent of American adults had bachelor's degrees in 2015, compared to 16 percent in 1979 (Ryan and Bauman 2016)—it has also helped widen the gap between the wealthiest and the poorest workers.

Racial differences in levels of education persist, which partly explains why racial differences in income and wealth also persist. In 2015, of those ages twenty-five and older, 93 percent of whites, 89 percent of Asian Americans, and 87 percent of blacks had completed high school, compared to only 67 percent of Latinos (Ryan and Bauman 2016). We will delve more deeply into race and ethnic differences in educational attainment in Chapter 12.

Occupation

In the United States and other industrialized societies, occupation is an important indicator of one's social standing. Occupational status depends heavily on one's level of educational attainment. In fact, in studies where persons are asked to rate jobs in terms of how “prestigious” they are, those requiring the most education are often—but not always—ranked most highly (see Table 7.1). The top-ranked occupations appear to share one of two characteristics: They either require a fair amount of education, or a fair amount of public service. These rankings have been fairly consistent for nearly four decades (Griswold 2014). There are some interesting differences by age, however. Millennials seem more

TABLE 7.1

Relative Social Prestige of Select U.S. Occupations

OCCUPATION	PRESTIGE SCORE	OCCUPATION	PRESTIGE SCORE	OCCUPATION	PRESTIGE SCORE
Physician	7.6	Actor	5.7	Bank teller	4.2
Architect	6.7	Firefighter	5.7	Local delivery truck driver	4.2
Dentist	6.7	Musician in a symphony orchestra	5.6	Salesperson in a store	3.9
Registered nurse	6.5	Aircraft mechanic	5.5	Day-care aide	3.6
Lawyer	6.4	Farm manager	5.0	Waiter/waitress	3.6
Veterinarian	6.4	Real estate agent	4.9	Cashier in a supermarket	3.4
Secondary-school teacher	6.1	Carpenter	4.6	Taxi driver	3.2
Sociologist	6.1	Machinist	4.4	Janitor	3.0
Police officer	5.9	Auto body repairperson	4.3	Door-to-door salesperson	2.9
Member of the clergy	5.8				

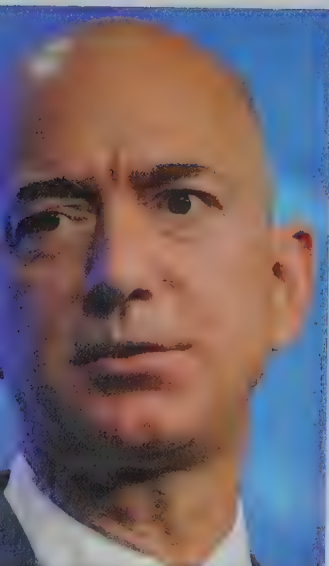
Note: Respondents were asked to rank the occupations' prestige on a scale of 1–9, with 1 as the least prestigious and 9 as the most prestigious.

Source: Smith and Son 2014

inclined than older Americans to value fame: Professional athletes, actors, and entertainers move up in the rankings (Harris 2014).

A Picture of the U.S. Class Structure

As we have seen so far, social class is a multifaceted concept, comprising how far we've gone in school, how much we earn, what we do for a living, and how many assets we possess. It is partly for this reason that it can be difficult to define precisely what social classes like upper, middle, and lower class mean in the United States. There can be wide differences in the lifestyles and personal characteristics of people even within a single social class group. Some scholars have gone so far as to argue that social class is a problematic concept because members of even a single social class "do not share distinct similar, life-defining experiences" (Kingston 2001). Despite this important critique, we can highlight some general characteristics that distinguish the major social strata.



In 2016, Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon and owner of the *Washington Post*, and Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg were the second- and fourth-richest people in the world, respectively. Bill Gates, cofounder of Microsoft, was #1.

The purpose of the following discussion is to describe broad class differences in the United States. Bear in mind that there are no sharply defined boundaries between the classes, and there is no real agreement among sociologists about where the boundaries should fall.

THE UPPER CLASS

The **upper class** consists of the richest Americans—those households earning more than \$200,000, or approximately 5 percent of all American households. Most Americans in the upper class are wealthy but not superrich. They are likely to own a large suburban home as well as a vacation home, drive expensive cars, vacation abroad, and educate their children in private schools and colleges. At the lower levels of this group, a large part of income may come from salaried earnings. This group would include many professionals, from some doctors and lawyers to university administrators and possibly even a few highly compensated professors. There are roughly 7 million households that fall into this category (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015c).

At the very top of the upper class are the superrich—people who have accumulated vast fortunes that permit them to enjoy a lifestyle unimaginable to most Americans. If one uses a cut-off of the richest 0.1 percent in terms of income, these are people whose income tops \$2 million (Lenzer 2011; Pomerleau 2013). Their wealth stems in large part from their substantial investments, including stocks and bonds and real estate, and the interest income derived from those investments. They include people who acquired their wealth in a variety of ways: celebrities, professional athletes, heads of major corporations, people who have made large amounts of money through investments or real estate, those fortunate enough to have inherited great wealth from their parents.

The superrich are highly self-conscious of their unique and privileged social class position; some give generously to such worthy causes as the fine arts, hospitals, and charities. Their common class identity is strengthened by such things as having attended the same exclusive private secondary schools (to which they also send their children). They sit on the same corporate boards of directors and belong to the same private clubs. They contribute large sums of money to their favorite politicians and may be on a first-name basis with members of Congress and perhaps even with the president. Because they are able to give large donations to political campaigns, they often have a significant influence on American politics (Domhoff 2013).

The turn of the twenty-first century saw extraordinary opportunities for the accumulation of such wealth. Globalization is one reason. Those entrepreneurs who are able to invest globally often prosper, both by selling products to foreign consumers and by making profits cheaply by using low-wage labor in developing countries. Young entrepreneurs with startup high-tech companies, such as Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and Yahoo co-founder Jerry Yang, made legendary fortunes. In 2016, Zuckerberg was the fourth wealthiest person in the world, with an estimated net worth of \$55.5 billion (Dolan 2016).

As a consequence of globalization and the information revolution, the number of superrich Americans has exploded in recent years. At the end of World War II, there were only 13,000 people worth \$1 million or more in the United States. In 2015, there were 10.4 million millionaire households in the United States (Spectreth Group 2016) and

540 billionaires (Forbes 2016). Unlike “old-money” families such as the Rockefellers or the Vanderbilts, who accumulated their wealth in earlier generations and thus are viewed as a sort of American aristocracy, much of this “new wealth” is held by entrepreneurs, including such recent arrivals as GoPro founder Nick Woodman, whose net worth is estimated at nearly \$5 billion.

THE MIDDLE CLASS

The **middle class** is a catchall for a diverse group of occupations, lifestyles, and people who earn stable and sometimes substantial incomes at primarily white-collar jobs and highly skilled blue-collar jobs. It is generally considered to include households with income between \$40,000 and \$200,000. The American middle class grew throughout much of the first three-quarters of the twentieth century, then shrank during most of the past four decades. While the middle class was once largely white, today it is increasingly diverse, both racially and culturally, including African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos.

For many years, when Americans were asked to identify their social class, the majority claimed to be middle class. The reason was partly the American cultural belief that the United States is relatively free of class distinctions; few people want to be identified as being too rich or too poor. Most Americans seem to think that others are not very different from their immediate family, friends, and coworkers (Kelley and Evans 1995; Simpson, Stark, and Jackson 1988; Vanneman and Cannon 1987). Since people rarely interact with those outside of their social class, they tend to see themselves as like “most other people,” whom they then regard as being “middle class” (Kelley and Evans 1995).

This perception that we are all middle class has eroded in recent years. According to Gallup polls, in 2015, 51 percent of Americans identified as middle class or upper middle class, down from an average of more than 60 percent from 2000 to 2008 (Newport 2015). The recent recession was partly to blame, as well as the uneven economic recovery that followed. The stock market might have risen to record levels by 2014, but this did not benefit the majority of Americans.

The American middle class can be subdivided into two groups: the upper middle class and the lower middle class.

The Upper Middle Class The upper middle class consists of highly educated professionals (for example, doctors, lawyers, engineers, and professors), mid-level corporate managers, people who own or manage small businesses and retail shops, and some large-farm owners. Household incomes range quite widely, from about \$100,000 to perhaps \$200,000. The lower end of the income category would include college professors, for example, while the higher end would include corporate managers and small business owners. The upper middle class includes approximately 20 percent of all American households (Elwell 2014). Its members are likely to be college educated (as are their children) with advanced degrees. They own comfortable homes, drive expensive late-model cars, have some savings and investments, and are often active in local politics and civic organizations. However, they tend not to enjoy the same high-end luxuries, social connections, or extravagancies as members of the upper class.

The Lower Middle Class The lower middle class consists of trained office workers (for example, secretaries and bookkeepers), elementary and high school teachers, nurses,

upper class

A social class broadly composed of the more affluent members of society, especially those who have inherited wealth, own businesses, or hold large numbers of stocks (shares).

middle class

A social class composed broadly of those working in white-collar and highly skilled blue-collar jobs.

salespeople, police officers, firefighters, and others who provide skilled services. This group, which includes about 40 percent of American households, is the most varied of the social class strata and may include college-educated persons with relatively modest earnings, such as public elementary school teachers, as well as quite highly paid persons with high school diplomas only, such as skilled craftsmen (e.g., plumbers) and civil servants with many years of seniority. Household incomes in this group range from about \$40,000 to \$100,000 (Elwell 2014). Members of the lower middle class may own a modest house, although many live in rental units. Almost all have a high school education, and some have college degrees. They are rarely politically active beyond exercising their right to vote.

The number of Americans who identify as “lower class” or “lower middle class” has increased in recent years, from 25 percent in 2008 to 40 percent in 2014. The numbers have increased even more among Millennials (from 25 percent to 49 percent) as young people become increasingly worried about their career prospects (Kochhar and Morin 2014).

THE WORKING CLASS

The **working class**, about 20 percent of all American households, includes primarily **blue-collar** workers, such as factory workers and mechanics, and **pink-collar** laborers, such as clerical aides and sales clerks, and others who earn a modest weekly paycheck at a job that offers little control over the size of one's income or working conditions. Household incomes range from about \$20,000 to \$40,000 (Elwell 2014), and at least two household members work to make ends meet. Family income is just enough to pay the rent or the mortgage, put food on the table, and perhaps save for a summer vacation. As you will see later in this chapter, many blue-collar jobs in the United States are threatened by economic globalization, so members of the working class today are likely to feel insecure about their own and their family's future.

The working class is racially and ethnically diverse. While older members of the working class may own a home that was bought several years ago, younger members are likely to rent. The home or apartment is likely to be in a lower-income suburb or a city neighborhood. The household car, a lower-priced model, is unlikely to be new. Children who graduate from high school are unlikely to go to college and will attempt to get a job immediately instead. Most members of the working class are not likely to be politically active even in their own community, although they may vote in some elections.

THE LOWER CLASS

The **lower class**, roughly 15 percent of American households, includes those who work part-time or not at all; household income is typically lower than \$20,000 (Elwell 2014). Most lower-class individuals are found in cities, although some live in rural areas and earn a little money as farmers or part-time workers. Some manage to find employment in semi-skilled or unskilled manufacturing or service jobs, ranging from making clothing in sweatshops to cleaning houses. Their jobs, when they can find them, are dead-end ones, meaning that years of work are unlikely to lead to promotion or substantially higher income. Their work is probably part time and highly unstable, without benefits such as medical insurance, disability, or Social Security. Even if they are fortunate enough to find a full-time job, there are no guarantees that it will be around next month or even next week. Many people

working class

A social class broadly composed of people working in blue-collar, or manual, occupations.

blue- and pink-collar jobs

Jobs that typically pay low wages and often involve manual or low-skill labor. Blue-collar jobs typically are held by men (e.g., factory worker), whereas pink-collar jobs are typically held by women (e.g., clerical assistant).

lower class

A social class composed of those who work part-time or not at all and whose household income is typically low.

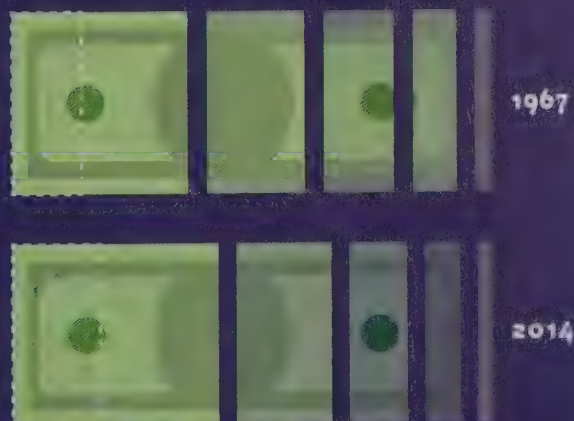
Income inequality refers to the unequal distribution of income across the population, or the gap between a country's richest and poorest citizens. One measure of income inequality is the income share held by the top 10 percent of the population. The greater the share, the higher the level of income inequality.

Income Share Held by the Top 10% of Population



Distribution of Income in the United States

Population	1967	2014
Top 5%	17.2%	21.9%
Top 20%	43.6%	51.2%
Second-highest 20%	34.2%	33.2%
Middle 20%	17.3%	14.3%
Second-lowest 20%	10.8%	8.2%
Bottom 20%	4.0%	3.1%



CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 Name at least three components of social class. How do blacks and whites differ along these components?
- 2 How do we explain the enduring racial disparity in wealth?
- 3 What are the major social class groups in the United States today? Describe at least two ways (other than their income) that these groups differ from one another.

in the lower class live in poverty. Very few own their own homes. Most of the lower class rent, and some are homeless. If they own a car at all, it is likely to be a used car. A higher percentage of the lower class is nonwhite than is true of other social classes. Its members do not participate in politics, and they seldom vote.

THE “UNDERCLASS”

Within the lower class, some sociologists have identified a group that Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal (1963) originally referred to as the **underclass** because they are “beneath” the class system, in that they lack access to the world of work and mainstream patterns of behavior. Located in the highest-poverty neighborhoods of the inner city, the underclass is sometimes called the “new urban poor.”

The underclass includes many African Americans who have been trapped for more than one generation in a cycle of poverty from which there is little possibility of escape (Wacquant 1993, 1996; Wacquant and Wilson 1993; Wilson 1996). These are the poorest of the poor. Their numbers have grown rapidly over the past quarter-century and today include unskilled and unemployed men, young single mothers and their children on welfare, teenagers from welfare-dependent families, and many homeless people. They live in poor neighborhoods troubled by drugs, gangs, and high levels of violence. They are the truly disadvantaged, people with extremely difficult lives who have little realistic hope of ever making it out of poverty.

What Are the Causes and Consequences of Social Inequality in the United States?

Recognize why and how the gap between rich and poor has increased in recent decades. Understand social mobility, and think about your own mobility.

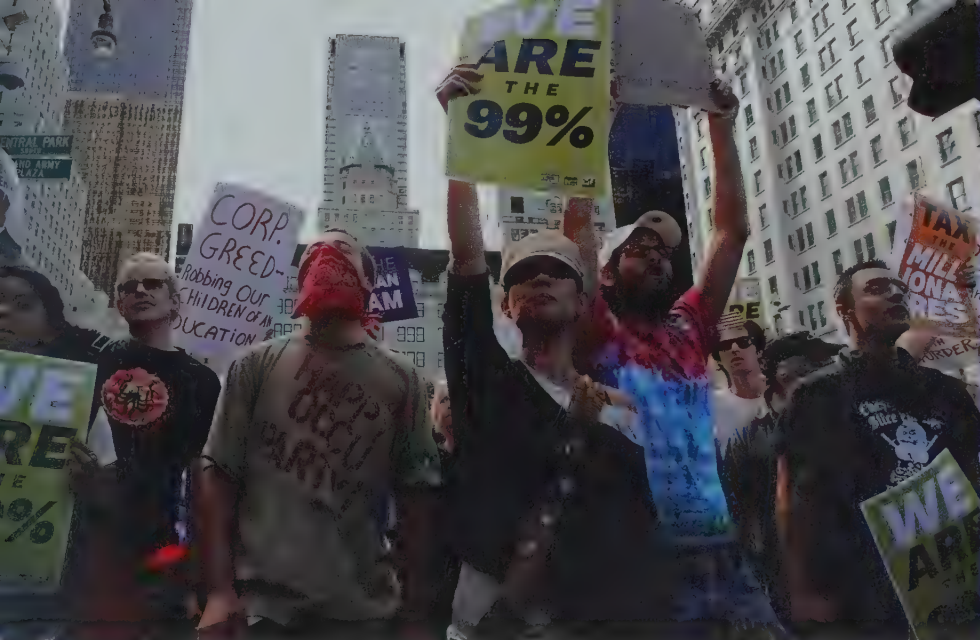
underclass

A class of individuals situated at the bottom of the class system, often composed of people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The United States prides itself on being a nation of equals. But as we touched on earlier in the chapter, during the past thirty years, the gap between the rich and the poor in the United States has started to grow. The rich have gotten much, much richer, while middle-class incomes have stagnated and the poor have grown in number. The current gap between the rich and the poor in the United States is the largest since the Census Bureau started measuring it in 1947 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015k). One statistical analysis found that the United States had the most unequal distribution of household income among all twenty-one industrial countries studied (Sweden had the most equal; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development 2010).

Ethnic Minorities Versus White Americans

There are substantial differences in income based on race and ethnicity, since minorities in the United States are more likely to hold the lowest-paying jobs. Black and Latino household



The Occupy Wall Street protests of 2011 drew attention to rising income inequality in the United States.

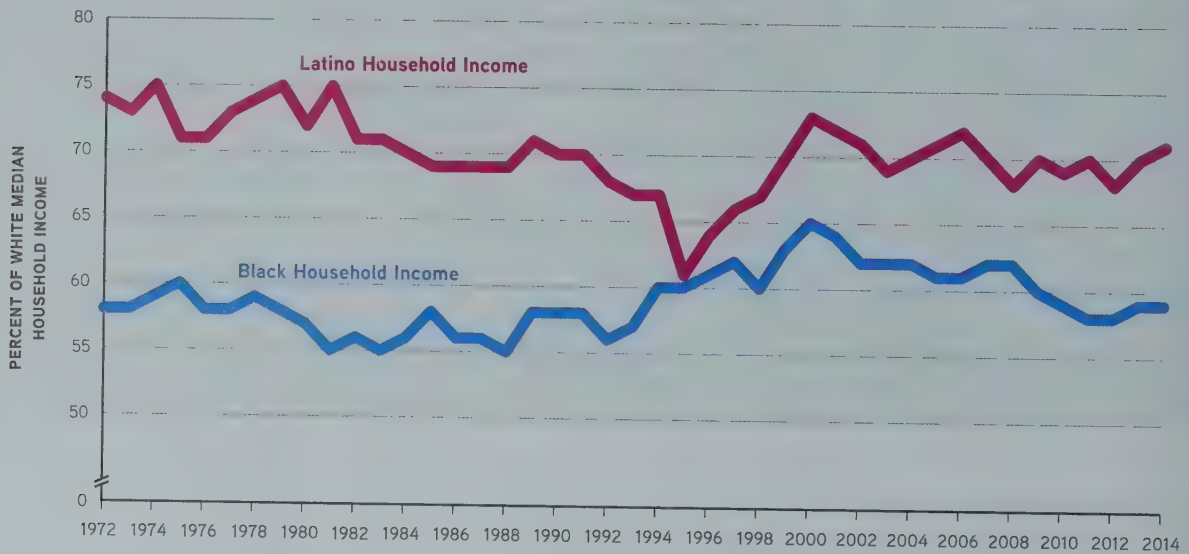
income, for example, averages between 60 and 70 percent that of whites (Figure 7.2). Since 1972, the black-white income ratio has remained essentially unchanged while the income of Hispanics has fallen relative to whites (DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015). In 2014 the median income of white households was \$60,256 compared to \$35,398 for black households and \$42,491 for Hispanic households. For blacks, this is a slight improvement over previous years, as a growing number have gone to college and moved into middle-class occupations. For Latinos, however, the situation has worsened, as recent immigrants from rural areas in Mexico and Central America find themselves working at low-wage jobs (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2001f).

Oliver and Shapiro (1995) found that the “wealth gap” between blacks and whites is even greater than the income gap. Recent data show that the wealth gap has increased in the aftermath of the Great Recession. In 2013, white households had a median net worth of \$141,900—thirteen times the median net worth of black households (\$11,000) and the largest gap since 1989. In 2007, the wealth of white households was ten times the wealth of black households (Kochhar and Fry 2014). Oliver and Shapiro also found that when blacks attained educational or occupational levels comparable with that of whites, the wealth gap still did not disappear.

Oliver and Shapiro (1995) argued that blacks in the United States have encountered many barriers to acquiring wealth throughout history. After the Civil War ended slavery in 1865, legal discrimination (such as mandatory segregation in the South and separate schools) tied the vast majority of blacks to the lowest rungs of the economic ladder. Racial discrimination was made illegal by the Civil Rights Act of 1964; nonetheless, discrimination has remained, and although some blacks have moved into middle-class occupations, many have remained poor or in low-wage jobs where the opportunities for accumulating wealth are nonexistent. Less wealth means less social and cultural capital: fewer dollars to invest in schooling for one’s children, a business, or the stock market—investments that in the long run would create greater wealth for future investments. We will further explore issues of racial inequality in Chapter 10.

FIGURE 7.2

Black and Latino Household Income as Percentage of White Household Income



Source: DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015

social mobility

Upward or downward movement of individuals or groups among different social positions.

intragenerational mobility

Movement up or down a social stratification hierarchy within the course of a personal career.

intergenerational mobility

Movement up or down a social stratification hierarchy from one generation to another.

Social Mobility

Social mobility refers to the upward or downward movement of individuals and groups among different class positions as a result of changes in occupation, wealth, or income. There are two ways of studying social mobility. First, we can look at people's own careers—how far they move up or down the socioeconomic scale in the course of their working lives. This is called **intragenerational mobility**. Alternatively, we can analyze where children are on the scale compared with their parents or grandparents. Mobility across the generations is called **intergenerational mobility**. Sociologists have long studied both types of mobility, with increasingly sophisticated methods. Unfortunately, with the exception of some recent studies, much of this research has been limited to male mobility, particularly of white males. We look at some of the research in this section.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOBILITY: WHO GETS AHEAD?

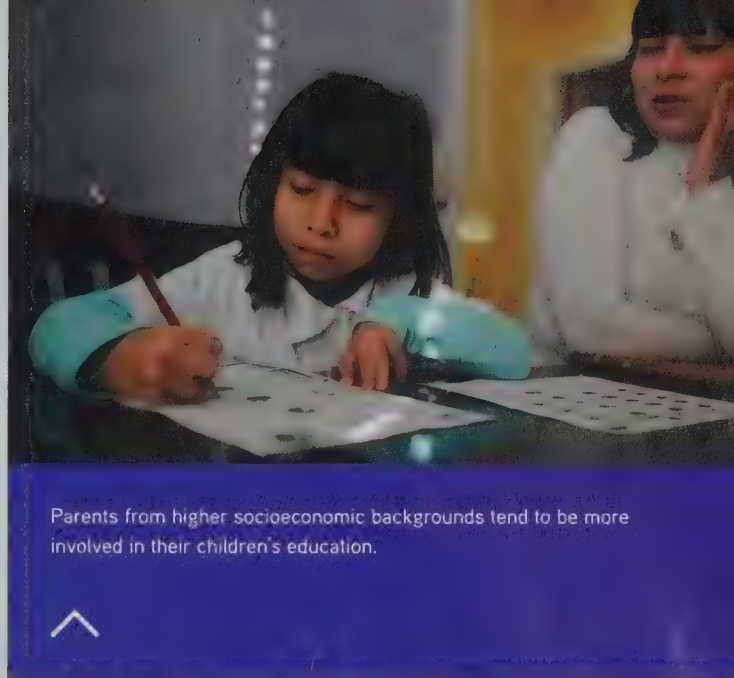
Is it possible for a young person from a working-class background to transcend class roots and become an upper-class professional? Is the case of Viviana Andazola Marquez a fairy tale or reality? If a reality, what factors contributed to her ascent up the social ladder? Sociologists have sought to answer this question by trying to understand which social factors are most influential in determining an individual's status or position in society. Most research shows that while the forces of social reproduction are very

powerful, it is possible for people to transcend their roots; **social reproduction** refers to the processes whereby parents pass down to their children a range of resources, including both financial and cultural capital.

In a classic study of intergenerational mobility in the United States, sociologists Peter Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan (1967) found that long-range intergenerational mobility—that is, from working class to upper middle class—was rare. Why? Blau and Duncan concluded that the key factor behind occupational status was educational attainment. A child's education is influenced by family social status; this, in turn, affects the child's social position later in life. Sociologists William Sewell and Robert Hauser (1980) later confirmed Blau and Duncan's conclusions. They added to the argument by claiming that the connection between family background and educational attainment occurs because parents, teachers, and friends influence the educational and career aspirations of the child and that these aspirations then become an important influence on the schooling and careers obtained throughout the child's life. In other words, aspirations are reproduced from generation to generation because parents and children share the social location and social ties that may shape aspirations.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1988) has also been a major figure in examining the importance of family background to social status, but his emphasis is on the cultural advantages that parents can provide to their children. Bourdieu argued that among the factors responsible for social status, the most important is the transmission of **cultural capital**, or the cultural advantages that coming from a “good home” confers. Wealthier families are able to afford to send their children to better schools, an economic advantage that benefits the children's social status as adults. Parents from the upper and middle classes are mostly highly educated themselves and tend to be more involved in their children's education—reading to them, helping with homework, purchasing books and learning materials, and encouraging their progress. Bourdieu noted that working-class parents are concerned about their children's education, but they lack the economic and cultural capital to make a difference.

Although Bourdieu focused on social status in France, the socioeconomic order in the United States is similar. Those who already hold positions of wealth and power can ensure their children have the best available education, often leading them into the best jobs. Studies consistently show that the large majority of people who have “made money” did so on the basis of inheriting or being given at least a modest amount initially—which they then used to make more. In U.S. society, it's better to start at the top than at the bottom (Duncan et al. 1998; Jaher 1973; Rubinstein 1986); through social reproduction processes, those who start at the top are able to pass their economic and cultural resources down to their children.



Parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to be more involved in their children's education.

social reproduction

The process whereby societies have structural continuity over time. Social reproduction is an important pathway through which parents transmit or produce values, norms, and social practices among their children.

cultural capital

Noneconomic or cultural resources that parents pass down to their children, such as language or knowledge. These resources contribute to the process of social reproduction, according to Bourdieu.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What are two pieces of statistical evidence used to support the claim that the gap between the rich and the poor is growing in the United States?
2. Contrast intragenerational and intergenerational mobility.
3. According to classic studies of mobility in the United States, how does family background affect one's social class (education)?
4. According to Pierre Bourdieu, how does the family contribute to the transmission of social class from generation to generation?
5. Describe at least two reasons for downward mobility.

Race and education play a major part in determining upward mobility. Sixty-three percent of black children born into the bottom fourth of the U.S. income distribution remained in the bottom fourth, while only 4 percent made it into the top fourth. Among white children, 32 percent of those born into the bottom fourth remained there, while 14 percent made it into the top fourth. In other words, while upward mobility is not high for anyone, it is far lower for blacks than it is for whites. Differences in education account for at least part of the racial differences: because schools remain highly segregated by race in many parts of the country, poor black children often do not have the same educational opportunities as whites (Hertz 2006).

DOWNWARD MOBILITY

Downward mobility occurs when one's own wealth, income, or occupational status is lower than what one's parents had. Downward mobility is less common than upward mobility; nevertheless, an estimated one-third of all Americans raised in the middle class—defined as households between the thirtieth and seventieth percentile of the income distribution—fall out of the middle class when they become adults (Acs 2011). A person with **short-range downward mobility** moves from one job to another that is similar in pay and prestige—for example, from a routine office job to semiskilled blue-collar work. Downward intragenerational mobility is often associated with psychological problems and anxieties. Some people are simply unable to sustain the lifestyle into which they were born. But another source of downward mobility among individuals arises through no fault of their own. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, and again in the late 2000s, corporate America was flooded with instances in which middle-aged men lost their jobs because of company mergers, takeovers, or bankruptcies. These executives either had difficulty finding new jobs or could only find jobs that paid less than their previous jobs.

How Does Poverty Affect Individuals?

Learn about poverty in the United States today, explanations for why it exists, and means for combating it. Learn how people become marginalized in a society and the forms that this marginalization takes.

At the bottom of the class system in the United States are the millions of people who live in poverty. Many do not maintain a proper diet and live in miserable conditions; their average life expectancy is lower than that of the majority of the population. In defining poverty, a distinction is usually made between absolute and relative poverty. **Absolute poverty** means that a person or family simply can't get enough to eat. People living in absolute poverty are undernourished and, in situations of famine, may actually starve to death. Absolute poverty is common in the poorer developing countries.

In the industrial countries, **relative poverty** is essentially a measure of inequality. It means being poor as compared with the standards of living of the majority. It is reasonable to call a person poor in the United States if he or she lacks the basic resources needed to maintain a decent standard of housing and healthy living conditions.

Measuring Poverty

When President Lyndon B. Johnson began the War on Poverty in 1964, around 36 million Americans lived in poverty—about 19 percent of the population at that time. In 2014, this number sat at 46.7 million people, or roughly 15 percent of the population (DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015). The rate of child poverty is even worse: 21 percent of children live in a household with income levels beneath the poverty line. A recent UNICEF study reported that among the thirty-five wealthiest nations in the world, the United States has the second-highest child poverty rate, falling just behind Romania (UNICEF 2012). The largest concentrations of poverty in the United States are found in the South and the Southwest, in inner cities, and in rural areas. Among the poor, 20.8 million Americans (or nearly 7 percent of the U.S. population) live in extreme poverty: Their incomes are only half of the official poverty level, meaning that they live at near-starvation levels (DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015).

What does it mean to be poor in the world's richest nation? The U.S. government currently calculates a **poverty line** based on cost estimates for families of different sizes. This results in a strict, no-frills budget, which for a family of four in 2014 works out to an annual cash income of just over \$24,000, or around \$2,000 a month to cover all expenses (DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015).

But how realistic is this formula? Some critics believe it overestimates the amount of poverty. They point out that the current standard fails to take into account noncash forms of income available to the poor, such as food stamps, Medicare, Medicaid, and public housing subsidies, as well as under-the-table pay obtained from work at odd jobs that is concealed from the government. Others counter that the government's formula greatly underestimates the amount of poverty because it overemphasizes the proportion of a family budget spent on food and severely underestimates the share spent on housing. According to some estimates, two-thirds of all U.S. families whose income is \$15,000 a year (about what would be earned under the federal minimum wage) are spending more than half of their income on housing (Harvard University Joint Center for Housing Studies 2014). Still others observe that this formula dramatically underestimates the proportion of older adults (age sixty-five and older) who live in poverty because they spend a relatively small proportion of their income on food yet are faced with high health-care costs (Carr 2010).

Who Are the Poor?

Most Americans think of the poor as people who are unemployed or on welfare. Data on who the poor actually are show that blacks and Latinos are more likely than whites to live in poverty, but poverty strikes members of all ethnic and racial backgrounds. Surveys show that Americans are split on whether the poor are responsible for their plight. An NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll in 2014 found that 46 percent believe that poverty is the result of circumstances beyond people's control, while 44 percent believe it is because people do not do enough to lift themselves out of poverty (Wessler 2014). This represents a significant shift in opinion from twenty years earlier, when fewer than a third of respondents believed poverty to be caused by conditions beyond one's control, and more than half believed that the poor were responsible for their plight. This shift in opinion may well reflect the lingering aftermath of the recent recession, which affected many working- and

downward mobility

Social mobility in which individuals' wealth, income, or status is lower than what they or their parents once had.

short-range downward mobility

Social mobility that occurs when an individual moves from one position in the class structure to another of nearly equal status.

absolute poverty

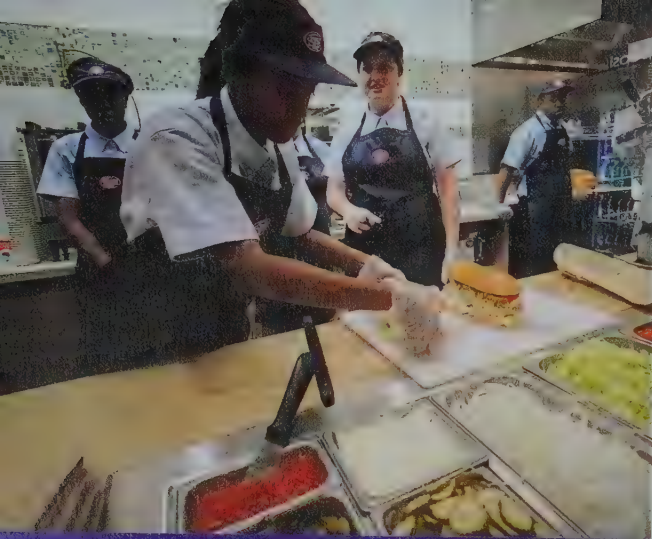
The minimal requirements necessary to sustain a healthy existence.

relative poverty

Poverty defined according to the living standards of the majority in any given society.

poverty line

An official government measure to define those living in poverty in the United States.



Many fast-food workers are counted among the working poor. Most earn minimum wage, and many lack health benefits due to their part-time work schedules.

working poor

People who work but whose earnings are not enough to lift them above the poverty line.

middle-class Americans, revealing to them that circumstances beyond one's control can adversely affect one's livelihood.

THE WORKING POOR

Many Americans fall into the category of the **working poor**—that is, people who work at least twenty-seven weeks a year but whose earnings are not high enough to lift them above the poverty line. The federal minimum wage, the legal floor for wages in the United States, was first set in 1938 at \$0.25 an hour. Set on July 24, 2009, the federal minimum wage is currently \$7.25 per hour, although individual states can set higher minimum wages than the federal standard. As of January 2016, the District of Columbia had the highest minimum wage, at \$10.50 per hour; California and Washington have a minimum wage of \$10 per hour. Although the federal minimum wage has increased over the years, since 1965 it has failed to keep up with inflation.

In 2013, there were an estimated 10.5 million individuals among the working poor, or 7 percent of the labor force. The working poor are disproportionately nonwhite and immigrant: Blacks and Hispanics are twice as likely as whites and Asians to fall into this category. Women and young workers are also more likely to be classified as working poor than men and older workers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015d). The more education an individual has, the less likely he or she is to be among the working poor: While 19 percent of people with less than a high school diploma are working poor, only 2.3 percent of college graduates fall into this category.

Most poor people, contrary to popular belief, do not receive welfare payments because they earn too much to qualify. Only 5 percent of all low-income families with a full-time, full-year worker receive welfare benefits, and over half rely on public health insurance rather than employer-sponsored insurance. Research on low-wage fast-food workers further reveals that many working poor lack adequate education, do not have health insurance, and are trying to support families on poverty-level wages (Newman 2000).

POVERTY, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

Poverty rates in the United States are much higher among most minority groups than among whites, even though more than two-thirds of the poor are white. As Figure 7.3 shows, blacks and Latinos experience more than double the poverty rate of whites. This is because they often work at the lowest-paying jobs and because of racial discrimination. Asian Americans have the highest income of any group, but their poverty rate is slightly less than one and a half times that of whites, reflecting the recent influx of relatively poor Asian immigrant groups.

Latinos have somewhat higher incomes than blacks, although their poverty rate is comparable. Nonetheless, the number of blacks living in poverty has declined considerably

in recent years. In 1959, 55 percent of blacks were living in poverty; by 2014, that figure had dropped to 26 percent. A similar pattern holds for Latinos: Poverty grew steadily between 1972 and 1994, peaking at almost 31 percent of the Latino population. By 2014, however, the poverty rate for Latinos had fallen to 24 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015h). This is mainly because the economic expansion of the 1990s created new job opportunities (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, and Lee 2005).

THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

Much of the growth in poverty is associated with the **feminization of poverty**, an increase in the proportion of the poor who are female. Growing rates of divorce, separation, and single-parent families have placed women at a particular disadvantage; it is extremely difficult for unskilled or semiskilled, low-income, poorly educated women to raise children by themselves while also holding down a job that pays enough to raise them out of poverty. As a result, in 2014, 40 percent of all single-parent families with children headed by women were poor, compared with only 8 percent of married couples with children (Figure 7.4) (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015h).

The feminization of poverty is particularly acute among families headed by Hispanic women. Although the rate has declined by almost a third since its peak in the mid-1980s (it was 64 percent in 1985), 40 percent of all female-headed Hispanic families lived in poverty in 2014. The same proportion—40 percent—of female-headed African American families also live in poverty, both considerably higher than either white (24 percent) or Asian (18 percent) female-headed households (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015h).

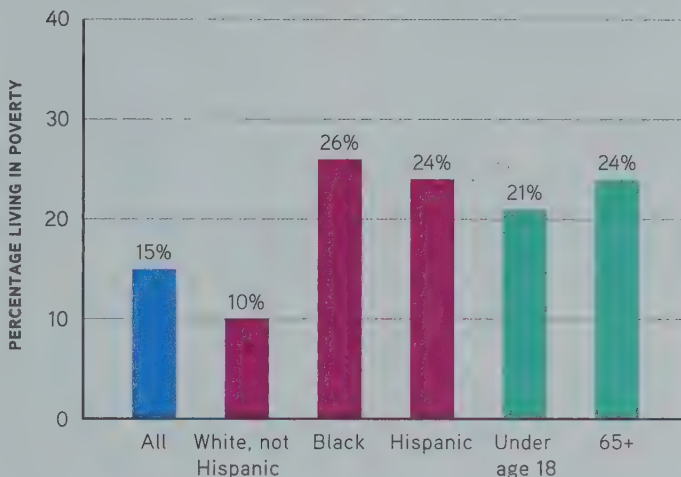
A single woman attempting to raise children alone is caught in a vicious circle (Edin and Kefalas 2005). If she has a job, she must find someone to take care of her children because she cannot afford to hire a babysitter or pay for day care. From her standpoint, she will take in more money if she accepts welfare payments from the government and tries to find illegal part-time jobs that pay cash not reported to the government rather than find a regular full-time job paying minimum wage. Even though welfare will not get her out of poverty, if she finds a regular job, she will lose her welfare altogether, and she and her family may end up worse off economically. We will further explore the economic disadvantages facing women and mothers in Chapter 9.

CHILDREN IN POVERTY

Given the high rates of poverty among families headed by single women, it follows that children are the principal victims of poverty in the United States. As noted earlier, the United States ranks second among the nation's wealthiest countries with respect to its child poverty rates (defined as poverty among people under eighteen). Nonetheless, the child poverty

FIGURE 7.3

Americans Living in Poverty in 2014



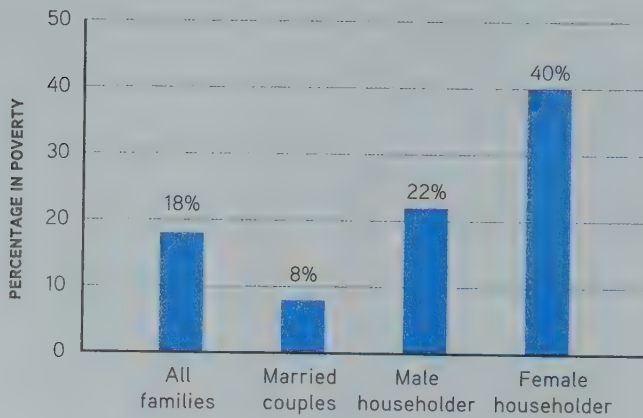
Source: DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015

feminization of poverty

An increase in the proportion of the poor who are female.

FIGURE 7.4

Families in Poverty in 2014



Note: Families with children under eighteen.

Source: DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015

rate has varied considerably over the last forty years, declining when the economy expands or the government increases spending on antipoverty programs and rising when the economy slows and government antipoverty spending falls. The child poverty rate declined from 27 percent of all children in 1959 to 14 percent in 1973—a period associated with both economic growth and Johnson's War on Poverty (1963–1969). During the late 1970s and 1980s, as economic growth slowed and cutbacks were made in government antipoverty programs, child poverty grew, exceeding 20 percent during much of the period. The economic expansion of the 1990s saw a drop in child poverty rates, and in 2000 the rate had fallen to 16 percent, a twenty-year low (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2003b).

However, these patterns have reversed in recent years, due in part to the 2008 recession. In 2014, the child poverty rate had swelled to 21 percent. A study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2015) found that in 2013, 31 percent of children

lived in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment; one in four children lived in a low-income working family. The economic well-being of racial minority children and children of single mothers is even more dire. In 2014, 12 percent of white children were poor compared with 37 percent of black children, 14 percent of Asian children, and 32 percent of Hispanic children; nearly 47 percent of children in single-parent families headed by a woman are in poverty (DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015).

Social Security

A government program that provides economic assistance to persons faced with unemployment, disability, or old age.

Medicare

A program under the U.S. Social Security Administration that reimburses hospitals and physicians for medical care provided to qualifying people over sixty-five years old.

THE ELDERLY IN POVERTY

Although relatively few persons ages sixty-five and older live in poverty (10 percent), this aggregate statistic conceals vast gender, race, and marital status differences in the economic well-being of older adults. In 2011, elderly poverty rates ranged from just 4 percent among white married men to an astounding 32 percent for black women who live alone and 39 percent for Hispanic women living alone (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2012b; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2012b). As we noted earlier, these figures may underestimate how widespread elderly poverty is because poverty rates fail to consider the high (and rising) costs of medical care, which disproportionately strike older adults (Carr 2010).

Because older people have for the most part retired from paid work, their income is based primarily on **Social Security** and private retirement programs. Social Security and **Medicare** have been especially important in lifting many elderly people out of poverty. Yet people who depend solely on these two programs for income and health-care coverage are likely to live modestly at best. In December 2015 some 40 million retired workers were receiving Social Security benefits; their average monthly payment was about \$1,350 (or just over \$16,000 a year) (Social Security Administration 2016). Social Security accounts for only about 38 percent of the income of the typical retiree; most of the remainder comes



Blacks and Latinos are much more likely than whites to live in poverty. Many, like the family pictured here, live in overcrowded or substandard housing.

from investments and private pension funds, and sometimes earnings. Low-income households are particularly likely to rely heavily on Social Security, which accounts for 94 percent of income for beneficiaries who live on less than \$12,554 a year (Social Security Administration 2012).

Explaining Poverty: The Sociological Debate

Explanations of poverty can be grouped under two main headings: theories that see poor individuals as responsible for their status, and theories that view poverty as produced and reproduced by structural forces in society. These competing approaches are sometimes described as “blame the victim” and “blame the system” theories, respectively. We briefly examine each in turn.

There is a long history of attitudes that hold the poor responsible for their own disadvantaged positions. Early efforts to address the effects of poverty, such as the poorhouses of the nineteenth century, were grounded in a belief that poverty was the result of an inadequacy or pathology of individuals. The poor were seen as those who were unable—due to lack of skills, moral or physical weakness, absence of motivation, or below-average ability—to succeed in society. Social standing was taken as a reflection of a person's talent and effort; those who deserved to succeed did so, while others less capable were doomed to fail. The existence of winners and losers was regarded as a fact of life.

Such outlooks enjoyed a renaissance, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, as the political emphasis on individual ambition rewarded those who “succeeded” in society and held those who did not succeed responsible for the circumstances in which they found themselves. Often, explanations for poverty were sought in the lifestyles of poor people, along with the attitudes and outlooks they supposedly espoused. Oscar Lewis (1968) set forth one of the most influential of such theories, arguing that a **culture of poverty** exists among many poor people. According to Lewis, poverty is not a result of individual inadequacies

culture of poverty

The thesis, popularized by Oscar Lewis, that poverty is not a result of individual inadequacies but is instead the outcome of a larger social and cultural atmosphere into which successive generations of children are socialized. The culture of poverty refers to the values, beliefs, lifestyles, habits, and traditions that are common among people living under conditions of material deprivation.

but is a result of a larger social and cultural milieu into which poor children are socialized. The culture of poverty is transmitted across generations because young people from an early age see little point in aspiring to something more. Instead, they resign themselves fatalistically to a life of impoverishment.

The culture-of-poverty thesis has been taken further by American political scientist Charles Murray. According to Murray (1984), individuals who are poor through “no fault of their own”—such as widows or widowers, orphans, or the disabled—fall into a different category from those who are part of the **dependency culture**. By this term, Murray refers to poor people who rely on government welfare provision rather than entering the labor market. He argues that the growth of the welfare state has created a subculture that undermines personal ambition and the capacity for self-help. Rather than orienting themselves toward the future and striving to achieve a better life, those dependent on welfare are content to accept handouts. Welfare, he argues, has eroded people’s incentive to work.

An opposite approach to explaining poverty emphasizes larger social processes that produce conditions of poverty that are difficult for individuals to overcome. According to such a view, structural forces within society—factors like class, gender, ethnicity, occupational position, education attainment, and so forth—shape the way in which resources are distributed (Wilson 1996). Advocates of structural explanations for poverty argue that the perceived lack of ambition among the poor is in fact a consequence of their constrained situations, not a cause of it. Reducing poverty is not a matter of changing individual outlooks, they claim, but instead requires policy measures aimed at distributing income and resources more equally throughout society. Child-care subsidies, a minimum hourly wage, and guaranteed income levels for families are examples of policy measures that have sought to redress persistent social inequalities.

Both theories have enjoyed broad support, and social scientists consistently encourage variations of each view in public debates about poverty. Critics of the culture-of-poverty view accuse its advocates of “individualizing” poverty and blaming the poor for circumstances largely beyond their control. They see the poor as victims, not as freeloaders who are abusing the system. Most sociologists emphasize the systemic or structural causes of poverty. While individual initiative obviously plays a part, as we have seen in this chapter there are major advantages conferred by being born higher up on the income and wealth ladder—and major disadvantages from being born at the bottom.

Social Exclusion

What are the social processes that lead to large numbers of people being marginalized in a society? The idea of **social exclusion** refers to new sources of inequality—ways in which individuals may become cut off from involvement in the wider society. It is a broader concept than that of the underclass and has the advantage that it emphasizes processes—mechanisms of exclusion. Social exclusion can take a number of forms. It may occur in isolated rural communities cut off from many services and opportunities or in inner-city neighborhoods marked by high crime rates and substandard housing. Exclusion and inclusion may be seen in economic terms, political terms, and social terms.

The concept of social exclusion raises the question of agency. **Agency** refers to our ability to act independently and to use free will. When dealing with social exclusion, however, the word *exclusion* implies that someone or something is being shut out by

dependency culture

A term popularized by Charles Murray to describe individuals who rely on state welfare provision rather than entering the labor market. The dependency culture is seen as the outcome of the “paternalistic” welfare state that undermines individual ambition and people’s capacity for self-help.

social exclusion

The outcome of multiple deprivations that prevent individuals or groups from participating fully in the economic, social, and political life of the society in which they live.

agency

The ability to think, act, and make choices independently.



More than half a million people are homeless on any given night in the United States, 60 percent of whom are men.

another, and is beyond an individual's control. Certainly in some instances individuals are excluded through decisions that lie outside their own control. Insurance companies might reject an application for a policy on the basis of an applicant's personal history and background. An employee laid off later in life may be refused further jobs on the basis of his or her age.

But social exclusion can also result from people excluding themselves from aspects of mainstream society. Individuals can choose to drop out of school, to turn down a job opportunity and become economically inactive, or to abstain from voting in political elections. In considering the phenomenon of social exclusion, we must once again be conscious of the interaction between human agency and responsibility, on the one hand, and the role of social forces in shaping people's circumstances on the other hand.

HOMELESS PERSONS

No discussion of social exclusion is complete without reference to the people who are traditionally seen as at the very bottom of the social hierarchy: homeless persons. The growing problem of homelessness is one of the most distressing signs of changes in the American stratification system. Homeless people are a common sight in nearly every U.S. city and town and are increasingly found in rural areas as well. On a single night in January 2015, more than half a million (564,708) people were homeless (U.S. Department of Housing and Human Development 2015). Two generations ago, homeless populations were mainly elderly, alcoholic men who were found on the skid rows of the largest metropolitan areas. Today they are primarily young single men, often of working age.

The fastest-growing group of homeless people, however, consists of families with children, who make up more than a third (37 percent) of those currently homeless (National Center on Family Homelessness 2014). In 2015, men comprised 60 percent of the homeless

CONCEPT CHECKS

What is the poverty line, and how does the U.S. government calculate this statistic?

Describe the demographic characteristics of the poor in the United States.

Why are women and children at a high risk of becoming impoverished in the United States today?

Contrast the culture-of-poverty argument and structural explanations for poverty.

Describe the concept of social exclusion.

Describe the demographic characteristics of the homeless population in the United States today.

What are the main reasons people become homeless?

population. Despite accounting for only 13 percent of the U.S. population, blacks make up 40 percent of the homeless population. Less than half (49 percent) of homeless people are white, while 20 percent are Hispanic, nearly 3 percent are Native American, and 1 percent are Asian. Only a small proportion of the homeless population are Latino or Asian American immigrants, possibly because these groups enjoy close-knit family and community ties that provide a measure of security against homelessness (Waxman and Hinderliter 1996). More than one in ten homeless adults in 2015 was a veteran (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2015).

There are many reasons that people become homeless. A survey of twenty-five cities by the United States Conference of Mayors (2008) identified a lack of affordable housing, poverty, and unemployment as the leading causes of homelessness among families. For single individuals, substance abuse, lack of affordable housing, and mental illness were identified as leading causes of homelessness. One reason for the widespread incidence of such problems among homeless people is that many public mental hospitals have closed their doors. The number of beds in state mental hospitals has declined by as many as half a million since the early 1960s, leaving many mentally ill people with no institutional alternative to a life on the streets or in homeless shelters. Such problems are compounded by the fact that many homeless people lack family, relatives, or other social networks to provide support.

The rising cost of housing is another factor, particularly in light of the increased poverty noted elsewhere in this chapter. Declining incomes at the bottom, along with rising rents, create an affordability gap between the cost of housing and what poor people can pay in rents (Dreier and Appelbaum 1992). An estimated 50 percent of all renters today are spending more than 30 percent of their income on rent; a quarter of renters are spending more than 50 percent of their income on rent (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University 2015). The burden of paying rent is extremely difficult for low-income families whose heads work for minimum wage or slightly higher. Paying so much for rent leaves them barely a paycheck away from a missed rental payment and possible eviction (National Low Income Housing Coalition 2000).

How Does Social Inequality Affect Your Life?

Throughout this chapter, we have shown how changes in the American economy affect social stratification, emphasizing the importance of both globalization and changes in information technology. We have pointed out that the global spread of an industrial capitalist economy, driven in part by the information revolution, has helped break down closed caste systems around the world and replace them with more open class systems. The degree to which this process will result in greater equality in countries undergoing capitalist development will be explored in the next chapter.

What do these changes hold in store for you? On the one hand, new jobs are opening up, particularly in high-technology fields that require special training and skills and pay

Learn how changes in the American economy have led to growing inequalities since the 1970s.

high wages. A flood of new products are flowing into the United States, many made with cheap labor that has lowered their costs. This has enabled consumers such as yourself to buy everything from laptops to cars to athletic shoes at costs lower than you otherwise would have paid, thereby contributing to a rising standard of living.

But these benefits come with potentially significant costs. Given high levels of job loss in the recent recession and Americans' demands for low-cost products, you may find yourself competing for jobs with workers in other countries who work for lower wages. This has already been the case for the manufacturing jobs that once provided the economic foundation for the working class and segments of the middle class. Companies that once produced in the United States—from cars to apparel to electronics—now use factories around the world, taking advantage of labor costs that are a fraction of those in the United States. Will the same hold true for other, more highly skilled jobs—jobs in the information economy itself? Many jobs that require the use of computers—from graphic design to software engineering—can be done by anyone with a high-speed computer connection, anywhere in the world. The global spread of tech companies will open up vastly expanded job opportunities for those with the necessary skills and training—but it will also open up equally expanded global competition for those jobs.

Partly as a result of these forces, inequality has increased in the United States since the early 1970s, resulting in a growing gap between the rich and the poor. The global economy has permitted the accumulation of vast fortunes at the same time that it has contributed to declining wages, economic hardship, and poverty in the United States. Although the working class is especially vulnerable to these changes, the middle class is not exempt: A growing number of middle-class households experienced downward mobility from the late 1970s through the mid-1990s, until a decade of economic growth benefited all segments of American society.

The economic recession that began in 2008 contributed to the downward mobility of middle-class Americans, at the time leaving many college graduates with high levels of debt and few prospects for rewarding employment (Demos 2010). The slow economic recovery since that time has improved prospects somewhat, although not equally for all Americans. As of 2015, nearly half of all households earning less than \$30,000 lamented that they had recovered “hardly at all,” compared with a third of households earning more than \$100,000. More than three out of every five Americans believed the economic system “unfairly favors powerful interests,” with only a quarter viewing U.S. economic conditions as “excellent” or “good” (Pew Research Center 2015k).

Although it is always hazardous to try to predict the future, global economic integration will likely continue to increase for the foreseeable future. How this will affect your jobs and careers—and stratification in the United States—is much more difficult to foresee. Although the rags-to-riches story of Viviana Andazola Marquez is uplifting and inspiring, fewer and fewer young adults will be able to transcend childhoods of disadvantage unless the economy rebounds, providing opportunities for education, gainful employment, and safe and secure housing.

CONCEPT CHECKS

How has globalization affected the life chances of young adults in the United States today?

How has the recent recession affected the life chances of young adults in the United States today?

The Big Picture

Stratification, Class, and Inequality

Thinking Sociologically

1. If you were doing your own study of status differences in your community, how would you measure people's social class? Base your answer on the textbook's discussion of these matters to explain why you would take the particular measurement approach you've chosen. What would be its value(s) and shortcoming(s) compared with those of alternative measurement procedures?
2. Using occupation and occupational change as your mobility criteria, view the social mobility within your family for three generations. As you discuss the differences in jobs between your paternal grandfather, your father, and yourself, apply all these terms correctly: *vertical* and *horizontal* *mobility*, *upward* and *downward* *mobility*, *intragenerational* and *intergenerational* *mobility*. Explain fully why you think people in your family have moved up, moved down, or remained at the same status level.

What Is Social Stratification?

p. 193

Learn about social stratification and how social background affects one's life chances. Become acquainted with the most influential theories of stratification.

How Is Social Class Defined in the United States?

p. 199

Understand the social causes and consequences of social class in U.S. society, as well as the complexities and challenges of defining class.

What Are the Causes and Consequences of Social Inequality in the United States?

p. 208

Recognize why and how the gap between rich and poor has increased in recent decades. Understand social mobility, and think about your own mobility.

How Does Poverty Affect Individuals?

p. 212

Learn about poverty in the United States today, explanations for why it exists, and means for combating it. Learn how people become marginalized in a society and the role that the organization takes.

How Does Social Inequality Affect Your Life?

Learn how changes in the American economy have led to growing inequalities

Terms to Know

Concept Checks

social stratification

meritocracy • caste system • endogamy • class • social mobility • life chances • means of production • bourgeoisie • proletariat • surplus value • social status • pariah groups • power

income • wealth • upper class • middle class • working class • blue- and pink-collar jobs • lower class • underclass

social mobility • intragenerational mobility • intergenerational mobility • social reproduction • human capital • downward mobility • long-range downward mobility

absolute poverty • relative poverty • poverty • working poor • feminization of poverty • Social Security • Medicare • culture of poverty • dependency culture • social exclusion • agency

1. What are the three shared characteristics of socially stratified systems?
2. How is the concept of class different from that of caste?
3. According to Karl Marx, what are the two main classes, and how do they relate to each other?
4. What are the three main differences between Max Weber's and Karl Marx's theories of social stratification?
5. How does social stratification contribute to the functioning of society? What is wrong with this argument?

1. Name at least three components of social class. How do blacks and whites differ along these components?
2. How do we explain the enduring racial disparity in wealth?
3. What are the major social class groups in the United States today? Describe at least two ways (other than their income) that these groups differ from one another.

1. What are two pieces of statistical evidence used to support the claim that the gap between the rich and the poor is growing in the United States?
2. Contrast intragenerational and intergenerational mobility.
3. According to classic studies of mobility in the United States, how does family background affect one's social class in adulthood?
4. According to Pierre Bourdieu, how does the family contribute to the transmission of social class from generation to generation?
5. Describe at least two reasons for downward mobility.

1. What is the poverty line, and how does the U.S. government calculate this statistic?
2. Describe the demographic characteristics of the poor in the United States.
3. Why are women and children at a high risk of becoming impoverished in the United States today?
4. Contrast the culture-of-poverty argument and structural explanations for poverty.
5. Describe the concept of social exclusion.
6. Describe the demographic characteristics of the homeless population in the United States today. What are the main reasons people become homeless?

1. How has globalization affected the life chances of young adults in the United States today?
2. How has the recent recession affected the life chances of young adults in the United States today?

8

Global Inequality

An Unequal World



Residents scavenge for food in a massive garbage dump near Port-au-Prince, Haiti, after the 2010 earthquake that killed an estimated 300,000 people.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

What is global inequality?

Understand the systematic differences in wealth and power among countries.

What is daily life like in rich versus poor countries?

Recognize the impact of different economic standards of living on people throughout the world.

Can poor countries become rich?

Analyze the success of the emerging economies.

How do sociological theories explain global inequality?

Learn several sociological theories explaining why some societies are wealthier than others, as well as how global inequality can be overcome.

How does global inequality affect your life?

Understand how global economic inequality affects the daily life of you and your peers.





The nations of Haiti and Japan have little in common, at first glance. Haiti, an island in the Caribbean, is one of the world's poorest nations. Haiti ranked 163 of 188 countries in the 2015 United Nations Human Development Index and is ranked poorly on a range of quality-of-life indicators, including education, life expectancy, sanitation, access to clean water, and quality of housing (United Nations Development Programme 2015). The average adult in Haiti has completed only 4.9 years of schooling, and life expectancy at birth is only 63 years. According to the United Nations, the island nation suffers from a shortage of skilled labor and from widespread unemployment and underemployment, where more than two-thirds of the labor force do not have formal jobs. As recently as 2016, Haiti was described as the "poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with 80 percent of the population living under the poverty line and 54 percent in abject poverty (Central Intelligence Agency 2016b)." More than half of Haitians live on \$2.41 or less per day (World Bank 2014d).

Japan, by contrast, is a wealthy and highly industrialized nation that most Americans recognize as a major producer of automobiles like Honda and Toyota, and computer and electronic products like those made by Sony, Panasonic, and Nintendo. Also an island nation, Japan has the world's third-largest economy measured by its gross domestic product (GDP) and fourth largest when considering its purchasing power parity. It is also the world's fifth-largest exporter and importer. In Japan, life expectancy at birth is 84 years—the second longest in the world behind only Monaco. Its infant mortality rate is the third lowest of any country in the world (Central Intelligence Agency 2016c). More than half (59 percent) of Japanese persons ages twenty-five to thirty-four have achieved a postsecondary education. This percentage is the second highest among member nations of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2016).

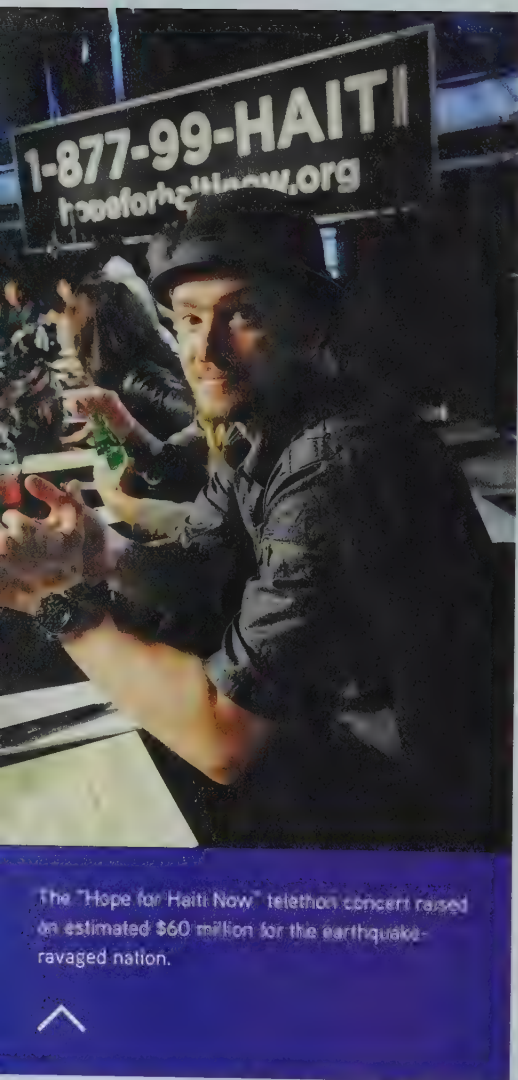
Despite their vastly divergent fortunes, Haiti and Japan were unified in their grief in 2010 and 2011, respectively, when they were each devastated by unimaginable natural disasters.

In January 2010, a powerful earthquake struck Haiti, killing an estimated 300,000 people and leaving more than 1 million persons homeless (Central Intelligence Agency 2013b). Those not killed by the shock of the quake were at risk of illness and infection, especially given that so many were vulnerable even prior to the quake. Malnutrition is rampant in Haiti, only about 60 percent of the nation's children are vaccinated against basic diseases like Diphtheria, and an estimated 130,000 people are living with HIV or AIDS (UN AIDS 2016b).

Just thirteen months after the Haiti disaster, in March 2011, Japan was rocked by an earthquake and tsunami, which subsequently triggered a nuclear reactor meltdown. Much of northern Japan was leveled, leaving tens of thousands dead or missing and more than 100,000 buildings flattened. In the week following each disaster, the world responded in very different ways.

Charitable contributions to Japan were less than one-third the amount of the donations given to Haiti, according to Charity Navigator, an organization that tracks donations to charitable organizations. In the first week following the Japan disaster, the American Red Cross raised \$47 million for the earthquake and tsunami victims. By contrast, in the week following the Haitian earthquake, the Red Cross raised a whopping \$92 million. It's not just the Red Cross that witnessed such a large gap in donations. In the same time period, the Christian humanitarian aid group World Vision raised \$3 million for Japan from American donors, compared with \$15.8 million within the week after the Haiti earthquake. When Charity Navigator tallied up the total donations made by a dozen large U.S. charitable organizations, they found that \$64 million had been raised for Japan in the first week after the disaster, compared with \$210 million for Haiti (and \$457 million after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the southeastern United States) (Shaver 2011).

What can explain this vast gap in charitable giving? Officials who run philanthropic organizations say that Americans typically give money to other nations based on their sense of need and their familiarity with the country.



Haiti, as we saw earlier, was impoverished even prior to the earthquake and is a neighbor of the United States. The nation's capital, Port-au-Prince, is just 710 miles from Miami, Florida. Japan, by contrast, is on the other side of the globe and is perceived by observers to be able to "fix it themselves" given their national wealth and high level of technological development (Shaver 2011). According to Daniel Borochoff, president of the American Institute of Philanthropy, in the eyes of potential U.S. donors, "Japan is not Haiti, and it's not Indonesia; it's a developed country with a GDP somewhat similar to our country. It's not what people typically think of as a country in need of wide-scale international aid."

The stories of Japan and Haiti clearly illustrate the gross inequities in health, wealth, and well-being throughout the globe. **Globalization**—the increased economic, political, and social interconnectedness of the world—has produced opportunities for unthinkable wealth and technological development, as we have seen in Japan's recent history and in its efforts to rebuild and bounce back from disaster. Yet at the same time, globalization has produced widespread poverty and suffering, as we have seen in Haiti, as well as in countless nations throughout much of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Consider Bina Khatun, a knitting operator at a Chinese-owned garment factory in Bangladesh. Khatun, along with thousands of other workers, puts in thirteen hours a day, six days a week, making sweaters for major European retailers. More experienced workers like Khatun make \$0.22 an hour, which comes out to about \$11 a week. When Khatun complained to factory management about being sexually harassed by her supervisor, she was beaten for speaking out (Kernaghan 2012). Millions of workers such as Khatun are being drawn into the global labor force, many working in oppressive conditions that would be unacceptable, if not unimaginable, under U.S. labor laws. And these are the fortunate ones: Those outside the global economy are frequently even worse off.

In the previous chapter we examined the American class structure, noting vast differences among individuals' income, wealth, jobs, and quality of life. The same is true in the world as a whole: Just as we can speak of rich or poor individuals within a country, we can also talk about rich or poor countries in the world system. A country's position in the global economy affects how its people live, work, and even die. In this chapter, we look closely at differences in wealth and power among countries in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. We examine how differences in economic standards of living affect people throughout the world. We then turn to the emerging economies of the world to understand which countries are improving their fortunes and why. This will lead us to a discussion of different theories that attempt to explain why global inequality exists and what can be done about it. We conclude by speculating on the future of economic inequality in a global world.

What Is Global Inequality?

Global inequality refers to the systematic differences in wealth and power that exist among countries. These differences exist alongside differences within countries: Even the wealthiest countries today have growing numbers of poor people, while less wealthy nations are producing many of the world's superrich. Sociology's challenge is not merely to identify all such differences but to explain why they occur—and how they might be overcome.

globalization

The development of social and economic relationships stretching worldwide. In current times, we are all influenced by organizations and social networks located thousands of miles away. A key part of the study of globalization is the emergence of a world system—for some purposes, we need to regard the world as forming a single social order.

global inequality

The systematic differences in wealth and power among countries.



Understand the systematic differences in wealth and power among countries.

One simple way to classify countries in terms of global inequality is to compare the wealth produced by each country per average citizen. This approach measures the value of a country's yearly output of goods and services produced by its total population and then divides that total by the number of people in the country. The resulting measure is termed the *per person gross national income* (GNI), a measure of the country's yearly output of goods and services per person. The World Bank, an international lending organization that provides loans for development projects in poorer countries, uses this measure to classify countries as high income (an annual per person GNI of \$12,476 or more, in 2015 dollars), upper middle income (\$4,036–\$12,475), lower middle income (\$1,026–\$4,035), or low income (\$1,025 or less) (World Bank 2016e).

The infographic on the next page shows how the World Bank divides 214 countries and economies, containing more than 7.1 billion people, into four economic classes. The infographic shows that while nearly 50 percent of the world's population live in low-income and lower-middle-income countries, slightly more than 50 percent live in upper-middle- or high-income countries. Bear in mind that this classification is based on average income for each country; therefore, it masks income inequality within each country. Such differences can be significant, although we do not focus on them in this chapter. For example, the World Bank classifies India as a lower-middle-income country because its per person GNI in 2015 was only \$1,590. Yet despite widespread poverty, India also boasts a large and growing middle class. China, on the other hand, was classified as upper middle income because its GNI per capita in 2015 was \$7,820, placing China in the world's upper-middle-income category; it nonetheless has hundreds of millions of people living in poverty (World Bank 2016g).

Comparing countries on the basis of economic output alone can also be misleading because GNI includes only goods and services that are produced for cash sale. Many people in low-income countries are farmers or herders who produce for their own families or for barter, involving noncash transactions. The value of their crops and animals is not taken into account in the statistics. Further, economic output is not the sole indicator of a country's worth: Poor countries are no less rich in history, culture, and traditions than their wealthier neighbors, but the lives of their people are much harsher.

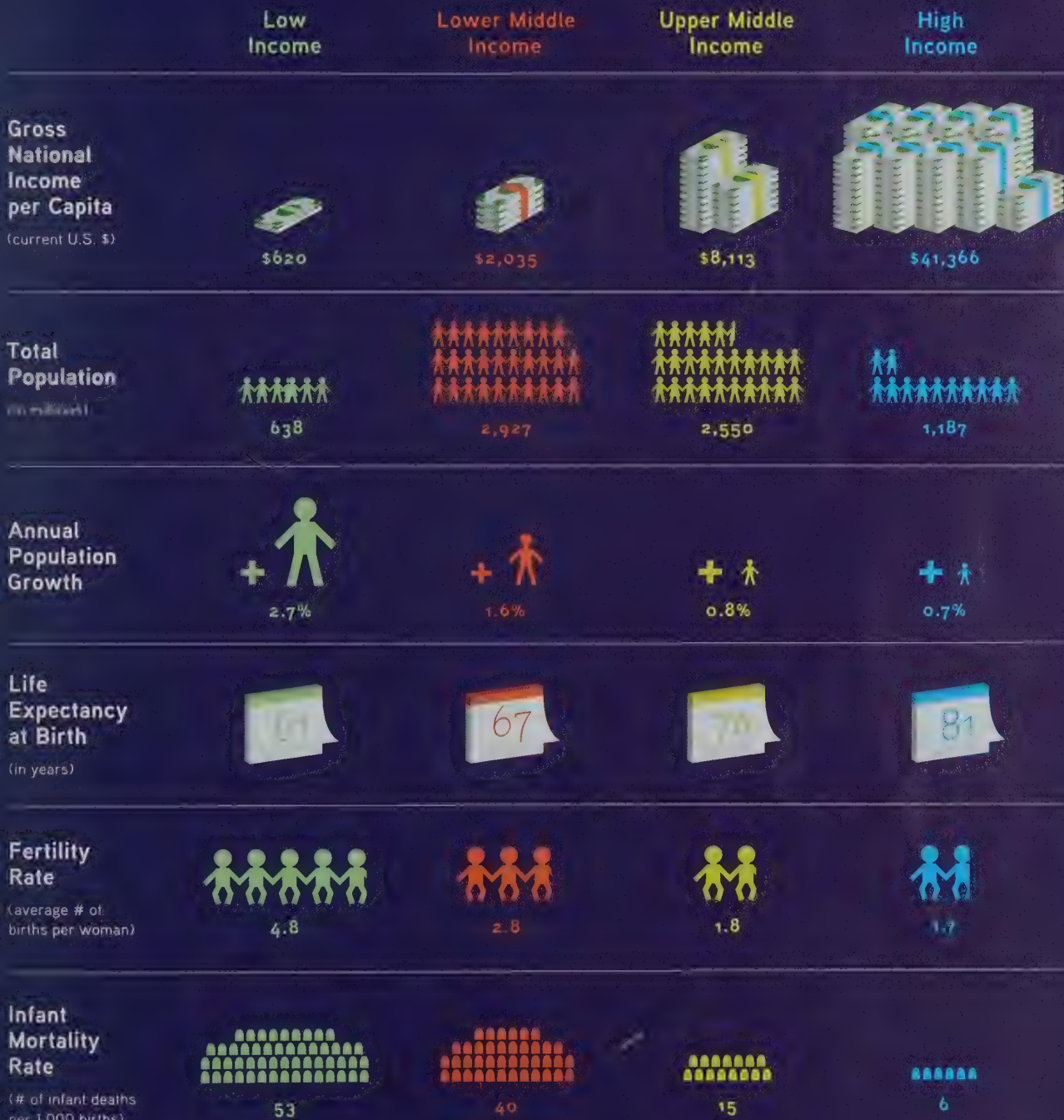
High-Income Countries

High-income countries are generally those that were the first to industrialize, a process that began in England some 250 years ago and then spread to Europe, the United States, and Canada. In the 1970s, Japan joined the ranks of high-income, industrialized nations, while Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan moved into this category only within the last decade or so. The reasons for the success of these Asian latecomers to industrialization are much debated by sociologists and economists; we will look at them later in the chapter.

High-income countries are home to 16 percent of the world's population, or nearly 1.2 billion people, yet they lay claim to 64 percent of the world's annual output (World Bank 2016g). High-income countries offer adequate housing and food, drinkable water, and other comforts unknown in many parts of the world. Although these countries often have large numbers of poor people, most of their inhabitants enjoy a standard of living unimaginable by the majority of the world's people.

An Unequal World

Global inequality refers to the systematic differences in wealth and power that exist among countries. The World Bank uses per person gross national income (GNI) to classify countries into four economic classes: low income, lower middle income, upper middle income, and high income.



Middle-Income Countries

The middle-income countries (including lower middle and upper middle) are located primarily in East and Southeast Asia and include the oil-rich countries of the Middle East and North Africa, a few countries in the Americas (Mexico, Central America, Cuba, and other countries in the Caribbean, and South America), and the once-communist republics that formerly made up the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies (Global Map 8.1). Most of these countries began to industrialize relatively late in the twentieth century and therefore are not yet as industrially developed (or as wealthy) as the high-income countries. The countries that once composed the Soviet Union, on the other hand, are highly industrialized, although in most cases their living standards have eroded during the past two decades as a result of the collapse of communism and the move to capitalist economies. In Russia, for example, the wages of ordinary people dropped by nearly a third between 1998 and 1999, while retirement pensions dropped by nearly half. Millions of people, many of them elderly, suddenly found themselves destitute (Central Intelligence Agency 2000). Since then, the Russian economy has recovered somewhat, with foreign investment gradually increasing and the energy market booming.

In 2015, middle-income countries were home to 75 percent of the world's population (nearly 5.5 billion people) but accounted for only 35 percent of the output produced in that year (World Bank 2016g). Although many people in these countries are substantially better off than their neighbors in low-income countries, most do not enjoy anything resembling the standard of living common in high-income countries.

Low-Income Countries

Finally, the low-income countries include much of eastern, western, and sub-Saharan Africa; North Korea in East Asia; Nepal in South Asia; and Haiti in the Caribbean. These countries have mostly agricultural economies and have only recently begun to industrialize. Scholars debate the reasons for their late industrialization and widespread poverty, as we will see later in this chapter.

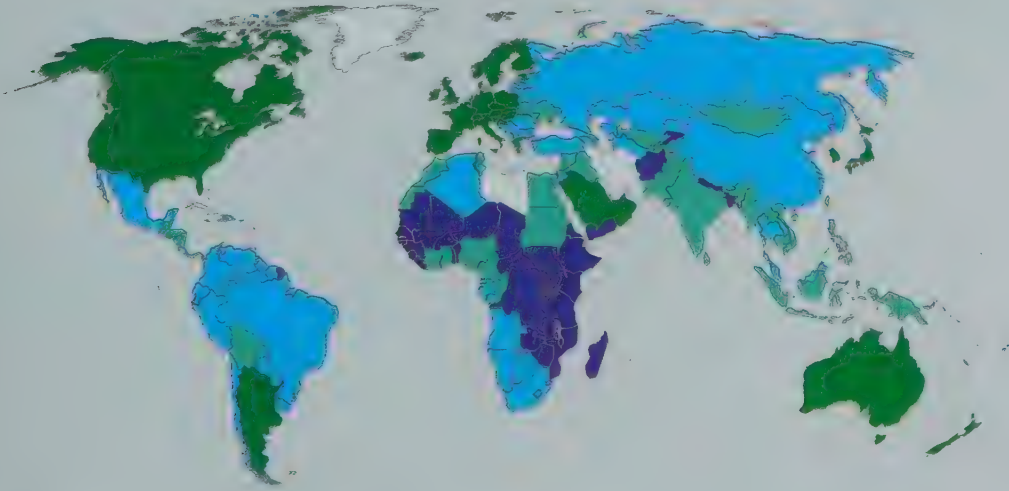
In 2015, the low-income countries accounted for less than 9 percent of the world's population (638 million people) yet produced only 0.5 percent of the world's yearly output of wealth (World Bank 2016g). Moreover, this inequality is increasing. Fertility rates are much higher in low-income countries than elsewhere, with large families providing additional farm labor or otherwise contributing to family income. (In wealthy industrial societies, where children are more likely to be in school than on the farm, the economic benefit of large families declines, so people tend to have fewer children.) In fact, there is an inverse relationship between income level and population growth: In general, the poorer the country, the faster the growth in population. Between 2000 and 2015, the population of high-income countries increased 10 percent; upper-middle-income countries, 12 percent; lower-middle-income countries, 27 percent; and low-income countries, 51 percent.

In many of these low-income countries, people struggle with poverty, malnutrition, and even starvation. Most people live in rural areas, although this is rapidly changing: Hundreds of millions of people are moving to huge, densely populated cities, where they live either in dilapidated housing or on the open streets (see Chapter 15).

Rich and Poor Countries: The World by Income in 2015

Like individuals in a country, the countries of the world as a whole can be seen as economically stratified. In general, those countries that experienced industrialization the earliest are the richest, while those that remain agricultural are the poorest. An enormous—and growing—gulf separates the two groups.

■ High: \$12,476 or more ■ Upper middle: \$4,036–\$12,475 ■ Lower middle: \$1,026–\$4,035 ■ Low: \$1,025 or less



Source: World Bank 2016e

GROWING GLOBAL INEQUALITY: THE RICH GET RICHER, THE POOR GET POORER

During the last thirty years, the overall standard of living in the world has risen slowly. The average global citizen is better off today than ever before. Illiteracy rates are down, infant mortality and malnutrition are less common, people are living longer, average income is higher, and poverty is down. Since these figures are overall averages, however, they hide the substantial differences among countries: Many of these gains have been in the high- and middle-income countries, while living standards in many of the poorest countries have declined.

Between 1988 and 2015, average per person GNI increased by 145 percent in high-income countries but increased by only 103 percent in low-income countries, widening the global gap between rich and poor. In 2015, the average person in a typical high-income country earned \$41,366 (based on current U.S. dollars), nearly sixty-seven times as much as the \$620 earned by his or her counterpart in a low-income country (World Bank 2016g).

CONCEPT CHECKS

Explain how the World Bank measures global inequality, and discuss some of the problems associated with measuring global inequality.

Compare and contrast high-income, middle-income, and low-income countries.



Recognize the impact of different economic standards of living on people throughout the world.

What Is Daily Life Like in Rich vs. Poor Countries?

An enormous gulf in living standards separates most people in rich countries from their counterparts in poor ones. Wealth and poverty make life different in a host of ways. For instance, about one-third of the world's poor are undernourished, and almost all are illiterate and lack access to even primary-school education. The world is no longer predominantly rural: More than half of the world's population now lives in cities, with 880 million people living in urban slums in 2015 (United Nations Development Programme 2015). Many of the poor come from racial, ethnic, or religious groups that differ from the dominant groups of their countries, and their poverty is at least in part the result of discrimination (Narayan 1999).

Here we look at the differences among high- and low-income countries in terms of health and disease, hunger and nutrition, education, and child labor.

Health

People in high-income countries are far healthier than their counterparts in low-income countries. Low-income countries generally suffer from inadequate health facilities, and their hospitals and clinics seldom serve the poorest people. People living in low-income countries also lack proper sanitation, drink polluted water, and run a much greater risk of contracting infectious diseases. They are more likely to suffer malnutrition, starvation, and famine. All of these factors contribute to physical weakness and poor health, making people in low-income countries susceptible to illness and disease. There is growing evidence that the high rates of HIV/AIDS infection found in many African countries and Haiti are due in part to the weakened health of impoverished people, especially children (Mody et al. 2014).

One chilling example of the relationship between global poverty and disease is the Ebola epidemic that broke out in West Africa in 2014. Ebola is a deadly disease that is spread through contact with the blood or bodily fluids of infected persons who are showing symptoms. The illness spread rapidly partly because it was new to this region of Africa and so went unrecognized: Caregivers, from family members to professional health workers, initially believed it to be malaria or some other disease that is transmitted by mosquitoes rather than human contact. Ebola also spread rapidly in West Africa because there were no health care facilities capable of dealing with the large and growing number of Ebola patients, who need to be completely isolated and treated by trained medical personnel wearing special (and costly) protective suits.

Many victims were in remote rural areas that lacked usable roads or other infrastructure, making it difficult to identify, isolate, and treat them; when they flooded into crowded cities in search of treatment, the disease quickly spread. The borders between Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea are open in many places, making containment of the disease difficult. And years of war and corrupt governments in this region meant that a concerted state-led response was unlikely (Fox 2014). As a result, during the first



The "Ebola Must Go" campaign is an attempt to educate and mobilize communities without proper resources to recognize and isolate Ebola.



Can Apps Heal Global Inequalities?

Think about how you use your smartphone. Maybe you check the latest news headlines or sports scores. Or maybe you like to post photos on Facebook. But can you think of ways that you might use your smartphone to improve the well-being of the millions of people living in poor nations? A number of app developers are doing just that. Despite an enduring digital divide, smartphone ownership in developing countries has jumped from just 21 percent in 2013 to 37 percent in 2015, making it possible for these developers to reach even more people across the globe (Poushter 2016).

In 2015, developing regions accounted for approximately 99 percent of all global maternal deaths (WHO 2015a). This is partly due to the fact that nearly half of all women in low-income countries give birth without the help of a skilled health care worker. The Safe Delivery app aims to reduce maternal mortality in developing countries by teaching birth attendants how to deal with emergency childbirth situations. Video guides and step-by-step instructions educate users on how to prevent infection as well as deal with problems such as prolonged labor and hypertension (Kweifio-Okai 2015)

Smartphones have also emerged as a particularly effective way to diagnose eye disorders. According to the WHO, more than 280 million people around the world have vision problems or are blind; an estimated 90 percent of these sight-impaired people live in poor nations. However, many lack access to vision care. Developed in Kenya by a British ophthalmologist, the Peek (Portable Eye Examination Kit) app enables health care workers

to perform detailed eye exams in the field with just a smartphone (Kuo 2016). The easy-to-dispense Peek eye test displays the letter “E” in varying orientations. Patients, who don’t need to be able to read English, just indicate the direction the letter is facing. The test giver then swipes the screen in that direction or shakes the phone if the patient can’t tell. The test takes about a minute and results are available instantaneously (Sohn 2015). In addition to visual acuity tests, the app can detect cataracts, glaucoma, and signs of nerve disease (CNN 2016). A clip-on camera adapter, which can be made with a 3D-printer, allows users to take high-resolution images of a person’s retina that can then be sent to doctors to diagnose remotely (Kuo 2016).

Other entrepreneurs are developing apps to aid agricultural production in Africa. A competition called Apps4Africa encouraged young people to develop apps that address the impact of climate change on various communities. The Grainy Bunch, which was developed in Tanzania, features a national grain supply chain management system that monitors the purchase, storage, distribution, and consumption of grain across the entire nation. Similarly, Agro Universe, developed by a team from Uganda, creates a regional marketplace, helping communities prepare for pest- and drought-induced food shortages by linking communities to farmers with available produce (Fenner 2012).

Do you believe that apps can play an effective role in solving some of the problems of global inequality? Why or why not? Can you think of an app that would help solve some of the problems of global inequality that you read about in this chapter?

Peek (Portable Eye Examination Kit), which uses a phone’s camera to scan people’s eyes for cataracts and other problems, has been used successfully in Kenya, Botswana, and India. Smartphone apps like Peek are bringing vision care to poor, remote communities in the developing world.



months of the outbreak as many as three-quarters of infected victims died. When Ebola is diagnosed early and treated adequately, the mortality rate can be as low as 30 percent (NPR 2014).

Because of poor health conditions, people in low-income countries are more likely to die in infancy and less likely to live to old age than people in high-income countries. Children in low-income countries are more than ten times more likely to die before they reach the age of five than children in high-income countries (World Bank 2016g). Children often die of illnesses that are readily treated in wealthier countries, such as measles or diarrhea. If they do survive childhood, people in low-income countries have an average life expectancy of 61 years, compared to 81 years in high-income countries. Still, conditions are improving somewhat. Between 1980 and 2015 for example, the infant mortality rate dropped from 136 (per 1,000 live births) to 53 in low-income countries and from 85 to 31 in middle-income countries (World Bank 2016g).

Hunger and Malnutrition

Hunger and malnutrition are major global sources of poor health. As we saw in the case of Haiti, the impoverished population already suffered from hunger and malnutrition prior to the earthquake, which compromised the ability of many to survive the added tragedy of the natural disaster. Problems of inadequate food are nothing new. What seems to be new is their pervasiveness—the fact that so many people in the world today appear to be on the brink of starvation.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (2015) estimates that nearly 795 million people—just over one in nine people in the world—suffer from chronic hunger, the vast majority of whom live in developing countries. In Southern Asia alone there are 281 million undernourished people (16 percent of the population); another 220 million people (23 percent) in sub-Saharan Africa are undernourished. According to UNICEF (2015), nearly half of all deaths of children under the age of five are attributable to undernutrition.

Most hunger today is the result of a combination of natural and social forces. Drought alone affects an estimated 100 million people in the world today. In countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Tajikistan, the combination of drought and internal warfare has wrecked food production, resulting in starvation and death for millions of people. Conflict and hunger go hand-in-hand: Conflict undermines food security, while hunger can contribute to violence. People in conflict-ridden nations are up to three times more likely to be undernourished. For example, in Syria, 37 percent of the population is in urgent need of food assistance (FAO 2016).

The countries affected by famine and starvation are for the most part too poor to pay for new technologies that would increase their food production. Nor can they afford to purchase sufficient food imports from elsewhere in the world. Paradoxically, as world hunger grows, food production continues to increase, often in the very countries experiencing hunger emergencies (Food and Agriculture Organization 2004). This growth, however, is not evenly distributed around the world. In much of Africa, for example, food production per person has declined. Surplus food produced in high-income countries such as the United States is seldom affordable to the countries that need it most.

Education and Literacy

Education and literacy are important routes to economic development. Lower-income countries are therefore disadvantaged because they lack high-quality public education systems. Thus, children in high-income countries get more schooling, and adults in those countries are more likely to be literate, or able to read and write. While virtually all high school-age males and females attend secondary school in high-income countries, in 2014 only 68 percent in middle-income countries did so, and only 37 percent in low-income countries (World Bank 2016k). In low-income countries, 57 percent of men and women over the age of fifteen are able to read and write, compared to virtually all (99 percent) of those in high-income countries (World Bank 2016k). One reason for these differences is that high-income countries spend a much larger percentage of their national income on education than low-income countries do.

Education is important for several reasons. First, it contributes to economic growth, because people with advanced schooling provide the skilled workforce necessary for high-wage industries. Second, education offers the only hope for escaping the cycle of harsh working conditions and poverty; poorly educated people are condemned to low-wage unskilled jobs. Finally, educated people have fewer children, thus slowing the global population explosion that contributes to global poverty (see Chapter 19).

Child Labor

In low-income countries, children are often forced to work because of a combination of family poverty, lack of education, and traditional indifference among some people in many countries to the plight of those who are poor or who are ethnic minorities. Worldwide more than 120 million children between the ages of five and fourteen are engaged in child labor. The incidence of child labor is highest in low-income countries: Nearly 23 percent of all children in low-income countries are engaged in child labor, compared to 9 percent for lower-middle-income countries and 6 percent from upper-middle-income countries (International Labor Organization 2013). Most working children labor in agriculture, with the rest in manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels, and a variety of services, including working as servants in wealthy households. At best, these children work for long hours with little pay and are therefore unable to go to school and develop the skills that might eventually enable them to escape their lives of poverty. Many, however, work at hazardous and exploitative jobs under slavelike conditions, suffering a variety of illnesses and injuries.



In sub-Saharan Africa, more than one in five children are forced to work, often for long hours with little pay in hazardous and exploitative jobs.



CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 Why do people who live in high-income countries have better health than those who live in low-income countries?
- 2 What is one global cause of poor health?
- 3 What are two causes of global hunger today?



Analyze the success of the emerging economies.

emerging economies

Developing countries that over the past two or three decades have begun to develop a strong industrial base, such as Singapore and Hong Kong.

Can Poor Countries Become Rich?

In the mid-1970s a number of low-income countries in East Asia were undergoing a process of industrialization that appeared to threaten the global economic dominance of the United States and Europe (Amsden 1989). This process began with Japan in the 1950s followed by Hong Kong in the 1960s and Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore in the 1970s and 1980s. Other Asian countries began to follow in the 1980s and the early 1990s, most notably China, but also Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. Today, most of these **emerging economies** are middle income, and some—such as Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore—have moved up to the high-income category.

China, the world's most populous country, has one of the most rapidly growing economies on the planet. According to projections by the International Monetary Fund (2013), China ranks first in terms of GDP growth among all economies listed in the World Economic Outlook Projections. At an average annual growth rate of 10 percent between 1980 and 2010, the Chinese economy has more than doubled, and today is the world's second-largest economy behind the United States, having surpassed Japan in 2010. The low- and middle-income economies of East Asia as a whole averaged 7.7 percent growth per year during much of the 1980s and 1990s—a rate that is extraordinary by world standards (World Bank 2000–2001). By 1999, the GDP per person in Singapore was virtually the same as that in the United States.

Economic growth in East Asia has been accompanied by important social problems. These have included the sometimes violent repression of labor and civil rights, terrible factory conditions, the exploitation of an increasingly female workforce, the exploitation of immigrant workers from impoverished neighboring countries, and widespread environmental degradation. Many of these atrocities continue today; Foxcon and Pegatron, two of Apple's biggest suppliers, have been found to badly mistreat workers in their Chinese factories (Neate 2013). Nonetheless, due to the sacrifices of past generations of workers, large numbers of people in these countries are prospering.

The economic success of the East Asian emerging economies can be attributed to a combination of factors. Some of these factors are historical, including those stemming from world political and economic shifts. Some are cultural. Still others have to do with the ways these countries pursued economic growth. Sociologists cite five main reasons for the recent economic advances of the East Asian emerging economies. First, most were part of colonial situations that, while imposing many hardships, also helped to pave the way for economic growth. For example, Hong Kong and Singapore were former British colonies; Britain encouraged industrial development, constructed roads and other transportation systems, built relatively efficient governmental bureaucracies, and actively developed both Hong Kong and Singapore as trading centers (Cumings 1987; Gold 1986).

Second, the East Asian region benefited from a long period of world economic growth. Between the 1950s and the mid-1970s, the growing economies of Europe and the United States provided a big market for the clothing, footwear, and electronics that were increasingly being made in East Asia, creating a window of opportunity for economic development (Henderson and Appelbaum 1992). Third, economic growth in this region took off at



Hong Kong (shown here), along with Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore, have become some of the most rapidly growing economies on earth.

the high point of the Cold War, when the United States and its allies, in erecting a defense against communist China, provided generous economic aid that fueled investment in new technologies such as transistors, semiconductors, and other electronics, contributing to the development of local industries (Amsden 1989; Castells 1992; Cumings 1987, 1997; Deyo 1987; Evans 1987; Haggard 1990; Henderson 1989; Mirza 1986). Fourth, many of the East Asian governments enacted strong policies that favored economic growth by keeping labor costs low, encouraging economic development through tax breaks and other economic policies, and offering free public education.

Finally, some have argued that cultural traditions, including a shared Confucian philosophy, contributed to these economic advances. Scholars such as Weber (1977, orig. 1904), who viewed the rise of capitalism in Western Europe as a function of the Protestant belief in thrift, frugality, and hard work, have observed a similar process in Asian economic history. Confucianism, it is argued, inculcates respect for one's elders and superiors, education, hard work, and proven accomplishments as the key to advancement, as well as a willingness to sacrifice today to earn a greater reward tomorrow. As a result of these values, the Weberian argument goes, Asian workers and managers are highly loyal to their companies, submissive to authority, hardworking, and success oriented. Workers and capitalists alike are said to be frugal. Instead of living lavishly, they are likely to reinvest their wealth in further economic growth (Berger 1986; Berger and Hsiao 1988; Helm 1992; Redding 1990; Wong 1986).

Recent social and cultural changes may undermine the influence of traditional values on Asian economic development. For example, thrift, a central Confucian cultural value, appears to be on the decline in Japan and the East Asian emerging economies, as young people—raised in the booming prosperity of recent years—increasingly value conspicuous consumption over austerity and investment (Helm 1992).

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What are the five factors that have facilitated the economic success of the East Asian emerging economies?
2. What are potential obstacles to the continued economic success of the emerging economies?

How Do Sociological Theories Explain Global Inequality?

Learn several sociological theories explaining why some societies are wealthier than others, as well as how global inequality can be overcome.

market-oriented theories

Theories about economic development that assume that the best possible economic consequences will result if individuals are free to make their own economic decisions, uninhibited by governmental constraint.

modernization theory

A version of market-oriented development theory that argues that low-income societies develop economically only if they give up their traditional ways and adopt modern economic institutions, technologies, and cultural values that emphasize savings and productive investment.

What causes global inequality? How can it be overcome? In this section we examine four theories that have been advanced over the years to explain global inequality: market-oriented, dependency, world-systems, and state-centered theories. These theories each have strengths and weaknesses. One shortcoming of all of them is that they frequently give short shrift to the role of women in economic development. By drawing on all four theories together, however, we should be able to answer a key question facing the 84 percent of the world's population living outside high-income countries: How can they move up in the world economy?

Market-Oriented Theories

Fifty years ago, the most influential theories of global inequality advanced by American economists and sociologists were **market-oriented theories**. These theories assume that the best possible economic consequences will result if individuals are free, uninhibited by any form of governmental constraint, to make their own economic decisions. Unrestricted capitalism, if allowed to develop fully, is said to be the avenue to economic growth. Government bureaucracy should not dictate which goods to produce, what prices to charge, or how much workers should be paid. According to market-oriented theorists, governmental direction of the economies of low-income countries results only in blockages to economic development (Berger 1986; Ranis and Mahmood 1992; Ranis 1996; Rostow 1961; Warren 1980). While market-oriented theories remain generally accepted among economists, sociologists are unlikely to accept the notion that the “invisible hand” of the marketplace, by itself, will lead to desirable outcomes for the world's poor (Slater and Tonkiss 2013).

Market-oriented theories inspired U.S. government foreign-aid programs that attempted to spur economic development in low-income countries by providing money, expert advisers, and technology, paving the way for U.S. corporations to make investments in these countries. One of the most influential early proponents of such theories was W. W. Rostow, an economic adviser to former U.S. president John F. Kennedy, whose ideas helped shape U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America during the 1960s. Rostow's explanation is one version of a market-oriented approach, termed *modernization theory*. **Modernization theory** argues that low-income societies can develop economically only if they give up their traditional ways and adopt modern economic institutions, technologies, and cultural values that emphasize savings and productive investment.

According to Rostow (1961), the traditional cultural values and social institutions of low-income countries impede their economic effectiveness. For example, many people in low-income countries, in Rostow's view, would rather consume today than invest

for the future. But to modernization theorists, the problems in low-income countries run even deeper. The cultures of such countries, according to the theory, tend to support “fatalism”—a value system that views hardship and suffering as the unavoidable plight of life. Acceptance of one’s lot in life thus discourages people from working hard to overcome their fate. In this view, then, a country’s poverty is due largely to the cultural failings of the people themselves. Such failings are reinforced by government policies that set wages and control prices and generally interfere in the operation of the economy.

Rostow’s ideas remain influential. **Neoliberalism**, the prevailing view among economists today, argues that free-market forces, achieved by minimizing governmental restrictions on business, provide the only route to economic growth. Neoliberalism holds that global free trade will enable all countries of the world to prosper; eliminating governmental regulation is seen as necessary for economic growth to occur. Neoliberal economists therefore call for an end to restrictions on trade and often challenge minimum wage and other labor laws, as well as environmental restrictions on business.

Dependency Theories

During the 1960s, a number of theorists questioned market-oriented explanations of global inequality. Many of these critics were sociologists and economists from the low-income countries of Latin America and Africa who rejected the idea that their countries’ economic underdevelopment was due to their own cultural or institutional failings. Instead, they built on the theories of Karl Marx, who argued that world capitalism would create a class of countries manipulated by more powerful countries just as capitalism within countries leads to the exploitation of workers. **Dependency theories**, as they are called, argue that the poverty of low-income countries stems from their exploitation by wealthy countries and the multinational corporations that are based in wealthy countries. In this view, global capitalism locked many countries into a downward spiral of exploitation and poverty.

Dependency theorists argue that this exploitation began with **colonialism**, a political-economic system under which powerful countries establish, for their own profit, rule over weaker peoples or countries. Powerful nations have colonized other countries usually to procure the raw materials needed for their factories and to control markets for the products manufactured in those factories. Although colonialism typically involved European countries establishing colonies in North and South America, Africa, and Asia, some Asian countries (such as Japan) had colonies as well.

Colonialism ended throughout most of the world after World War II, but the exploitation did not: Transnational corporations continued to reap enormous profits from their branches in low-income countries. According to dependency theory, these global companies, often with the support of the powerful banks and governments of rich countries, established factories in poor countries, using cheap labor and raw materials to maximize production costs without governmental interference. In turn, the low prices set for labor and raw materials prevented poor countries from accumulating the profit necessary to industrialize themselves. Local businesses that might compete with foreign corporations were prevented from doing so. In this view, poor countries are forced to borrow from rich countries, thus increasing their economic dependency.

neoliberalism

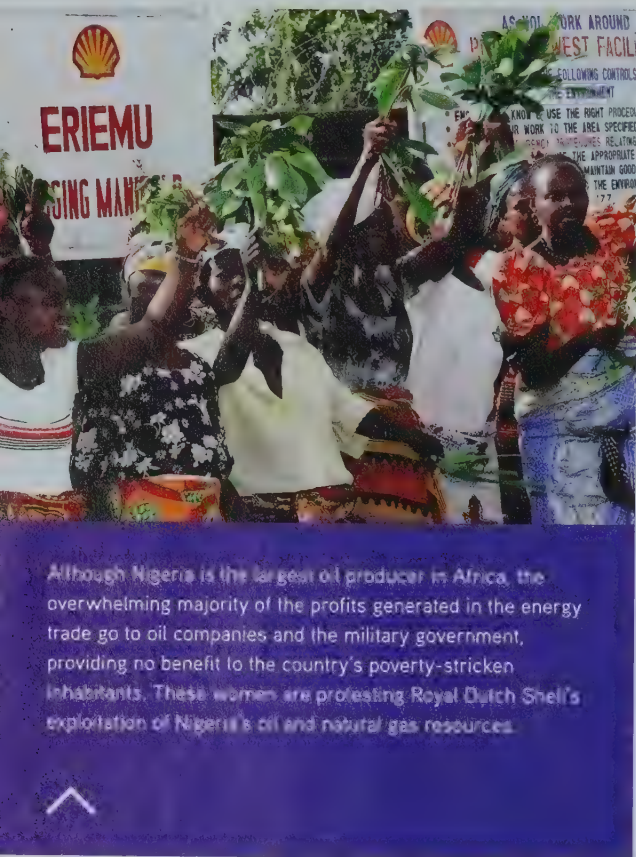
The economic belief that free-market forces, achieved by minimizing government restrictions on business, provide the only route to economic growth.

dependency theories

Marxist theories of economic development that maintain that the poverty of low-income countries stems directly from their exploitation by wealthy countries and the multinational corporations that are based in wealthy countries.

colonialism

The process whereby Western nations established their rule in parts of the world away from their home territories.



world-systems theory

Pioneered by Immanuel Wallerstein, a theory that emphasizes the interconnections among countries based on the expansion of a capitalist world economy. This economy is made up of core countries, semiperipheral countries, and peripheral countries.

Low-income countries are thus seen not as underdeveloped but rather as misdeveloped (Amin 1974; Emmanuel 1972; Frank 1966, 1969a, 1969b, 1979; Prebisch 1967, 1971). Since dependency theorists believe that exploitation has kept their countries from achieving economic growth, they typically call for revolutionary changes that would push foreign corporations out of their countries altogether (Frank 1966, 1969a, 1969b).

Dependency theorists regard the exercise of political and military power as central to enforcing unequal economic relationships. According to this theory, whenever local leaders question such unequal arrangements, their voices are quickly suppressed. When people elect a government opposing these policies, that government is likely to be overthrown by the country's military, often backed by the armed forces of the industrialized countries themselves. Dependency theorists point to many examples, including the role of the CIA in overthrowing the Marxist governments of Guatemala in 1954 and the socialist government in Chile in 1973, and in undermining support for the leftist government in Nicaragua in the 1980s. In the view of dependency theory, global economic inequality is thus backed up by force.

World-Systems Theory

During the last quarter-century, sociologists have increasingly seen the world as a single (although often conflict-ridden) economic system. While dependency theories hold that individual countries are economically tied to one another, **world-systems theory** argues that the world capitalist economic system is not merely a collection of independent countries engaged in diplomatic and economic relations with one another but rather must be understood as a single unit. The world-systems approach is most closely identified with the work of Immanuel Wallerstein and his colleagues. Wallerstein showed that capitalism has long existed as a global economic system, beginning with the extension of markets and trade in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1996; Wallerstein 1974a, 1974b, 1979, 1990, 1996a, 1996b, 2004). The world system is seen as comprising four overlapping elements (Chase-Dunn 1989):

- A world market for goods and labor
- The division of the population into different economic classes, particularly capitalists and workers
- An international system of formal and informal political relations among the most powerful countries, whose competition with one another helps shape the world economy
- The carving up of the world into three unequal economic zones, with the wealthier zones exploiting the poorer ones

World-systems theorists term these three economic zones *core*, *periphery*, and *semiperiphery*. All countries in the world system are said to fall into one of the three categories. **Core countries** are the most advanced industrial countries, taking the lion's share of profits in the world economic system. These include Japan, the United States, and the countries of Western Europe. The **peripheral countries** comprise low-income, largely agricultural countries that are often manipulated by core countries for their own economic advantage. Examples of peripheral countries are found throughout Africa and to a lesser extent in Latin America and Asia. Natural resources, such as agricultural products, minerals, and other raw materials, flow from periphery to core—as do the profits. The core, in turn, sells finished goods to the periphery, also at a profit. World-systems theorists argue that core countries have made themselves wealthy with this unequal trade, while at the same time limiting the economic development of peripheral countries.

Finally, the **semiperipheral countries** occupy an intermediate position: These are semi-industrialized, middle-income countries that extract profits from the more peripheral countries and in turn yield profits to the core countries. Examples of semiperipheral countries include Mexico in North America; Brazil, Argentina, and Chile in South America; and the emerging economies of East Asia. The semiperiphery, though to some degree controlled by the core, is thus also able to exploit the periphery. Moreover, the greater economic success of the semiperiphery holds out to the periphery the promise of similar development. Although the world system tends to change very slowly, once-powerful countries eventually lose their economic power and others take their place.

An important offshoot of the world-systems approach is a concept that emphasizes the global nature of economic activities. **Global commodity chains** are worldwide networks of labor and production processes yielding a finished product. These networks consist of all pivotal production activities that form a tightly interlocked “chain” extending from the raw materials needed to create the product to its final consumer (Appelbaum and Christerson 1997; Gereffi 1995, 1996; Hopkins and Wallerstein 1996).

The commodity-chain approach sees manufacturing as becoming increasingly globalized. Exports of manufactured goods nearly tripled between 2000 and 2012, growing from \$7 trillion to \$18 trillion. While most of the exports in manufactured goods originate in high-income countries, their share has declined as manufacturing has shifted to middle-income countries such as China. In 2000, high-income countries accounted for 83 percent of all exports of manufactured goods; by 2012 that share had dropped to 69 percent. Among middle-income countries the reverse was the case: exports of manufactured goods increased by nearly three-quarters, from 18 percent in 2000 to 31 percent in 2012 (World Bank 2014d). The “rise of the rest” (Zakaria 2008) has been fueled by export-oriented industrialization, in which a growing number of countries now manufacture goods for world consumption. China, which moved from the ranks of low- to upper-middle-income largely because of its exports of manufactured goods, partly accounts for this trend. Yet the most profitable activities in the commodity chain—engineering, design, and advertising—usually occur in core countries, whereas the least profitable activities, such as factory production, occur in peripheral countries.

State-Centered Theories

Some of the most recent explanations of successful economic development emphasize the role of state policy in promoting growth. Differing sharply from market-oriented theories,

core countries

According to world-systems theory, the most advanced industrial countries, which take the lion's share of profits in the world economic system.

peripheral countries

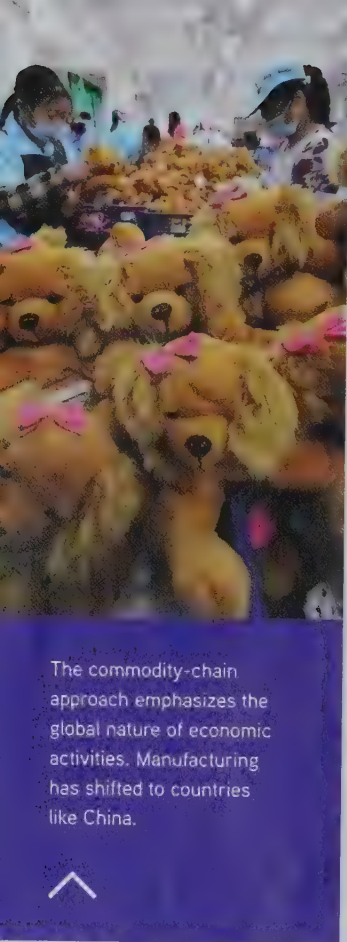
Countries that have a marginal role in the world economy and are thus dependent on the core producing societies for their trading relationships.

semiperipheral countries

Countries that supply sources of labor and raw materials to the core industrial countries and the world economy but are not themselves fully industrialized societies.

global commodity chains

Worldwide networks of labor and production processes yielding a finished product.



state-centered theories

Development theories that argue that appropriate government policies do not interfere with economic development but rather can play a key role in bringing it about.

state-centered theories argue that appropriate government policies do not interfere with economic development but rather can play a key role in bringing it about. A large body of research now suggests that in some regions of the world, such as East Asia, successful economic development has been state led.

Strong governments contributed in various ways to economic growth in the East Asian emerging economies during the 1980s and 1990s (Amsden 1994; Cumings 1997; Evans 1995; Henderson and Appelbaum 1992; World Bank 1997):

1. **East Asian governments have sometimes aggressively acted to ensure political stability, while keeping labor costs low.** They have accomplished this by acts of repression, such as outlawing trade unions, banning strikes, jailing labor leaders, and, in general, silencing the voices of workers. The governments of Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore in particular have engaged in such practices.
2. **East Asian governments have frequently sought to steer economic development in desired directions.** Some examples include state agencies providing cheap loans and tax breaks to businesses that invest in industries favored by the government and governments preventing businesses from investing their profits in other countries, forcing them to invest in economic growth at home.
3. **East Asian governments have often been heavily involved in social programs such as low-cost housing and universal education.** The world's largest public housing systems (outside of socialist or formerly socialist countries) have been in Hong Kong and Singapore, where government subsidies keep rents extremely low. As a result, workers don't require high wages to pay for their housing, so they can compete better with American and European workers in the emerging global labor market.

Evaluating Global Theories of Inequality

Each of the four sets of theories of global inequality has strengths and weaknesses. Together, they enable us to better understand the causes of and cures for global inequality.

1. **Market-oriented theories** recommend the adoption of modern capitalist institutions to promote economic development. They further argue that countries can develop economically only if they open their borders to trade, and they cite evidence to support this argument. But market-oriented theories overlook economic ties between poor countries and wealthy ones—ties that can impede economic growth under some conditions and enhance it under others. They blame low-income countries for their poverty rather than acknowledging outside factors, such as the business operations of more powerful nations. Market-oriented theories also ignore the ways government can work with the private sector to spur economic development. Finally, they fail to explain why some countries take off economically while others remain grounded in poverty and underdevelopment.
2. **Dependency theories** emphasize how wealthy nations have exploited poor ones. While these theories account for much of the economic backwardness in Latin America and Africa, they cannot explain the occasional success stories such as

Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico or the rapidly expanding economies of China and East Asia. In fact, some formerly low-income countries have risen economically despite the presence of multinational corporations. Even some former colonies, such as Hong Kong and Singapore, are among the success stories.

3. **World-systems theory** analyzes the world economy as a whole, looking at the complex global web of political and economic relationships that influence development and inequality in poor and rich nations alike. It is thus well suited to understanding the global economy at a time when businesses are increasingly free to set up operations anywhere, acquiring an economic importance rivaling that of many countries. One challenge faced by world-systems theory lies in the difficulty of modeling a complex and interdependent world economy. It has also been criticized for emphasizing economic and political forces at the expense of cultural ones, such as the combination of nationalism and religious belief that is currently reshaping the Middle East. Finally, world-systems theory has been said to place too much emphasis on the role of nation-states in a world economy increasingly shaped by transnational corporations that operate independently of national borders (Robinson 2004; Sklair 2002b).
4. **State-centered theories** stress the role of governments in fostering economic growth. They thus offer a useful alternative to both the prevailing market-oriented theories, with their emphasis on states as economic hindrances, and dependency theories, which view states as allies of global business elites in exploiting poor countries. When combined with the other theories—particularly world-systems theory—state-centered theories can explain the radical changes now transforming the world economy.

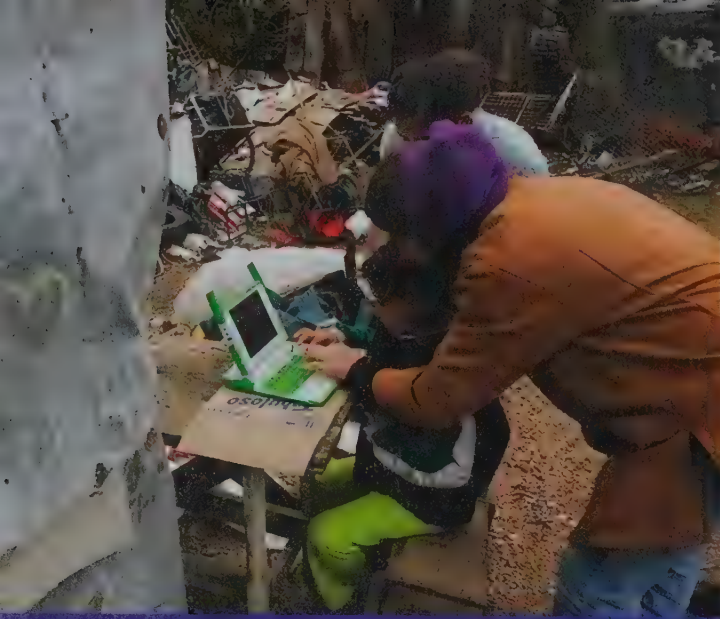
CONCEPT CHECKS

1. Describe the main assumptions of market-oriented theories of global inequality.
2. Why are dependency theories of global inequalities often criticized?
3. Compare and contrast core, peripheral, and semiperipheral nations.
4. How have strong governments of some East Asian nations contributed to the economic development of that region?

How Does Global Inequality Affect Your Life?

Today the social and economic forces leading to a single global capitalist economy appear to be irreversible. What does rapid globalization mean for the future of global inequality? No sociologist knows for certain, but many possible scenarios exist. In one, our world might be dominated by large global corporations, with workers everywhere competing with one another at a global wage. Such a scenario might predict falling wages for large numbers of people in today's high-income countries and rising wages for a few in low-income countries. There might be a general leveling out of average income around the world, although at a level much lower than that currently enjoyed in the United States and other industrialized nations. In this scenario, the polarization between the haves and the have-nots would grow, as the whole world would be increasingly divided into those who benefit from the global economy and those who do not. Such polarization could fuel conflict among ethnic groups and even nations, as those suffering from economic globalization would blame others for their plight (Hirst and Thompson 1992; Wagar 1992).

Understand how global economic inequality affects the daily life of you and your peers.



The lack of modern technology in poor nations prevents residents from developing the skills needed to transcend poverty. A girl from a poor family in Montevideo, Uruguay, uses a laptop given to her as part of a new educational policy aimed at closing the technology gap.

In another, more hopeful scenario, a global economy could mean greater opportunity for everyone, as the benefits of modern technology stimulate worldwide economic growth. In the most optimistic view, the republics of the former Soviet Union, as well as the formerly socialist countries of Eastern Europe, will eventually advance into the ranks of the high-income countries. Economic growth will spread to Latin America, Africa, and the rest of the world. Because capitalism requires that workers be mobile, the remaining caste societies around the world will be replaced by class-based societies. These societies will experience enhanced opportunities for upward mobility. According to this more optimistic scenario, the more successful East Asian emerging economies, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore, are only a sign of things to come.

One challenge to this more hopeful scenario is the widening technology gap that divides rich and poor countries, making it even more difficult for poor countries to catch up. This gap is a result of the disparity in wealth between nations, but it also reinforces those disparities. Poor countries cannot easily afford modern technology—yet, in the

absence of modern technology, they face major barriers to overcoming poverty. They are caught in a vicious downward spiral from which it is difficult to escape.

Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Earth Institute and Quetelet professor of sustainable development and professor of health policy and management at Columbia University, and a prominent adviser to many Eastern European and developing countries, claims that the world is divided into three classes (Sachs 2000):

- *Technology innovators* are those regions that provide nearly all of the world's technological inventions; they account for no more than 15 percent of the world's population.
- *Technology adopters* are those regions that are able to adopt technologies invented elsewhere, applying them to production and consumption; they account for 50 percent of the world's population.
- Finally, the *technologically disconnected* are those regions that neither innovate nor adopt technologies developed elsewhere; they account for 35 percent of the world's population.

Innovation requires a critical mass of ideas and technology to become self-sustaining. That is why technological innovation in the United States is concentrated in regions rich in universities and high-tech firms—for example, California's Silicon Valley. Poor countries

are ill equipped to develop such high-tech regions; most lack even a science adviser to their government. Sachs urges the governments of wealthy countries, along with international lending institutions, to provide loans and grants for scientific and technological development. Universities in wealthy nations could establish overseas research and training institutes that would foster collaborative research projects. As long as major regions of the world remain technologically disconnected, it seems unlikely that global poverty will be eradicated.

What is the future of global inequality? It is difficult to be entirely optimistic. Global economic growth has slowed, and while environmental challenges resulting from global warming will affect all countries, the poorest countries will be the hardest hit. The Russian economy, in its move from socialism to capitalism, has encountered many pitfalls, leaving many Russians poorer than ever. The European Union, once thought to be a pillar of the global economy, is facing many challenges. While many countries have experienced economic growth, many have not; the gap between rich and poor remains large.

The future of global inequality remains an open question—one whose answer will depend, in large part, on whether global economic expansion can be sustained in the face of ecological constraints and a global economy that has proven to be surprisingly fragile. It remains to be seen whether the countries of the world will learn from one another and work together to create better lives for their peoples. Technological advances, including widespread use of the Internet and frequent media reports of tragedy in poorer parts of the world, such as the devastating earthquake in Haiti, may raise awareness of the startling economic and health inequalities in the world today. A well-informed awareness of global inequality may be an essential step toward trying to eradicate the vast gap between the haves and have-nots, and developing social programs to eradicate the problems of hunger and disease that plague poorer societies.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1. What is the role of technology in deepening existing global inequalities?
- 2. According to Sachs, what can be done to reduce the technology gap between rich and poor countries?

The Big Picture

Global Inequality

Learning Objectives

What Is Global Inequality?

Understand the systematic differences in wealth and power among countries.

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What Is Daily Life Like In Rich Versus Poor Countries?

Recognize the impact of different economic standards of living on people throughout the world.

p. 232

Can Poor Countries Become Rich?

Analyze the success of the emerging economies.

p. 236

How Do Sociological Theories Explain Global Inequality?

Learn several sociological theories explaining why some societies are wealthier than others, as well as how global inequality can be overcome.

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How Does Global Inequality Affect Your Life?

Examine how global economic inequality affects the daily life of you and your peers.

Thinking Sociologically

1. Concisely review the four theories offered in this chapter that explain why there are gaps between nations' economic developments and resulting global inequality: market-oriented theory, dependency theory, world-systems theory, and state-centered theory. Briefly discuss the distinctive characteristics of each theory and how each differs from the others. Which theory do you feel offers the most explanatory power to addressing economic developmental gaps?
2. This chapter states that global economic inequality has personal relevance and importance to people in advanced, affluent economies. Briefly review this argument. Explain carefully whether you were persuaded by it.

Terms to Know

Concept Checks

globalization

global inequality

1. Explain how the World Bank measures global inequality, and discuss some of the problems associated with measuring global inequality.
2. Compare and contrast high-income, middle-income, and low-income countries.

emerging economies

1. Why do people who live in high-income countries have better health than those who live in low-income countries?
2. What is one global cause of poor health?

market-oriented theories • modernization theory • neoliberalism • dependency theories • imperialism • world-systems theory • core countries • peripheral countries • semiperipheral countries • global commodity chain • state-centered theories

1. What are the five factors that have facilitated the economic success of the East Asian emerging economies?
2. What are potential obstacles to the continued economic success of the emerging economies?

1. Describe the main assumptions of market-oriented theories of global inequality.
2. Why are dependency theories of global inequalities often criticized?
3. Compare and contrast core, peripheral, and semiperipheral nations.
4. How have strong governments of some East Asian nations contributed to the economic development of that region?

1. What is the role of technology in deepening existing global inequalities?
2. According to Sachs, what can be done to reduce the inequalities between rich and poor countries?

9

Gender Inequality

Gender Inequality

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Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer of Facebook and the author of *Lean In*, which urges women to be more assertive and seek leadership roles in the workplace, gives a talk on contemporary inequality between the sexes. As more and more women enter the realm of corporate America, are they achieving gender parity?

THE BIG QUESTIONS

Are gender differences due to nature, nurture, or both?

Evaluate the extent to which differences between women and men are the result of biological factors or social and cultural influences.

How do gender inequalities affect social institutions?

Recognize that gender differences are a part of our social structure and create inequalities between women and men. Learn the forms these inequalities take in social institutions such as the workplace, the family, the educational system, and the political system in the United States and globally.

Why are women the target of violence?

Learn about the specific ways that women are the target of physical and sexual violence in the United States and globally.

How does social theory explain gender inequality?

Think about various explanations for gender inequality. Learn some feminist theories about how to achieve gender equality.

What are the global consequences of gender inequality?

Learn how globalization has transformed ideas about women's rights.





By many indications, it looks like women have made it in the high-pressure, male-dominated fields of business, finance, and technology. Women like Mary Barra, CEO of General Motors; Susan Wojcicki, CEO of YouTube, and Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, serve as role models for young women hoping to ascend the ranks of corporate America. However, despite the tremendous successes of Barra, Sandberg, Wojcicki, and other high-ranking professional women today, it's still not easy for women to make it to the top. Discrimination, both overt and subtle, still hurts millions of women in the workforce today. Witness the case of Merrill Lynch, a venerable brokerage firm that is owned by Bank of America. In September 2013, Bank of America agreed to pay \$39 million to nearly 5,000 women who worked at Merrill Lynch as part of a discrimination case filed by the employees (McGeehan 2013).

What was the basis of the lawsuit? The three plaintiffs, Judy Calibuso, a financial adviser at Merrill Lynch, and Julie Moss and Dianne Goedtel, former financial advisers at Bank of

America, charged that their employer gave male colleagues bigger annual bonuses and more opportunities to get ahead—such as “plum accounts” and the most high-powered clients. For example, Calibuso had asked her manager to be assigned to the lucrative task of working on “fee-based” accounts and was told that those assignments would instead go to a male colleague. When Calibuso complained to a supervisor, she was reprimanded for making waves. Yet one of the most remarkable aspects of the lawsuit is that there was no dramatic centerpiece; rather, the suit was based on dozens of small slights or injustices that the women faced in their daily work lives. According to the lawsuit’s web page, Bank of America and Merrill Lynch engaged in “a pattern and practice of gender discrimination against their female financial advisers with respect to business opportunities, compensation, professional support, and other terms and conditions of employment” (Lieff et al. 2012).

You probably didn’t see anything on the nightly news or Twitter about the experiences of Calibuso and her colleagues because we tend to pay attention only to cases where the discrimination is blatant, egregious, or shocking. That’s the case with another lawsuit against Merrill Lynch, which attracted media attention in July 2013. Three plaintiffs—Sara Hunter Hudson, Julia Kuo, and Catherine Wharton—alleged that they were fired from their positions as trainees at Merrill Lynch because the firm favored men and promoted a “boys club” work culture. The women claim that their boss ordered them to attend workshops on how to “dress for success” and suggested they read the book *Seducing the Boys Club: Uncensored Tactics from a Woman at the Top* (DiSesa 2008). The book offered the women tips for making it in a man’s world; they were advised to flirt with their male colleagues and clients and to use charm, flattery, and sweetness when offering critical feedback to male coworkers (Marsh 2013). In their complaint, Hudson, Kuo, and Wharton protested against a company that “advocated conforming to gender stereotypes to get ahead in the workplace.”

As we will see later in the chapter, the demeaning treatment of women at Merrill Lynch and other major financial firms may partly explain why women account for less than 30 percent of all senior officers in finance and only 2 percent of CEOs (Catalyst 2016). A casual observer who sees a statistic like this might conclude that women are not cut out for such a cutthroat industry or that they simply prefer to work in other fields. Yet sociology helps us look beyond individual skills and preferences and helps us understand the systematic ways that factors like gender shape one’s access to power and resources. Explaining the differences and inequalities between women and men in a society is now one of the most central topics in sociology.

In this chapter, we will take a sociological approach to the exploration of gender differences and gender inequality. Gender is a way for society to divide people into two categories: “men” and “women.” Not all persons, however, fit neatly into one of these two categories, as we will see later in this chapter (Heine 2013). According to this socially created division, men and women have different identities and social roles. Men and women are expected to think and act in certain ways across most life domains. Gender also serves as a social status; in almost all societies men’s roles are valued more than women’s roles (Bern 1993). Men and women are not only different but also unequal in terms of power, prestige, and wealth.

Despite the advances that many women have made in the United States and other Western societies, this remains true today. Sociologists are interested in explaining how society differentiates between women and men, and how these differences serve as the basis for social inequalities (Chafetz 1990). Yet sociologists recognize that gender alone does not shape our life experiences. Rather, there are pronounced differences in women’s and men’s lives on the

basis of race, social class, age, birth cohort, religion, nation of origin, sexual orientation, and even one's marital or parental status (Choo and Ferree 2010). The challenges women face in wealthy Western nations also vary markedly from those experienced by women in the Global South, underscoring the importance of **intersectionality**, or the ways that women's (and men's) multiple identities and social locations shape their experiences (Mohanty 2013).

In this chapter, we examine the origins of gender differences, assessing the debate over the role of biological factors versus social influences in the formation of gender roles. We also look to other cultures for evidence on this debate. Then we review the various forms of gender inequality that exist in U.S. society and throughout the globe. In this section, we focus on major social institutions, including the educational system, the workplace, the family, and the government. Next, we examine how and why women are more likely than men to be the targets of sexual violence. We review the various forms of feminism and assess prospects for future change toward a gender-equal society. We then analyze some theories of gender inequality and apply them to the lives of women like Judy Calibuso. We conclude the chapter by looking at the role of women around the world in the first two decades of the twenty-first century.

Are Gender Differences Due to Nature, Nurture, or Both?

Are differences between boys and girls, and between men and women, due to nature, nurture, or some combination of the two? As we first noted in Chapter 2, scholars are divided about the degree to which inborn biological characteristics have an enduring impact on our gender identities as "feminine" or "masculine" and the social roles based on those identities. No one would argue that our behavior is purely instinctive or hardwired. Yet scholars disagree as to the extent to which they believe gender differences are the product of learning and socialization.

Before we review the relative influences of nature and nurture, we first need to make an important distinction between sex and gender. **Sex** refers to physical differences of the body, whereas **gender** concerns the psychological, social, and cultural differences between males and females. This distinction is fundamental because many differences between males and females are not biological in origin.

The Role of Biology

How much are differences in the behavior of women and men the result of biological differences? Some researchers hold that innate differences of behavior appear in some form in all cultures and that the findings of sociobiology point strongly in this direction. Such researchers are likely to draw attention to the fact, for example, that in almost all cultures, men rather than women take part in hunting and warfare. Surely, they argue, this indicates that men possess biologically based tendencies toward aggression that women

intersectionality

A sociological perspective that holds that our multiple group memberships affect our lives in ways that are distinct from single group membership. For example, the experience of a black female may be distinct from that of a white female or a black male.

sex

The biological and anatomical differences distinguishing females from males.



Evaluate the extent to which differences between women and men are the result of biological differences or social and cultural influences.

gender

Social expectations about behavior regarded as appropriate for the members of each sex. Gender refers not to the physical attributes distinguishing men and women but to socially formed traits of masculinity and femininity.

biological essentialism

The view that differences between men and women are natural and inevitable consequences of the intrinsic biological natures of men and women.

lack. In looking at the kinds of jobs that women and men typically hold, they might point out that women are better suited than men for jobs like store cashier or clerical assistant. Ringing up purchases and assisting with office tasks are more passive occupations than being a stock handler or store security guard, positions that require more physical strength and aggressiveness.

Most social scientists are unconvinced by these arguments, and even view them as potentially dangerous. In her classic book *The Lenses of Gender*, Sandra Lipsitz Bem (1993) notes that this kind of **biological essentialism** rationalizes and legitimizes gender differences as the natural and inevitable consequences of the intrinsic biological natures of women and men. As such, social influences are neglected or minimized. For example, social scientists who renounce biological essentialism would argue that the level of aggressiveness of men varies widely across cultures and that women are expected to be more passive or gentle in some cultures than in others (Elshtain 1981). Further, some argue that women are just as aggressive as men; however, women use strategies that are consistent with gender role socialization. For instance, women will use “interpersonal aggression,” such as malicious gossip or “bad mouthing,” rather than engaging in physical fights (Bjorkqvist 1994; Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, and Osterman 2006). Theories of “natural difference” are often grounded in data on animal behavior, critics point out, rather than in anthropological or historical evidence about human behavior, which reveals variation over time and place. In the majority of cultures, most women spend a significant part of their lives caring for children and therefore cannot readily take part in hunting or war.

The hypothesis that biological factors wholly determine behavior patterns in men and women is undermined, in part, by a lack of empirical evidence. Nearly a century of research fails to identify the physiological and biological origins of the complex social behaviors exhibited by human males and females (Connell 1987). Theories that see individuals as complying with some kind of innate predisposition neglect the vital role of social interaction and social contexts in shaping human behavior.

What does the research show? Some studies show differences in hormonal makeup between the sexes, with the male sex hormone, testosterone, associated with a propensity to violence (Rutter and Giller 1984). For instance, if male monkeys are castrated at birth, they become less aggressive; conversely, female monkeys given testosterone will become more aggressive than normal females. However, it has also been found that providing monkeys with opportunities to dominate others actually increases the testosterone level. This means that aggressive behavior may affect the production of the hormone, rather than the hormone's causing increased aggression—thus underscoring the importance of social context. In other words, there might be slight biological differences between men and women, but these small differences may be exacerbated and amplified by social contexts that promote behaviors that are consistent with gendered stereotypes and expectations.

Another source of information comes from the experience of identical twins. Identical twins derive from a single egg and have exactly the same genetic makeup. In one particular case, one of a pair of identical male twins was seriously injured while being circumcised, and the decision was made to reconstruct his genitals as a female. He was thereafter raised as a girl. The twins at six years old demonstrated typical male and female traits as found in Western culture. The little girl enjoyed playing with other girls, helped with the housework, and wanted to get married when she grew up. The boy preferred the company of

other boys, his favorite toys were cars and trucks, and he wanted to become a firefighter or police officer.

For some time, this case was treated as a conclusive demonstration of the overriding influence of social learning on gender differences. However, when the girl was a teenager she was interviewed during a television program, and the interview showed that she felt some unease about her gender identity, even perhaps that she was “really” a boy after all. She had by then learned of her unusual background, and this knowledge may very well have been responsible for this altered perception of herself (Ryan 1985).

Gender Socialization

Another explanation for gender differences is **gender socialization**, or ways that individuals learn gender roles from socializing agents such as the family, peers, schools, and the media (as discussed in Chapter 4). Through contact with various agents of socialization, children gradually internalize the social norms and expectations that are seen to correspond with their sex. In other words, gender differences are not biologically determined; they are culturally produced. The concept of gender socialization teaches us that gender inequalities result because men and women are socialized into different roles.

People create gender through social interactions with others, such as family members, friends, and colleagues. This process begins at birth when doctors, nurses, and family members—the first to see an infant—assign the person to a gender category on the basis of physical characteristics. Babies are immediately dressed in a way that marks the sex category; for instance, a girl may wear a little pink bow while a boy may wear a sailor suit. “Parents don’t want to be constantly asked if their child is a boy or a girl” (Lorber 1994). Once the child is marked as male or female, everyone who interacts with the child will treat it in accordance with its gender. They do so on the basis of the society’s assumptions, which lead people to treat women and men differently, even as opposites (Renzetti and Curran 1995).

Gender socialization is very powerful, and challenges to it can upset one’s sense of order. Think about the controversy surrounding young Coy Mathis, who was born male but identified as female, preferring to wear girls’ clothing and play with girls’ toys. As sociological studies repeatedly show, once a gender is “assigned,” society expects individuals to act like “females” and “males.” These expectations are fulfilled and reproduced in the practices of everyday life, and challenges to these expectations are not yet widely accepted (Bourdieu 1990; Lorber 1994).

The Social Construction of Gender

In recent years, socialization and gender role theories have been criticized by a growing number of sociologists. Rather than seeing sex as biologically determined and gender as culturally learned, they argue that we should view both sex and gender as socially constructed products. Theorists who believe in the **social construction of gender** reject biological bases for gender differences. Gender identities emerge, they argue, in relation to perceived sex differences in societies and cultures, which in turn shape and even perpetuate those differences. For example, a society in which cultural ideas of masculinity are characterized by physical strength and tough attitudes will encourage men to cultivate a



The process of gender socialization begins at birth when babies are immediately assigned to a gender category.



gender socialization

The learning of gender roles through social factors such as schooling, peers, the media, and family.

social construction of gender

A perspective holding that gender differences are a product of social and cultural norms and expectations, rather than biology.

Almost all team sports are segregated by sex, affirming cultural beliefs in gender difference and inequality.



specific body image and set of mannerisms (Butler 1989; Connell 1987; Scott and Morgan 1993). Men who fail to comply with what scholars call “hegemonic masculinity,” or the social norms dictating that men should be strong, self-reliant, and unemotional, may be subtly sanctioned for not enacting gender roles in a way that is consistent with prevailing cultural norms (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

DOING GENDER

According to social constructionist perspectives, gender is not something that we are, but something that we “do” (West and Zimmerman 1987) or a role that we perform. That means that we learn how to present ourselves as “male” or “female” through our choice of behaviors, clothing, hairstyle, stance, body language, and tone of voice. For example, a number of scholars have uncovered the discouraging finding that some young women “play dumb” both because they believe it is consistent with gendered expectations for how girls should act and because they believe that doing so may help bolster the feelings of masculinity among the boys they are hoping to attract as romantic partners (Gove, Hughes, and Geerken 1980). As sociologist Maria do Mar Pereira discovered in her 2014 qualitative study of fourteen-year-old boys and girls, “Young people try to adapt their behavior according to these pressures to fit into society. One of the pressures is that young men must be more dominant—cleverer, stronger, taller, funnier—than young women, and that being in a relationship with a woman who is more intelligent will undermine their masculinity” (University of Warwick 2014).

But precisely how we “do gender” varies widely by race, social class, and social context. We selectively choose to enact different aspects of gender expectations based on what we think will work best in a particular setting. For example, sociologist Nikki Jones (2009)

found that young inner-city African American women would adjust their voices, stance, walk, and style of speaking in different situations, thus giving off the impressions of being “aggressive,” “good,” or “pretty” when they thought a particular type of femininity would “pay off.” Jones described the ways that twenty-two-year-old Kiara would “do gender.” Kiara was hoping to collect signatures for a petition to stop a new development in a poor neighborhood adjacent to her own. As Jones (2009: 90) describes:

[Kiara] confidently, assertively, even aggressively approaches men on the street to sign her petition and then draws on normative expectations of manhood and femininity to encourage them to add their names to the list: Babies and women are in danger, she tells them, letting the implication that real men would sign up to protect babies and women hang in the air. She switches from aggressive to demure just long enough to flirt with a man passing by on the street and then to defiant when she passes the police station on the corner. “They don’t give a fuck!” she declares loudly.

Kiara’s behavior shows the complexities of gendered expectations in contemporary social life.

Findings from Other Cultures

If gender differences were mostly the result of biology, we could expect gender roles not to vary much from culture to culture. However, one set of findings that helps show how gender roles are in fact socially constructed comes from anthropologists who have studied gender in other times and cultures.

NEW GUINEA

In her classic New Guinea study *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, Margaret Mead (1963, orig. 1935) observed wide variability among gender role prescriptions—and such marked differences from those in the United States—that any claims to the universality of gender roles had to be rejected. Mead studied three separate tribes in New Guinea. In Arapesh society, both males and females generally exhibited characteristics and behaviors that would typically be associated with the Western female role. Both sexes among the Arapesh were passive, gentle, unaggressive, and emotionally responsive to the needs of others. In contrast, Mead found that in another New Guinea group, the Mundugumor, both the males and females were characteristically aggressive, suspicious, and, from a Western observer’s perspective, excessively cruel, especially toward children. In both cultures, however, men and women were expected to behave very similarly. In a third group, the Tchambuli tribe of New



Margaret Mead conducts fieldwork with a mother and child in the Admiralty Islands, part of Papua New Guinea, in 1953. Her classic study *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* found that gender roles there differed dramatically from those in the United States.

Mehran Rafaat (left) dresses and acts like a boy as a way to circumvent the barriers faced by girls in Afghan culture. Girls who live their lives disguised as boys are known as *bacha posh*.



Guinea, gender roles of the males and females were almost exactly reversed from the roles traditionally assigned to males and females in Western society. Women “managed the business affairs of life” while “the men . . . painted, gossiped and had temper tantrums” (Mead 1972).

THE !KUNG

Among the !Kung of the Kalahari desert, who refer to themselves as *zhun/twasi* or “the real people,” it is very common for both men and women to engage in child care (Shostak 1981). Due to the nonconfrontational parenting practices of the !Kung, who oppose violent conflict and physical punishment, children learn that aggressive behavior will not be tolerated by either men or women. Although the !Kung abide by the seemingly traditional arrangement where “men hunt and women gather,” the vast majority of their food actually comes from the gathering activities of women (see Draper, as cited in Renzetti and Curran 2000). Women return from their gathering expeditions armed not only with food for the community but also with valuable information for hunters.

THE BACHA POSH IN AFGHANISTAN

In contemporary Afghanistan, boys are so highly prized that families with only daughters often experience shame and pity; as a result, some transform one young daughter into a son. The parents cut the girl’s hair short, dress her in boys’ clothes, change her name to a boy’s name, and encourage her to participate in “boys’ activities” like bicycling and playing cricket. These children are called *bacha posh*, which translates into “dressed up as a boy.”

Parents of *bacha posh* believe that boys are afforded so many advantages in Afghan culture that it is helpful, rather than cruel, to transform their girls into boys. A *bacha posh*

can more easily receive an education, work outside the home, even escort her sisters in public, allowing freedoms that are unheard of for girls in a society that strictly segregates men and women. In most cases, a return to womanhood takes place when the child enters puberty, a decision almost always made by her parents (Nordberg 2010).

BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THE GENDERS

The understanding that only two genders (i.e., male and female) exist is not universal. The Spaniards who came to both North and South America in the seventeenth century noticed men in the native tribes who had taken on the mannerisms of women, and women who occupied male roles.

Several Native American cultures hold a special honor for persons of “integrated genders.” For example, the Navajo term *nádleehí* literally means “one who constantly transforms” and refers to a male-bodied person with a feminine nature, a special gift according to Navajo culture. The Navajo believe that to maintain harmony, there must be a balanced interrelationship between the feminine and the masculine within a single individual. Native activists working to renew their cultural heritage adopted the English term *two-spirit* as useful shorthand to describe the entire spectrum of gender and sexual expression that is better and more completely described in their own languages (Nibley 2011).

In the contemporary United States, growing numbers of young adults are challenging the male-female dichotomy and embracing both genders—or switching between the two. Eschewing labels such as “male” or “female,” a small but growing community of college-age adults in particular are instead choosing to identify as “androgynous,” “genderqueer,” “genderfluid,” “intersex,” “bigender,” “agender,” or “non-cis” (Schulman 2013). Although sociologists do not know for certain precisely how many individuals define their gender in ways beyond the male/female dichotomy, it soon may be possible to calculate a number in some parts of the world. Several nations have begun to collect official statistics on persons who identify as “third gender” or “third sex,” terms which encompass diverse experiences such as identifying as **transgender** or being **intersex**, which refers to individuals who are born with ambiguous genitalia. In 2011, Nepal became the first country to include a third gender category in its national census; India soon followed (Bochenek and Knight 2012). In 2015, New Zealand added the third gender category of “gender diverse” to its national statistics system (Price 2015). In Germany, parents now have the option of not specifying a child’s sex in birth registries. The intention is to allow babies born with biological characteristics of both sexes to make a choice about who they are once they get older. Under this new law, “individuals can . . . opt to remain outside the gender binary altogether” (Heine 2013).

Taken together, anthropological and sociological studies of gender reveal that culture, not biology, underlies gender differences. Sociologists have noted that while society teaches “masculine” and “feminine” gender roles, such an approach does not explain where these roles come from or how they can be changed. For this, we need to delve into classic and contemporary theoretical perspectives that shed light on how gender roles and gendered inequalities are built into social institutions (Lorber 1994).

transgender

A person who identifies as or expresses a gender identity that differs from their sex at birth.

intersex

An individual possessing both male and female genitalia. Although statistically rare, this subpopulation is of great interest to gender scholars.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 What is the difference between sex and gender?
- 2 How do both biology and gender socialization contribute to differences between men and women?
- 3 What is “doing gender”? Give an example of a way that you have “done gender” in your daily life.
- 4 How can studies of gender in other cultures contribute to the argument that gender is socially constructed?
- 5 What is intersex? How does it challenge the male-female sex dichotomy?



How Do Gender Inequalities Affect Social Institutions?

Recognize that gender differences are a part of our social structure and create inequalities between women and men. Learn the forms these inequalities take in social institutions such as the workplace, the family, the educational system, and the political system in the United States and globally.

patriarchy

The dominance of men over women. All known societies are patriarchal, although there are variations in the degree and nature of the power men exercise as compared with women.

gender inequality

The inequality between men and women in terms of wealth, income, and status.

Anthropologists and historians have found that most groups, collectives, and societies throughout history differentiate between women's and men's roles. Although there are considerable variations in the respective roles of women and men in different cultures, there are few instances of a society in which women are more powerful than men. Women everywhere typically are responsible for child rearing and the maintenance of the home, while political and military activities tend to be resoundingly male. Nowhere in the world do men have primary responsibility for the rearing of children. Conversely, there are few if any cultures in which women are primarily responsible for the herding of large animals, the hunting of large game, deep-sea fishing, or plow agriculture (Brown 1977).

Just because women and men perform different tasks or have different responsibilities in societies does not necessarily mean that women are unequal to men. However, if the work and activities of women and men are valued differently, then the division of labor between them can become the basis for unequal gender relations. In modern societies, the division of labor between the sexes has become less clear-cut than it was in premodern cultures, but men still outnumber women in all spheres of power and influence.

Male dominance in a society is usually referred to as **patriarchy**. Although men are favored in almost all of the world's societies, the degree of patriarchy varies. In the United States, women have made tremendous progress in several realms, especially education and work, but several forms of gender inequality still exist. Yet, throughout the world, many cultures exist where women suffer tremendous disadvantages relative to men.

Sociologists define **gender inequality** as the difference in the status, power, and prestige women and men have in groups, collectives, and societies. In thinking about gender inequality between men and women, we can ask the following questions: Do women and men have equal access to valued societal resources—for example, food, money, power, and time? Second, do women and men have similar life options? Third, are women's and men's roles and activities valued similarly? We examine the various forms of gender inequality in educational systems, the workplace, the home, and politics in the following sections. As you read, keep these questions in mind.

Education

If you look around your college campus, you might notice roughly equal numbers of men and women and may think that gender no longer affects whether and how one receives an education. There is some truth to this. College campuses today are roughly 50:50 when it comes to the number of men and women filling undergraduate classrooms; in fact, women slightly outnumber men on college campuses today. This gender gap is much larger among blacks and Latinos than among whites (Pollard 2011). Yet aggregate numbers are only part of the story. As we will see next, subtle dynamics, starting in primary school, teach boys and girls different skills and direct young men and women into divergent career paths.



Male students get more attention from their teachers than female students. By treating their male and female students differently, teachers—and schools—reinforce traditional gender roles.

UNEQUAL TREATMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

Sociologists have found that schools help foster gender differences in outlook and behavior. Studies document that teachers interact differently—and often inequitably—with their male and female students. These interactions differ in at least two ways: the frequency of teacher-student interactions and the content of those interactions. Both of the patterns are based on—and perpetuate—traditional assumptions about male and female behavior and traits.

One study showed that regardless of the sex of the teacher, male students interacted more with their teachers than female students did. Boys received more teacher attention and instructional time than girls did. This was due in part to the fact that boys were more demanding than girls (American Association of University Women 1992). Another study reported that boys were eight times more likely to call out answers in class, thus grabbing their teachers' attention. This research also showed that even when boys did not voluntarily participate in class, teachers were more likely to solicit information from them than from girls. When girls tried to bring attention to themselves by calling out in class without raising their hands, they were reprimanded (Sadker and Sadker 1994). Boys were also disadvantaged in several ways, however. Because of their rowdy behavior, they were more often scolded and punished than the female students.

This differential treatment of boys and girls perpetuates stereotypic gender role behavior. Girls are trained to be quiet and well behaved and to turn to others for answers, while boys are encouraged to be inquisitive, outspoken, active problem solvers.

THE GENDERING OF COLLEGE MAJORS

College is a time of exploration, when students take both general education classes and specialized classes within their chosen major that prepare them for a career after graduation. Men and women differ starkly in the majors they choose, opting for fields that are

consistent with gender-typed socialization; women focus on fields associated with caring and nurturing, whereas men tend to pursue fields that emphasize logic and analysis. Yet the majors women tend to choose are precisely those fields that garner the lowest earnings after graduation, whereas men are channeled into majors with high economic returns.

Researchers at Georgetown University documented gender differences in college majors using national data collected by the Census Bureau (Carnevale, Strohl, and Melton 2011) (Table 9.1). They found that the college majors with the highest proportion of female students were those in the education and health fields. For instance, 97 percent of all persons majoring in early childhood education were women, and more than 90 percent of all majors in nursing, elementary education, library science, and school counseling were female. By contrast, more than 90 percent of engineering majors were men.

Feminist scholars note that this stark gender segregation among college majors is one important reason for the persistent gender gap in pay. When the Georgetown researchers ranked college majors based on the earnings of graduates, they found that the two lowest-earning majors were counseling psychology (with median annual earnings of \$29,000) and early childhood education (with median annual earnings of \$36,000). Both of

TABLE 9.1

The Gendering of College Majors

MAJORS WITH HIGHEST CONCENTRATION OF WOMEN			MAJORS WITH HIGHEST CONCENTRATION OF MEN		
	Median Earnings	Percent Women		Median Earnings	Percent Men
Early Childhood Education	\$36,000	97	Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering	\$82,000	97
Medical Assisting Services	\$56,000	96	Mechanical Engineering Related Technologies	\$80,000	94
Communication Disorders Sciences and Services	\$40,000	94	Construction Services	\$70,000	92
Family and Consumer Sciences	\$40,000	93	Electrical and Mechanic Repairs and Technologies	\$57,000	91
Nursing	\$60,000	92	Industrial Production Technologies	\$65,000	91
Elementary Education	\$40,000	91	Mechanical Engineering	\$80,000	90
Nutrition Sciences	\$46,000	89	Mining and Mineral Engineering	\$80,000	90
Special Needs Education	\$42,000	88	Electrical Engineering Technology	\$68,000	90

Source: Carnevale, Strohl, and Melton 2011

these fields are dominated by women. By contrast, of the ten highest-earning majors, eight were engineering fields heavily dominated by men, including petroleum engineering (with median annual earnings of \$120,000) and aerospace engineering (with median annual earnings of \$87,000). Research on how young people choose their majors consistently shows that subtle forces, including input from parents, friends, and guidance counselors; a lack of same-sex role models; active encouragement (or discouragement) from teachers; and limited exposure to particular fields of study tend to channel women into female-typed majors and men into male-typed majors (Morgan, Gelbgiser, and Weeden 2013; Porter and Umbach 2006).

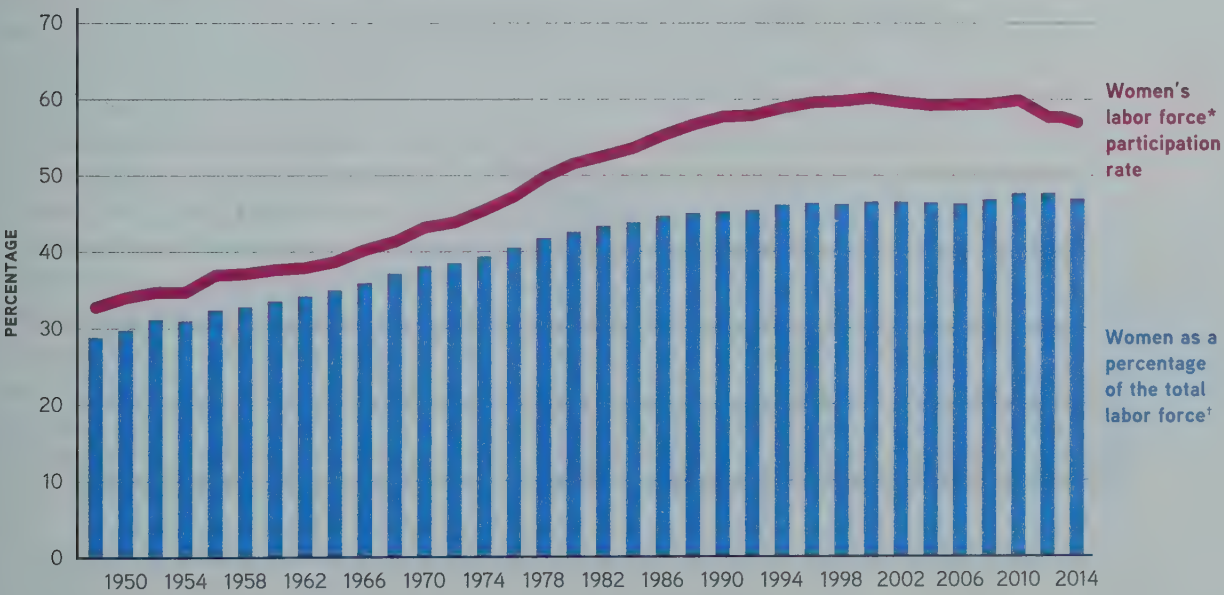
Women and the Workplace

Rates of employment of women outside the home, for all social classes, were quite low until well into the twentieth century in the United States. Even as late as 1910 in the United States, more than a third of gainfully employed women were maids or house servants. The female labor force consisted mainly of young single women and children. When women or girls worked in factories or offices, employers often sent their wages straight home to their parents. When they married, they withdrew from the labor force.

Since the turn of the twentieth century, women's participation in the paid labor force has risen more or less continuously, especially in the past fifty years (see Figure 9.1).

FIGURE 9.1

Women's Participation in the Labor Force in the United States



*Women in the labor force as a percent of all civilian women age sixteen and over.

*Women in the labor force as a percent of the total labor force (both men and women) age sixteen and over.

gender typing

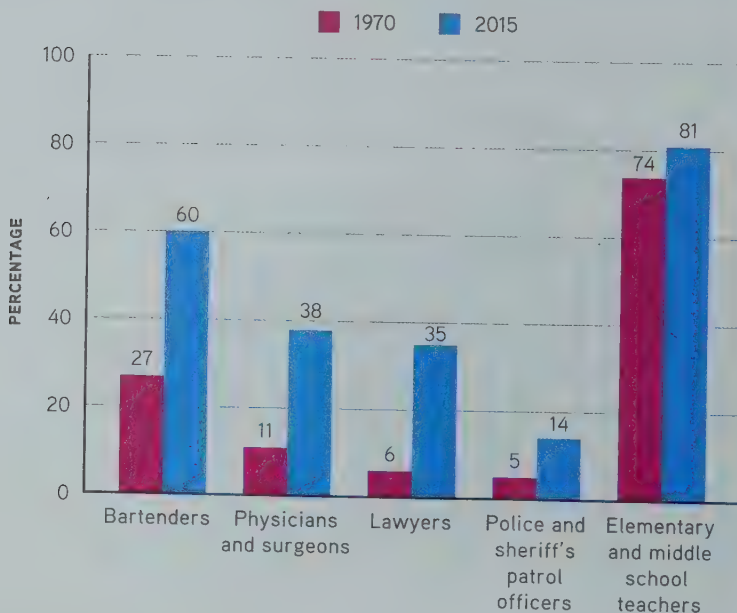
Designation of occupations as male or female, with "women's" occupations, such as secretarial and retail positions, having lower status and pay, and "men's" occupations, such as managerial and professional positions, having higher status and pay.

In 2014, 57 percent of women ages sixteen and older were in the labor force, compared to 38 percent in 1960. An even greater change in the rate of labor force participation has occurred among married mothers of young children. In 1975, only 39 percent of married women with preschool-age children (under six years old) were in the labor force; this figure had increased to 64 percent by 2014 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015f).

How can we explain this increase? One force behind women's increased entry into the labor force was the increase in demand, since 1940, for clerical and service workers, as the U.S. economy expanded and changed (Oppenheimer 1970). From 1940 until the mid- to late 1960s, labor force activity increased among women who were past their prime child-rearing years. During the 1970s and 1980s, as the marriage age rose, birth rates declined, and women's educational attainment increased, the growth in labor force participation spread to younger women. Many women now postpone family formation to complete their education and establish themselves in the labor force. Despite family obligations, today a majority of women of all educational levels now work outside the home during their child-rearing years.

FIGURE 9.2

Women as a Percentage of Total Employed in Select Occupations



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016k

INEQUALITIES AT WORK

Until recently, women workers were overwhelmingly concentrated in routine, poorly paid occupations. The fate of the occupation of clerk (office worker) provides a good illustration. In 1850 in the United States, clerks held responsible positions, requiring accountancy skills and carrying managerial responsibilities; less than 1 percent were women. The twentieth century saw a general mechanization of office work (starting with the introduction of the typewriter in the late nineteenth century), accompanied by a marked downgrading of the status of clerk—together with a related occupation, secretary—into a routine, low-paid occupation. Women filled these occupations as the pay and prestige of such jobs declined. Today, most secretaries and clerks are women. Once an occupation has become **gender typed**—once it is seen as mainly a "man's job" or a "woman's job"—inertia sets in.

Women have recently made some inroads into occupations once defined as "men's jobs" (Figure 9.2). By the 1990s, women constituted a majority of workers

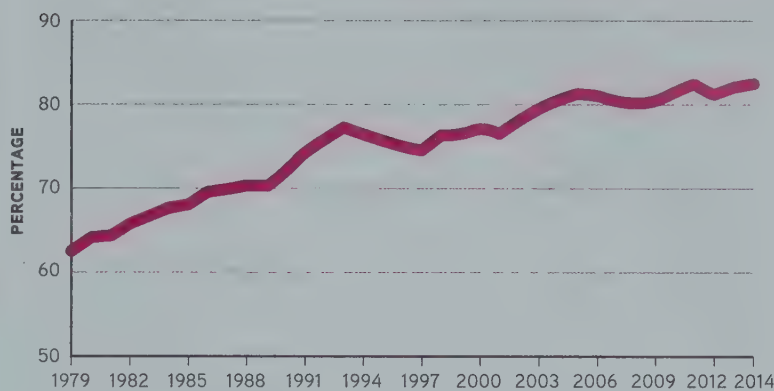
in previously male-dominated professions such as accounting, journalism, psychology, public service, and bartending. In fields such as law, medicine, and engineering, their proportion has risen substantially since 1970. While women's employment in professional and managerial occupations has steadily increased to be the largest occupational category for women (29 million, or 42 percent, in 2014), a considerable proportion of women workers are still employed in sales and office administrative support occupations (21 million, or 30 percent, in 2014) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015f).

Another important economic trend since the 1970s has been the narrowing of the gender gap in earnings (see Figure 9.3). Between 1979 and 2014, the ratio of women's to men's median weekly earnings among full-time, year-round workers increased from 62 percent to 83 percent. Moreover, this ratio increased among all races and ethnic groups (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015f). Some researchers have noted that the narrowing of the gender gap is less a reflection of improvement in women's economic standing than a decline in men's economic standing. The recent recession was dubbed the “he-cession” or “man-cession” because the types of jobs and industries hardest hit were those in which men were over-represented, such as construction and finance (Rampell 2009). As men's earnings erode, the female-male earnings ratio starts to inch upward.

Sociologists have identified many reasons why a gender pay gap persists. Although direct discrimination is certainly one explanation, there are other, more subtle reasons why women typically earn less than their male counterparts. Many sociologists point to **sex segregation**—or the concentration of men and women in different occupations—as an important cause of the gender gap in earnings. While the Equal Pay Act of 1963 holds that men and women must earn equal pay for performing equal work, women tend to hold different jobs, typically jobs that are dominated by women. These jobs, on average, pay less than occupations dominated by men. For instance, in 2015, occupations with the highest proportion of women included preschool and elementary school teacher (97 percent), dental hygienist (96 percent), child-care worker (95 percent), secretary (95 percent), and hairdresser (94 percent) (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016k). This is not surprising, given what we learned earlier about the concentration of women in health- and education-related college majors. Occupations with the highest proportion of male workers included construction worker, truck driver, taxi driver, plumber, electrician, carpenter, firefighter, and auto mechanic (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016k).

FIGURE 9.3

Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's



Note: Data relate to annual averages of median usual weekly earnings for full-time wage and salary workers.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015f

sex segregation

The concentration of men and women in different jobs. These differences are believed to contribute to the gender pay gap.

Nearly 90 percent of registered nurses are female. Occupations that are dominated by women typically pay less than those occupations held mainly by men.



glass ceiling

A promotion barrier that prevents a woman's upward mobility within an organization.

THE GLASS CEILING

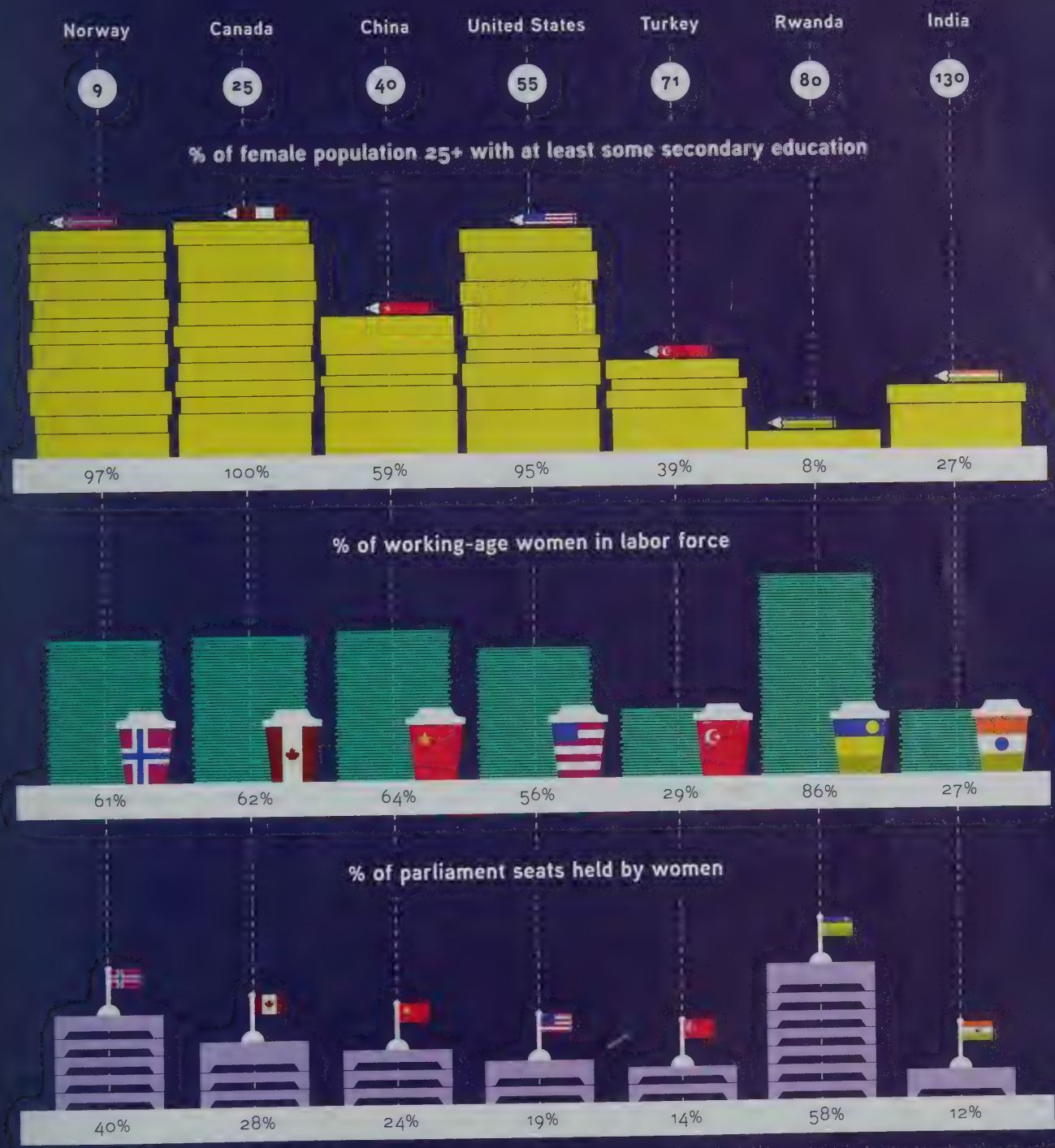
Although women are increasingly moving into “traditionally male” jobs, their entry into such jobs is not necessarily accompanied by increases in pay—and increases in occupational mobility—due to the “glass ceiling.” The **glass ceiling** is a promotion barrier that prevents a woman's upward mobility within an organization. The glass ceiling is particularly problematic for women who work in male-dominated occupations and professions. Women's progress is blocked not by virtue of innate inability or lack of basic qualifications, but by not having the sponsorship of well-placed, powerful senior colleagues to articulate their value to the organization or profession (Alvarez et al. 1996). As a result, women tend to progress to mid-level management positions, but they do not, in proportionate numbers, move beyond mid-management ranks. The obstacles women face as they strive to rise through the career ranks are exemplified by the Merrill Lynch cases we read about in the chapter opener. Women like Judy Calibuso, who asked to work with high-profile clients in order to ascend the corporate ladder, were passed over for their male coworkers. Calibuso and her coworkers were forced to watch their male colleagues climb past them in the corporate ranks—a phenomenon that sociologist Christine Williams (1992) calls the “glass elevator.”

GENDER INEQUITIES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship, or starting one's own business, has long been considered a pathway through which disadvantaged groups, typically immigrants, could circumvent workplace barriers and succeed on their own. But what about women? Can they break through the glass ceiling by breaking out on their own? The answer is mixed. The number of women

Gender Inequality

The Gender Inequality Index (GII), which is used to compare gender inequality across countries, looks at women's educational attainment, labor force participation, and representation in governmental bodies, among other metrics. In the graphic below, the countries' GII rankings are displayed in the white circles.



Source: United Nations Development Programme 2016

with their own business has increased steadily over the past several decades. Women-owned firms now account for 30 percent of all enterprises and are growing faster in number than most other types of businesses. Yet women's businesses tend to be much smaller than men's. As a result, women-owned firms employ only 6 percent of the U.S. workforce and contribute just under 4 percent of business revenues (American Express Open 2014).

Recent evidence suggests that women trying to start their own businesses face greater obstacles than men when trying to secure funding. One unscientific study of contestants on the popular TV show *Shark Tank* calculated that companies founded by men received an average valuation of nearly \$1.7 million, while companies founded by women received an average valuation of just over \$781,000 (Cooney 2016). Research by sociologist Sarah Thébaud sheds light on why women-owned businesses may be under-resourced: unfounded negative perceptions of women business owners by potential funders. In three experiments, Thébaud (2015) tested what a group of 178 college students thought about a series of business plans, and indirectly, the gender of the business owners behind them. In general, she found that the students rated women as less competent than men, even when the business plan was exactly the same. These studies show that the persistence of notions about gender difference perpetuates men's advantages.

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The United States is not alone in having a history of gender inequality in the workplace. Across the globe, men outpace women in most workplace and economic indicators. Most nations, however, like the United States, have witnessed tremendous strides in women's economic progress in recent decades. Some scholars and activists argue that women's economic empowerment has contributed in large part to China's meteoric rise as an economic power. An estimated 80 percent of the factory workers in China's Guangdong province are female; four of the ten richest self-made women in the world are Chinese (Kristof and WuDunn 2009; Kroll 2011).

The International Labor Organization (2016) found that the gap between the labor force participation rates of men and women decreased only slightly between 1995 and 2015, mainly because both women's and men's participation rates have fallen. In 2015, the gender gap in global labor force participation rates was 26 percent; while 76 percent of men participated in the global workforce in 2015, the same can be said of only 50 percent of women. Women have high labor force participation rates in high-income countries such as most European nations, where over two-thirds of the female adult population participate in the labor market and the male-female gap in labor force participation rates is less than 15 percent on average. This is especially true in nations with extensive social benefits (such as paid maternity leave) and where part-time work is possible. In North Africa and South Asia, by contrast, the gender gap in labor force participation is nearly 50 percent. These gender gaps are due largely to variations in women's labor force participation rates, from a high of 86 percent of women in Rwanda to 16 percent in Jordan. In contrast, men's participation rates are relatively stable across countries in different income strata (World Bank 2016g).

Women remain in the poorest-paying industrial and service-sector jobs in all countries, and in the less industrialized nations they are concentrated in the declining agricultural



Female workers watch the launch of a ship into China's Yangtze River. Thanks to the feminization of the global workforce, many women have achieved a degree of economic independence—but often at the price of unsafe labor conditions, low pay, and nonexistent job security.

sector. Because of persistent discrimination and lower wages, women represent 60 percent of the world's 550 million working poor (International Labor Organization 2004b). The feminization of the global workforce has brought with it the increased exploitation of young, uneducated, largely rural women around the world. These women labor under conditions that are often unsafe and unhealthy, at low pay and with nonexistent job security. For instance, the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh in 2013 was a tragic depiction of the unsafe work conditions facing garment workers, most of whom are women, in parts of the developing world. More than 1,000 workers died in the building collapse, many of whom had been toiling for low wages in a building that had been deemed an unsafe structure.

At the other end of the occupational spectrum, a recent study by the International Labor Organization concludes that women throughout the world still encounter a glass ceiling that restricts their movement into top positions. In 2013, women made up only 17.6 percent of board members of major companies in the European Union (European Parliament 2013). In recognition of these low rates, several national governments have recently passed legislation to increase women's participation in the highest echelons of business. In Japan, for example, women have been particularly likely to face barriers to career advancement, especially in professional and managerial positions. Only 11 percent of such positions are now held by women, due both to discriminatory hiring practices and the fact that fully 70 percent of Japanese women exit the workforce when they have their first child (Cunningham 2013; Simms 2013). However, policymakers in Japan have recently recognized that this is a tremendous loss of worker potential, especially when low birth rates mean that the nation may soon face a dearth of young workers. In 2013, the government issued a mandate that by 2020, women should hold 30 percent of all upper-management positions in major corporations (Cunningham 2013). Similar quota-based policies have already been passed in France, Iceland, the

Netherlands, and Spain (International Labor Organization 2011). The number of women in leadership roles is growing; the proportion of senior roles filled by women has reached 45 percent in Russia, 34 percent in Poland, and 30 percent in China, although it remains low in the United States: Only 23 percent of senior roles were held by women in 2016 (Thornton 2016).

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Economic disadvantage and daunting work hours are not the only challenges women workers face worldwide. Another pervasive yet poorly documented obstacle is sexual harassment. **Sexual harassment** is unwanted or repeated sexual advances, remarks, or behaviors that are offensive to the recipient and cause discomfort or interfere with job performance. Power imbalances facilitate harassment; even though women can and do sexually harass subordinates, because men usually hold positions of authority it is more common for men to harass women (Reskin and Padavic 1994).

The U.S. courts have identified two types of sexual harassment. One is the *quid pro quo*, in which a supervisor demands sexual acts from a worker as a job condition or promises work-related benefits in exchange for sexual acts. The other is the “hostile work environment,” in which a pattern of sexual language, lewd posters, or sexual advances makes a worker so uncomfortable that it is difficult for the worker to do his or her job (Padavic and Reskin 2002).

Sociologists have observed that “the great majority of women who are abused by behavior that fits legal definitions of sexual harassment—and who are traumatized by the experience—do not label what has happened to them as sexual harassment” (Paludi and Barickman 1991). Women’s reluctance to report harassment may be due to the following factors: (1) many still do not recognize that sexual harassment is an actionable offense; (2) victims may be reluctant to come forward with complaints, fearing that they will not be believed, that their charges will not be taken seriously, or that they will be subject to reprisals; and (3) it may be difficult to differentiate between harassment and joking on the job (Giuffre and Williams 1994).

The Family and Gender Issues

BALANCING WORK AND CHILD CARE

One key factor affecting women’s careers is the perception that for female employees, work comes second to having children. Research by Stanford University sociologist Shelley Correll and colleagues (2007) found that mothers are 44 percent less likely to be hired than nonmothers with the same work experience and qualifications. Not only that, but mothers are offered significantly lower starting pay for the same job than equally qualified nonmothers (an average of \$11,000 lower in this study). This earnings gap between mothers and nonmothers—referred to as the “motherhood penalty”—reflects a belief by employers in traditional gender roles and notions of parenthood. Because women are still considered the primary caregiver, they are perceived by employers as less reliable and less productive workers. As long as most of the population takes it for granted that parenting cannot be shared on an equal basis by both women and men, the problems facing women employees will persist.

sexual harassment

The making of unwanted sexual advances by one individual toward another, in which the first person persists even though it is clear that the other party is resistant.

Public policies may be effective in counteracting the obstacles imposed by employers' stereotypical views of mothers in the workplace. A team of sociologists led by Michelle Budig (2012) explored the ways that attitudes toward working mothers and public policies such as parental leave or public child care affected the earnings of women workers in twenty-two countries. They found that the "motherhood penalty" varied across countries, ranging from just 4.5 percent to a whopping 33 percent. The gaps were smallest in nations where the cultural attitudes supported maternal employment and the government provided job-protected parental leave and publicly funded child care.

HOUSEWORK AND THE SECOND SHIFT

The struggles facing women workers do not end once they set foot in their homes after work. Women throughout the world also perform housework and child care at the end of the paid work day, often dubbed the "second shift." As a result, women work longer hours than men in most countries.

Although there have been revolutionary changes in women's status in recent decades in the United States, including the entry of women into male-dominated professions, one area of work has lagged far behind: **housework**. Because of the increase of married women in the workforce and the resulting change in status, it was presumed that men would contribute more to housework. And while men now do more housework than they did three decades ago, a large gender gap persists (see Figure 9.4). In 1965, women ages eighteen to sixty-four performed twenty-eight hours of housework per week. This number had dropped to fifteen hours by 2011. By contrast, men's housework increased from four to nine hours per week between 1965 and 2011. So while the gap has decreased, women still put in significantly more time than their male counterparts (Pew Research Center 2013a).

Further investigation shows that it is the intersection of gender, marital status, and parental status that most powerfully shapes housework. A recent study showed that whereas women save their husbands an hour of housework a week, husbands create an additional seven hours of housework for their wives every week. Childless women do an average of ten hours of housework a week before marriage and seventeen hours after marriage. Childless men, by contrast, do eight hours before marriage and seven hours afterward. Married women with more than three kids are the most overworked, reporting an average of about twenty-eight hours per week, while married men with more than three kids logged only ten hours (University of Michigan Institute for Social Research 2008).

Some sociologists have suggested that this phenomenon is best explained as a result of economic forces: Household work is exchanged for economic

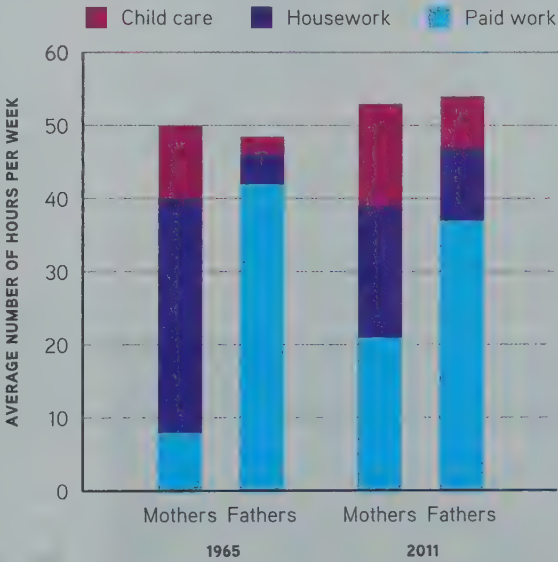
second shift

The excessive work hours borne by women relative to men; these hours are typically spent on domestic chores following the end of a day of work outside the home.

housework

Unpaid work carried on in the home, usually by women; domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, and shopping. Also called *domestic labor*.

FIGURE 9.4
The Second Shift



Source: Pew Research Center 2013a

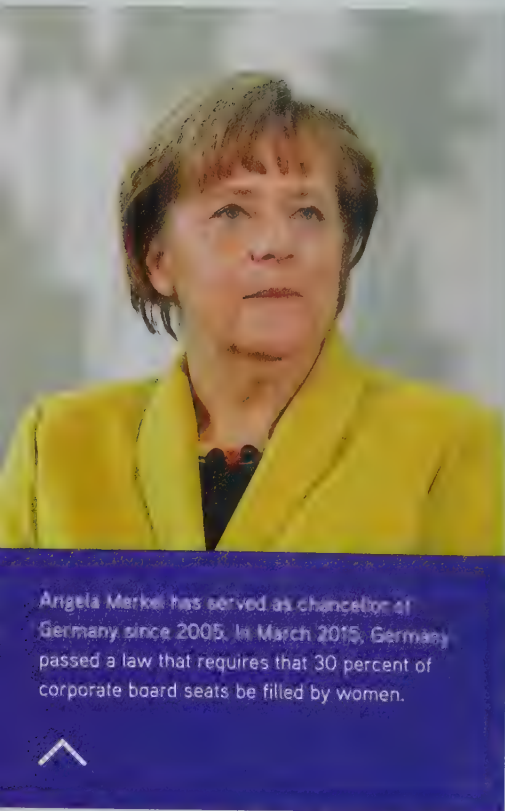
support. Because women typically earn less than men, they are more likely to remain economically dependent on their husbands and thus perform the bulk of the housework. Until the earnings gap is narrowed, women in heterosexual unions will likely remain in their dependent position. Recent evidence suggests same-sex couples maintain a much more egalitarian division of labor in the home, regarding both housework and child care, perhaps reflecting the fact that partners in same-sex relations tend to have less of a pronounced earnings gap than do partners in heterosexual partnerships (Goldberg, Smith, and Parry-Jenkins 2012). For example, one recent study of 103 same-sex and 122 straight couples found that same-sex couples tend to share more duties and assign chores based on each partner's personal preference, whereas straight couples tend to revert to traditional gender roles, with women, lower earners, and those with fewer work hours bearing the brunt of stereotypical female chores (Matos 2015). In Chapters 11 and 14, we will discuss more fully the way that relationship dynamics vary based on the sexual orientations of the partners.

In the coming decades, experts anticipate that we may see greater gender equity when it comes to household and child-care work. A recent study of young adults between the ages of eighteen and thirty-two in the United States found that the majority of respondents—regardless of gender or education level—aspired to a romantic relationship in which they would share earning and household/caregiving responsibilities equally with their partners (Pedulla and Thébaud 2015).

Gender Inequality in Politics

Women are playing an increasingly important role in U.S. politics, although they are still far from achieving full equality. Before 1993, there were only 2 women in the U.S. Senate (2 of 100 Senate members), and 29 in the U.S. House of Representatives (out of 435). Less than a decade later—in 2001—there were 13 women in the Senate and 59 in the House. As of January 2016, 104 women hold seats in the U.S. Congress, comprising 19.4 percent of the 535 members; 20 women (20 percent) serve in the Senate, and 84 women (19.3 percent) serve in the House. Four women delegates also represent American Samoa, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the Virgin Islands in the House of Representatives (Center for American Women in Politics 2016). Only six women are state governors (Center for American Women and Politics 2016). The U.S. Supreme Court had its first woman justice appointed in 1981, and its second twelve years later. Three women currently occupy seats on the Supreme Court—Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Elena Kagan, and Sonia Sotomayor—marking an all-time high.

Women politicians are overwhelmingly affiliated with the Democratic Party. In the U.S. Congress, 80 percent of women are Democrats, and 60 percent of women in state legislatures are Democrats (Center for American Women and Politics 2016). However, the Republican Party prominently features women leaders, including South Carolina governor Nikki Haley and Alaska senator Lisa Murkowski.



Angela Merkel has served as chancellor of Germany since 2005. In March 2015, Germany passed a law that requires that 30 percent of corporate board seats be filled by women.

Typically, the more local the political office, the more likely it is to be occupied by a woman. Men outnumber women in politics at all levels, but the gender gap is smaller among mayors and elected members of city and county governing boards. In most states, women are more likely to serve as representatives at the local level than the state level and even less likely to serve as senators or members of the House of Representatives. The farther from home the political office, the more likely it is to be regarded as “man’s work,” providing a living wage, full-time employment, and a lifetime career. The costs of running for local office are typically far lower than a campaign for a higher office, which can require a war chest beyond the reach of many women (Conway 2004).

GENDER AND POLITICS: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Women play an increasing role in politics throughout the world. Yet of the 192 countries that belong to the United Nations, only nineteen were headed by women in September 2016 (UN Women 2016). Since World War II, thirty-eight countries have been headed by women. As of mid-2016, women made up only 23 percent of the combined membership of the national legislatures throughout the world (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2016). In Rwanda, women comprise 58 percent of the national legislature—the highest proportion of any country. Regionally, female representation in national legislatures is highest in the Nordic countries (41 percent); in the Arab states, the figure is less than 20 percent (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2016).

The United Nations ranks countries according to a measure of gender inequality, called the Gender Inequality Index (GII), which covers three dimensions of inequality: reproductive health, including maternal mortality rate; empowerment, including shares of seats in parliament held by women; and participation in the labor force. By this measure, in 2015 the United States ranked fifty-fifth out of 155 countries—behind the Scandinavian and other northern and western European countries as well as Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Japan, and China.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- Describe at least three examples of how gender inequalities emerge in the workplace. How would a sociologist explain these inequities?
- What are the signs of **declining economic** inequality between men and women from a global perspective?
- How do inequalities in the home, especially with regard to housework and child care, reflect larger gender inequities in **society**?
- What are some important differences between men’s and women’s political participation in the United States?
- What are some signs of progress in terms of **women’s political** equality from a global perspective?

Why Are Women the Target of Violence?

Violence directed against women is found in many societies, including the United States. Most violence against women is perpetuated by an intimate partner. One out of three women worldwide has been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some other way—most often by someone she knows, including her husband or a male relative (World Health Organization 2016).

Although sexual assault at the hand of strangers triggers moral outrage, statistics show that more women are injured as a result of beatings by spouses than by any other cause, a problem that is ignored by most governments (Human Rights Watch 1995). Globally, it is estimated that as many as 38 percent of murdered women are killed by their



Learn about the specific ways that women are the target of physical and sexual violence in the United States and globally.



infanticide

The intentional killing of a newborn. Female babies are more likely than male babies to be murdered in cultures that devalue women.

rape

The forcing of nonconsensual vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse.

intimate partners. The prevalence of intimate partner homicide is highest in Southeast Asia at 55 percent (WHO 2013). In 2008 alone, there were an estimated 8,172 deaths of women in India at the hands of husbands and relatives because the women brought an insufficient dowry (Youthkiawaz.com 2010). According to the UN Population Fund, an estimated 5,000 women are the victims of “honor killings” per year worldwide (United Nations 2011).

Ritualized violence is also a common experience among women throughout the world. For example, an estimated 125 million girls and women alive today have been subjected to genital cutting, a practice done to control women’s sexuality (United Nations 2015). In addition, millions of women and girls throughout the world are “missing,” partly as the result of female **infanticide** in cultures where boys are more highly valued than girls (World Health Organization 2000).

The trafficking of women for forced prostitution, which has been called “the largest slave trade in history,” appears to be a growing problem (United Nations Population Fund 2005a). The United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (2008) estimates that at any given time 2.5 million people worldwide are subject to forced labor as a result of human trafficking. Forty-three percent are exploited for forced sexual exploitation, and 98 percent of those persons are women or girls.

In the United States, many scholars argue that the increased depiction of violence in movies, on television, and elsewhere in American popular culture contributes to a climate in which women are often victimized. The most common manifestation of violence against women is sexual assault, although stalking and sexual harassment are increasingly seen as forms of psychological (if not physical) violence as well.

Rape

Rape can be sociologically defined as the forcing of nonconsensual vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse. As one researcher observed, between consensual sex and rape lies “a continuum of pressure, threat, coercion, and force” (Kelly 1987). Common to all forms of rape is the lack of consent: At least in principle, “no” means “no” when it comes to sexual relations in most courts of law in the United States. The vast majority of rapes are committed by men against women, although men rape other men in prisons and other all-male institutional environments. However, recent studies have documented cases where women take sexual advantage of young men who may be insecure, intoxicated, or of a lower status position (Anderson and Struckman-Johnson 1998).

Rape is an act of violence, rather than a purely sexual act. It is often carefully planned rather than performed on the spur of the moment to satisfy some uncontrollable sexual desire. Many rapes involve beatings, knifings, and even murder. In some instances, sexual assault is facilitated by alcohol, or women having their drinks spiked with the sedative Rohypnol (i.e., “roofies”) or drugs referred to as “date-rape drugs” (Michigan Department of Community Health 2010). Even when rape leaves no physical wounds, it is a highly traumatic violation of the victim’s person that leaves long-lasting psychological scars.

It is difficult to know with accuracy how many rapes actually occur, since most rapes go unreported. According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, nearly one in five women (19 percent) in the United States has been raped (Breiding

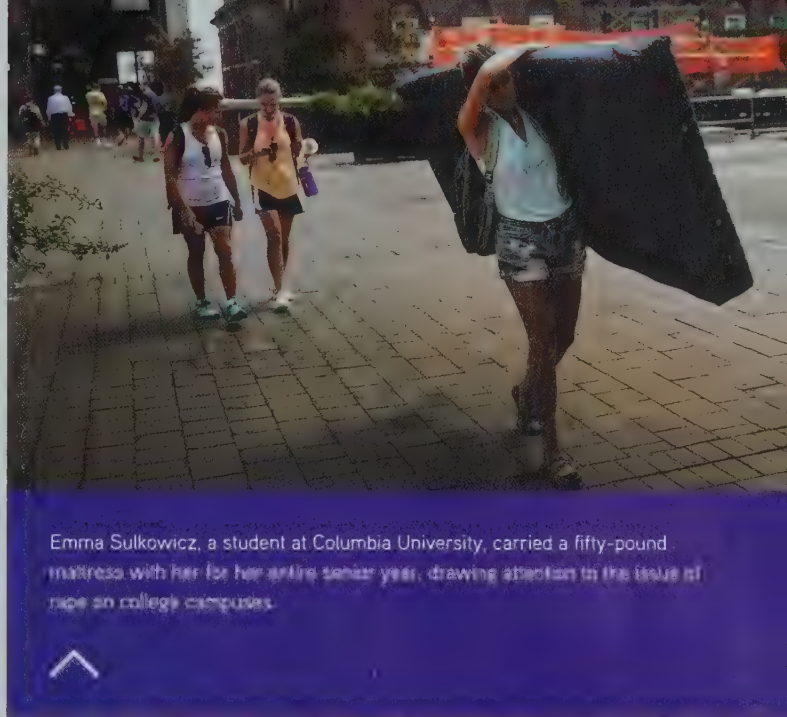
et al. 2014). The U.S. Department of Justice estimated that over the past eighteen years, nearly 100,000 women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four were victims of sexual assault every year (U.S. Department of Justice 2014).

Most rapes are committed by relatives (fathers or stepfathers, brothers, uncles), partners, or acquaintances. Among college students, most rapes are likely to be committed by boyfriends, former boyfriends, or classmates. The National Institute of Justice Campus Sexual Assault study presents a chilling picture of violence against women on campuses across the country (Krebs et al. 2007). The study, conducted during the winter of 2006, asked college women about their experience with rape, coerced sex, and unwanted sexual contact. Over three percent (3.4 percent) of female students surveyed reported as having been raped since entering college. A previous study conducted by the same organization found that for both completed and attempted rapes, 9 out of 10 offenders were known to the victim. The incidence of other forms of victimization reported in the study was substantially higher than that of rape. Overall, 29 percent of female students reported having experienced attempted or completed sexual assault (Krebs et al. 2007). Moreover, nearly 16 percent of the women reported being victimized by attempted or completed sexual assault before they entered college (19 percent since the beginning of their college career).

In recent years, college students who have been victims of sexual assault have taken dramatic steps to call attention to this crisis and to achieve justice. One such activist is Emma Sulkowicz. While a student at Columbia University in New York, Sulkowicz alleged she was raped by a male friend. When the university didn't expel him, Sulkowicz staged a public protest/art performance where she carried a mattress with her everywhere she went on campus during her senior year, including her graduation ceremony (Bazelon 2015). This protest, along with other protests on campuses across the United States, played a critical role in inspiring the Obama administration to start the "It's On Us" initiative in 2014, a campaign to raise awareness of and combat sexual assault on campus (Kingkade 2014).

Sexual Violence Against Women: Evidence of "Rape Culture"?

Some radical feminist scholars claim that men are socialized to regard women as sex objects, to feel a sense of sexual entitlement, and to instill fear in women by dominating them (Brownmiller 1986). This socialization context, described as a "**rape culture**" by



Emma Sulkowicz, a student at Columbia University, carried a fifty-pound mattress with her for her entire senior year, drawing attention to the issue of rape on college campuses.

rape culture

Social context in which attitudes and norms perpetuate the treatment of women as sexual objects and instill in men a sense of sexual entitlement.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1. Name three different kinds of violence against women.
- 2. How common is violence against women in the United States?
- 3. Why are women more likely than men to be the targets of sexual violence?

Think about various explanations for gender inequality. Learn some feminist theories about how to achieve gender equality.

Susan Brownmiller (1986), may make men insensitive to the difference between consensual and nonconsensual sex and thus contribute to the high levels of victimization women reported to the NCWSV study (Dworkin 1981, 1987; Griffin 1979).

The fact that “acquaintance rapes” occur suggests that at least some men are likely to feel entitled to sexual access if they already know the woman. A survey of nearly 270,000 first-year college students reported that 55 percent of male students agreed with the statement “If two people really like each other, it’s all right for them to have sex even if they’ve known each other only for a very short time.” Only 31 percent of female students were in agreement, suggesting a rather large gender gap concerning notions of sexual entitlement (American Council on Education 2001). When a man goes out on a date with sexual conquest on his mind, he may force his attentions on an unwilling partner, overcoming her resistance through the use of alcohol, persistence, or both. While such an act may not be legally defined as rape, it would be experienced as such by many women.

How Does Social Theory Explain Gender Inequality?

Investigating and accounting for gender inequality has become a central concern of sociologists. Many theoretical perspectives have been advanced to explain men’s enduring dominance over women—in the realm of economics, politics, the family, and elsewhere. In this section, we will review the main theoretical approaches to explaining the nature of gender inequality at the level of society.

Functionalist Approaches

As we saw in Chapter 1, the functionalist approach sees society as a system of interlinked parts that, when in balance, operate smoothly to produce social solidarity. Thus, functionalist and functionalist-inspired perspectives on gender seek to show that gender differences contribute to social stability and integration. Though such views once commanded great support, they have been heavily criticized for neglecting social tensions at the expense of consensus and for promoting a conservative view of the social world.

Talcott Parsons, a leading functionalist thinker, concerned himself with the role of the family in industrial societies (Parsons and Bales 1955). He was particularly interested in the socialization of children and believed that stable, supportive families are the key to successful socialization. In Parsons’s view, the family operates most efficiently with a clear-cut sexual division of labor in which females act in expressive roles, providing care and security to children and offering them emotional support, and men perform instrumental roles—namely, being the breadwinner in the family. This complementary division of labor, springing from a biological distinction between the sexes, would ensure the solidarity of the family according to Parsons.

Feminists have sharply criticized claims of a biological basis to the sexual division of labor, arguing that there is nothing natural or inevitable about the allocation of tasks in

“His” and “Hers” Apps?

Our face-to-face interactions at school, at work, in the family, and in our everyday lives are powerfully shaped by gender. But how does gender shape our digital lives? Do men and women use the same apps? Researchers are only beginning to document the digital lives of men and women, yet most of the evidence shows that men and women aren't all that different from one another.

A recent study by Pew (Purcell 2011) asked American adults what kinds of apps they had downloaded. Overall, the most popular were apps that provided regular updates on news, weather, sports, or finances (74 percent), that helped people communicate with family and friends (67 percent), and that helped them learn about something they were interested in (64 percent). Not surprisingly, apps with more specific functions were less popular; just 48 percent of people had downloaded apps that helped them with work-related tasks, 46 percent used apps that helped them shop, 43 percent watched movies or TV on their smartphones, and just 29 percent used apps that helped them manage their health.

The study found gender differences on just two dimensions. Men are more likely than women to use apps that help them with work-related tasks (56 percent versus 39 percent) and that advise them in making a purchase (51 percent versus 42 percent). The results of the Pew study suggest that men and women are more similar than different when it comes to their digital lives. Research firm Flurry Analytics similarly found

that when it comes to the most popular apps, the breakdown of users is roughly fifty-fifty; women and men are equally likely to use Facebook and Foursquare or to share their thoughts on Twitter (Bonnington 2012, Huffington Post 2012).

If we delve more deeply, however, we see that the specific ways that people use social networking sites and play games online differ by gender in ways that are consistent with gender role socialization. As a 2012 *Time* magazine article proclaimed, “Men are from Google+, women are from Pinterest” (Wagstaff 2012). Men outnumber women on high-tech sites like Google+ and outnumber women four to one on “male-themed” video games that feature things like gangs, mobsters, and war. By contrast, puzzles and word games like Words with Friends or “family-themed” games are downloaded more frequently by women.

Men and women also differ with respect to interest-based social networking apps. Men slightly outpace women on music-streaming and sharing sites like Spotify and Cloud and far outnumber women on Reddit, a site where people can generate their own news stories. By contrast, women are much more likely to use apps associated with fashion and home design. For example, 44 percent of online women use Pinterest compared with 16 percent of men (Duggan 2015).

What are your favorite apps? Do you think that your identity as male or female has shaped your preferences for particular apps? Why or why not?

Men are more likely than women to visit high-tech websites and play violent video games, whereas women favor puzzles, word games, and fashion-oriented sites and apps.



society. Women are not prevented from pursuing occupations on the basis of any biological features; rather, humans are socialized into roles that are culturally expected of them. Parsons's notions of the "expressive" female have been attacked by feminists and other sociologists who see his views as condoning the subordination of women in the home. There is no basis to the belief that the "expressive" female is necessary for the smooth operation of the family—rather, it is a role that is promoted largely for the convenience of men.

In addition, cross-cultural and historical studies show that even though most societies distinguish between men's and women's roles, the degree to which they differentiate tasks as exclusively male or female and assign different tasks and responsibilities to women and men can vary greatly across time and place (Coltrane 1992). Thus, gender inequalities do not seem to be fixed or static.

Feminist Approaches

The feminist movement has given rise to a large body of theory that attempts to explain gender inequalities and set forth agendas for overcoming those inequalities. As we learned in Chapter 1, **feminist theories** related to gender inequality contrast markedly with one another. Feminist writers are all concerned with women's unequal position in society, but their explanations for it vary substantially. Competing schools of feminism have sought to explain gender inequalities through a variety of deeply embedded social processes such as sexism, patriarchy, capitalism, and racism. In the following sections, we look at the arguments behind three main feminist perspectives: liberal, radical, black, and transnational feminism.

LIBERAL FEMINISM

Liberal feminism looks for explanations of gender inequalities in social and cultural attitudes. Unlike radical feminists, liberal feminists do not see women's subordination as part of a larger system or structure. Instead, they draw attention to many separate factors that contribute to inequalities between men and women. For example, liberal feminists are concerned with sexism and discrimination against women in the workplace, educational institutions, and the media. They tend to focus their energies on establishing and protecting equal opportunities for women through legislation and other democratic means. Legal advances such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Sex Discrimination Act of 1984 were actively supported by liberal feminists, who argued that enshrining equality in law is key to eliminating discrimination against women. Liberal feminists seek to work through the existing system to bring about reforms in a gradual way. In this respect, they are more moderate in their aims and methods than radical feminists, who call for an overthrow of the existing system.

While liberal feminists have contributed greatly to the advancement of women over the past century, critics charge that they are unsuccessful in dealing with the root cause of gender inequality and do not acknowledge the systemic nature of women's oppression in society. They say that by focusing on the independent deprivations that women suffer—sexism, discrimination, the "glass ceiling," unequal pay—liberal feminists draw only a partial picture of gender inequality. Radical feminists accuse liberal feminists of encouraging women to accept an unequal society and its competitive character.

RADICAL FEMINISM

At the heart of **radical feminism** is the belief that men are responsible for and benefit from the exploitation of women. The analysis of patriarchy—the systematic domination of

feminist theories

A sociological perspective that emphasizes the centrality of gender in analyzing the social world and particularly the experience of women. There are many strands of feminist theory, but they all seek to explain gender inequalities in society and to work to overcome them.

liberal feminism

Form of feminist theory that believes that gender inequality is produced by unequal access to civil rights and certain social resources, such as education and employment, based on sex. Liberal feminists tend to seek solutions through changes in legislation that ensure that the rights of individuals are protected.

radical feminism

Form of feminist theory that believes that gender inequality is the result of male domination in all aspects of social and economic life.



Surrounded by minority women at the Houston Civic Center, Coretta Scott King speaks about the resolution on minority women's rights that won the support of the National Women's Conference in 1977. The minority resolution, proposed by representatives of many races, declared that minority women suffered discrimination based on both race and sex.

females by males—is of central concern to this branch of feminism. Patriarchy is viewed as a universal phenomenon that has existed across time and cultures. Radical feminists often concentrate on the family as one of the primary sources of women's oppression in society. They argue that men exploit women by relying on the free domestic labor that women provide in the home, and that as a group, men also deny women access to positions of power and influence in society.

Radical feminists differ in their interpretations of the basis of patriarchy, but most agree that it involves the appropriation of women's bodies and sexuality in some form. Because women are biologically able to give birth to children, they become dependent on men for protection and livelihood. As such, the nuclear family is viewed as the site that generates "biological inequality" between women and men. Other radical feminists point to male violence against women as central to male supremacy. According to such a view, domestic violence, rape, and sexual harassment are all part of the systematic oppression of women, rather than isolated cases with their own psychological or criminal roots.

Radical feminists believe that gender equality can be attained only by overthrowing the patriarchal order because patriarchy is a systemic phenomenon. The use of patriarchy as a concept for explaining gender inequality has been popular with many feminist theorists. In asserting that "the personal is political," radical feminists have drawn widespread attention to the many linked dimensions of women's oppression.

Many objections can be raised, however, to radical feminist views. The main one, perhaps, is that the concept of patriarchy as it has been used is inadequate as a general explanation for women's oppression. Radical feminists have tended to claim that patriarchy has existed throughout history and across cultures—that it is a universal phenomenon. Critics argue, however, that such a conception of patriarchy does not leave room for historical or cultural variations. It also ignores the important influence that race, class, or ethnicity may have on the nature of women's subordination. In other words, it is not possible to see patriarchy as a universal phenomenon; doing so risks biological reductionism—attributing all the complexities of gender inequality to a simple distinction between men and women.

black feminism

A strand of feminist theory that highlights the multiple disadvantages of gender, class, and race that shape the experiences of nonwhite women. Black feminists reject the idea of a single, unified gender oppression that is experienced evenly by all women.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1. Contrast functionalist and feminist approaches to understanding gender inequality.
- 2. What are the key ideas of liberal feminism? What are the critiques of this perspective?
- 3. What are the key ideas of radical feminism? What are the critiques of this perspective?
- 4. What are the key ideas of black feminism? What are the critiques of this perspective?

BLACK FEMINISM AND TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM

Do the versions of feminism outlined above apply equally to the experiences of both white and nonwhite women? Many black feminists and feminists from the Global South claim they do not. They argue that ethnic and cross-national differences among women are not considered by the main feminist schools of thought, which are oriented to the dilemmas of white, predominantly middle-class women living in industrialized societies. It is not valid, they claim, to generalize theories about women's subordination as a whole from the experience of a specific group of women. These views exemplify the themes of intersectionality: women's and men's experiences are inextricably linked to their race, ethnicity, region, and socioeconomic location.

This dissatisfaction has led to the emergence of a **black feminism** focused on the particular problems facing black women. The writings of African American feminists emphasize the influence of the powerful legacy of slavery, segregation, and the civil rights movement on gender inequalities in the black community. They point out that early black **suffragettes** supported the campaign for women's rights but realized that the question of race could not be ignored. Black feminists contend, therefore, that any theory of gender equality that does not take racism into account cannot be expected to explain black women's oppression adequately. Some also argue that black women are multiply disadvantaged on the basis of their color, their sex, and their class position. When these three factors interact, they reinforce and intensify one another (Brewer 1993).

Transnational feminism, by contrast, focuses primarily on intersections among nationhood, race, gender, sexuality, and economic exploitation against the contemporary backdrop of global capitalism. This perspective recognizes that global processes, including colonialism, racism, and imperialism, shape gender relations and hierarchies in powerful ways (Mohanty 2003). Pioneers of transnational feminism recognize that the key themes of liberal feminism, such as concerns about equal pay for equal work or the division of household labor, are not relevant for many women in the Global South. Scholars working in this tradition often have a strong human rights orientation and see research as integral to social change. For instance, by understanding the processes through which female agricultural workers in Brazil are subordinated, transnational feminists can work to increase these women's bargaining power (Thayer 2010).

What Are the Global Consequences of Gender Inequality?

According to a Chinese saying, "Women hold up half the sky." In fact, as we have seen in this chapter, women typically hold up far more than half: Women have become a central part of the world's paid workforce, while at the same time maintaining their traditional responsibilities for home and family. Although global gender inequalities may seem very

far removed from your life, they have a direct effect on the daily lives of all the citizens of the globe.

China was the site of the 1995 United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women, where some 35,000 people, representing 180 governments and 7,000 women's organizations, discussed the problems of women worldwide. The conference, held in the capital city of Beijing, grappled with a central problem women face the world over: What happens when a country's traditional cultural beliefs conflict with modern notions of women's rights? Globalization has not only brought factories and television to nearly every place on the planet but has also exposed people throughout the world to ideas about equality and democracy. The modern women's movement has become a global champion of universal rights for women.

The conference's final action platform was clear: When cultural traditions conflict with women's rights, women's rights should take precedence. The platform called for women's right to control their own reproduction and sexuality, as well as to inherit wealth and property—two rights that women are denied in many countries. It concluded that no society can truly hope to better the lives of its citizens until it fosters gender equality.

How Gender Inequality Affects Our Lives

As we have seen throughout this chapter, women tend to fare worse than men with respect to education, earnings, power, risk of sexual violence, discrimination, and even political representation. Although the severity of the gender gap varies widely across nations, and even across subgroups within a single nation, the evidence and theories we have reviewed clearly reveal that gender inequalities are widespread. However, the processes through which inequalities are perpetuated may be subtle—so subtle, in fact, that we may not easily detect them in our everyday lives.

Women like financial advisers Judy Calibuso, Julie Moss, and Dianne Goedtel might not have noticed the first time they were shut out of the teams that worked on the most lucrative accounts. Similarly, Merrill Lynch trainees Sara Hunter Hudson, Julia Kuo, and Catherine Wharton might have laughed off the first time their male boss encouraged them to behave in a more “perky” and “bubbly” manner in order to get ahead in the male-dominated industry of finance (Sherwell 2013). But when they realized they were being sidelined by their male colleagues, it became clear that they were being discriminated against on the grounds of gender.

The Merrill Lynch lawsuits raise awareness about the subtle ways gender affects us. Can you think of ways that social institutions and forces, such as the media or even peer culture, allow gender biases to “infect, perhaps subconsciously” the ways you evaluate the competence, abilities, and skills of the men and women you meet? If you were going to hire a math tutor, for example, and all you knew about the two candidates was their gender, would you prefer to hire a male or a female tutor? Why? By recognizing the biases we hold and the way these biases may affect our behaviors and by seeking to understand the sources of these biases, we are using our sociological imaginations to fight gender inequalities.

suffragettes

Members of early women's movements who pressed for equal voting rights for women and men.

transnational feminism

A branch of feminist theory that highlights the way that global processes—including colonialism, racism, and imperialism—shape gender relations and hierarchies.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 The message emerging from the World Conference on Women was that when cultural traditions conflict with women's rights, women's rights should take precedence. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?
- 2 How did gender inequality in the workplace affect the women plaintiffs in the Merrill Lynch lawsuits?

The Big Picture

Gender Inequality

Thinking Sociologically

1. What does cross-cultural evidence from tribal societies suggest about the differences in gender roles?
Explain
2. Why are minority women likely to think very differently about gender inequality from how white women think about it? Explain.
3. Do you think Judy Calibuso had a compelling case in the Merrill Lynch lawsuit? Why or why not? What kind of evidence would be needed to make a reasonable judgment in that case?

Learning Objectives

Are Gender Differences Due to Nature, Nurture, or Both?

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Evaluate the extent to which differences between women and men are the result of biological factors or social and cultural influences.

How Do Gender Inequalities Affect Social Institutions?

p. 258

Recognize that gender differences are a part of our social structure and create inequalities between women and men. Learn the forms these inequalities take in social institutions such as the workplace, the family, the educational system, and the political system in the United States and globally.

Why Are Women the Target of Violence?

p. 271

Learn about the specific ways that women are the target of physical and sexual violence in the United States and globally.

How Does Social Theory Explain Gender Inequality?

p. 274

Think about various explanations for gender inequality. Learn some feminist theories about how to achieve gender equality.

What Are the Global Consequences of Gender Inequality?

p. 278

Learn how globalization has transformed ideas about women's rights

Terms to Know

Intersectionality

sex • gender • biological essentialism • gender socialization • social construction of gender • transgender • intersex

patriarchy • gender inequality • gender typing • sex segregation • glass ceiling • sexual harassment • second shift • housework

stereotype • rape • rape culture

feminist theories • liberal feminism • radical feminism • black feminism • suffragettes • transnational feminism

Concept Checks

1. What is the difference between sex and gender?
2. How do both biology and gender socialization contribute to differences between men and women?
3. What is "doing gender"? Give an example of a way that you have "done gender" in your daily life.
4. How can studies of gender in other cultures contribute to the argument that gender is socially constructed?
5. What is intersex? How does it challenge the male-female sex dichotomy?

1. Describe at least three examples of how gender inequalities emerge in the workplace. How would a sociologist explain these inequities?
2. What are the signs of declining economic inequality between men and women from a global perspective?
3. How do inequalities in the home, especially with regard to housework and child care, reflect larger gender inequities in society?
4. What are some important differences between men's and women's political participation in the United States?
5. What are some signs of progress in terms of women's political equality from a global perspective?

1. Name three different kinds of violence against women.
2. How common is violence against women in the United States?
3. Why are women more likely than men to be the targets of sexual violence?

1. Contrast functionalist and feminist approaches to understanding gender inequality.
2. What are the key ideas of liberal feminism? What are the critiques of this perspective?
3. What are the key ideas of radical feminism? What are the critiques of this perspective?
4. What are the key ideas of black feminism? What are the critiques of this perspective?

1. The message emerging from the World Conference on Women was that when cultural traditions conflict with women's rights, women's rights should take precedence. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?
2. How did gender inequality in the workplace affect the women plaintiffs in the Merrill Lynch lawsuits?

10

Ethnicity and Race

Racial & Ethnic Populations

p. 291

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The multiracial family of Bill de Blasio, his wife, Chirlane McCray, and his children, Chiara and Dante, became a topic of interest during his campaign for mayor of New York City and was highlighted even further by the public backlash to a Cheerios commercial featuring the daughter of parents of different races. What do the advertisement, viewer response, and de Blasio's election say about race relations in America today?

THE BIG QUESTIONS

What are race and ethnicity?

Learn the cultural bases of race and ethnicity and how racial and ethnic differences create sharp divisions in society. Learn the leading psychological theories and sociological interpretations of prejudice and discrimination.

How do ethnic groups coexist and compete?

Recognize the importance of the historical roots, particularly in the expansion of Western colonialism, of ethnic conflict. Understand the different models for a multiethnic society.

Why do ethnic groups migrate?

Understand global migration patterns and their impact.

How do ethnic minorities experience life in the United States?

Familiarize yourself with the history and social dimensions of ethnic relations in America.

How does racial and ethnic inequality affect your life?

Learn the forms of inequality experienced by different racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Understand how the history of prejudice and discrimination against ethnic minorities has created conditions of hardship for many, while others have succeeded despite societal barriers.

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When Cheerios unveiled a new television commercial in 2013, ad execs never could have predicted the firestorm that would follow. In the commercial, an adorable young girl, about five years old, asks her mother if Cheerios “are good for your heart.” Her mother reads the cereal box and notes that Cheerios’ whole-grain oats are “heart healthy.” The young girl runs over to her father, who is asleep on the sofa, and sprinkles Cheerios on his heart.

At first blush, the ad shows a little girl who wants her father to stay healthy by eating a low-fat cereal. But some people saw an entirely different scenario. The little girl, with her caramel complexion and bouncy ringlets, was clearly the daughter of a white mother and a black father (Elliott 2013). This simple fact triggered an onslaught of racist comments—so much so that YouTube promptly shut down the “comments” section on the video’s web page (Goyette 2013). Angry bloggers noted that the ad was “disgusting” and made them “want to

Yet while the number of Americans of multiracial identity is at an all-time high and rising, these individuals continue to negotiate their identities with observers who cling to the view that “race” is a monolithic construct. For example, Michelle López-Mullins, former president of the University of Maryland’s Multiracial and Biracial Student Association (MBSA), gets tired of hearing the question “What are you?” (Saulny 2011). Her father is Chinese and Peruvian, and her mother is white and Native American. López-Mullins recalls that when she was growing up, “I was always having to explain where my parents are from. . . . Saying ‘I’m an American’ wasn’t

CHAPTER 10 Ethnicity and Race

enough.” Although she found this frustrating when she was a child, she now embraces her mixed heritage. “Now when people ask what I am, I say ‘How much time do you have?’ Race will not automatically tell you my story.”

While in past generations mixed-race persons often tolerated negative labels like “mulatto” (that is, a person with one black parent and one white parent), López-Mullins and her friends from MBSA are proud of their backgrounds and embrace all aspects of their ethnicity. As Laura Wood, former vice president of MBSA, says, “It’s really important to acknowledge who you are. . . . If someone tries to call me black, I say, ‘Yes—and white.’”

The experiences of Laura Wood and Michelle López-Mullins—along with a mounting body of sociological research—illustrate just how difficult it is to pinpoint the conditions of racial and ethnic group membership for some individuals of multiracial heritage. In recent decades, a number of sociologists have turned their attention to this topic of multiracial identity and racial classification schemes. They have argued that a “static measure of race” is not useful for individuals of multiracial heritage who may assert different identities in varied social contexts (Cheng and Lee 2009; Harris 2003; Harris and Sim 2000). As López-Mullins told a *New York Times* reporter, “I’m pretty much checking everything. . . . Hispanic, white, Asian American, Native American” when filling out surveys like the U.S. Census. As we will see throughout this chapter, race and ethnicity are complex identities with powerful implications for our everyday lives.

What Are Race and Ethnicity?

In your daily life, you have no doubt used the terms *race* and *ethnicity* many times, but do you know what they mean? Defining and differentiating these terms is very difficult.

Ethnicity refers to cultural practices and outlooks of a given community that have emerged historically and tend to set people apart. Members of ethnic groups see themselves as culturally distinct from other groups in a society and are seen by those other groups to be so in return. Different characteristics may serve to distinguish ethnic groups from one another, but the most common are some combination of language, history, religious faith, and ancestry—real or imagined—and styles of dress or adornment. Ethnic differences are learned. Some examples of ethnic groups in the United States are Arab Americans, Jewish Americans, Italian Americans, Cuban Americans, South Asian Americans, and Chinese Americans.

The difference between race and ethnicity is not as clear-cut as some people think. For example, Ian Winchester, Michelle López-Mullins’s classmate at Maryland, identifies as both black and white. His black ancestors are from Ghana, while his white relatives are of Scottish and Norwegian descent. Winchester recalls that when he was growing up, his Scottish grandfather dressed him in kilts, while his black relatives would dress him in a dashiki. So does this mean that race is really a kind of ethnicity? In a way it is, but race has certain defining characteristics that make it different from ethnicity. At certain historical moments, ethnic differences take on two additional characteristics. First, some ethnic differences become the basis of stigmas that cannot



Learn the cultural bases of race and ethnicity and how racial and ethnic differences create sharp divisions in society. Learn the leading psychological theories and sociological interpretations of prejudice and discrimination.

ethnicity

Cultural values and norms that distinguish the members of a given group from others. An ethnic group is one whose members share a distinct awareness of a common cultural identity, separating them from other groups.

(Left) Taiwanese Americans perform during the National Asian Heritage Festival in Washington, D.C. (Right) A member of the Tlaxcala tribe of central Mexico dances at Carnival in New York. Styles of dress are one way that ethnic groups distinguish themselves from one another.



race

Differences in human physical characteristics used to categorize large numbers of individuals.

theory of racial formation

The process by which social, economic, and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories.

racialization

The process by which understandings of race are used to classify individuals or groups of people.

scientific racism

The use of scientific research or data to justify or reify beliefs about the superiority or inferiority of particular racial groups. Much of the “data” used to justify such claims are flawed or biased.

be removed by conversion or assimilation. Second, these stigmas become the basis of extreme hierarchy.

Race, then, can be understood as a classification system that assigns individuals and groups to categories that are ranked or hierarchical. There really are no clear-cut “races,” only a range of physical variations among human beings. Differences in physical type among groups of human beings arise from population inbreeding, which varies according to the degree of contact among different social or cultural groups. Human population groups are a continuum. The genetic diversity within populations that share visible physical traits is as great as the diversity between them. Racial distinctions are more than ways of describing human differences—they are also important factors in the reproduction of patterns of power and inequality within society. In other words, race is much more than physical appearance.

Sociological perspectives on race generally cohere with a **theory of racial formation** (Omi and Winant 1994); this is “the process by which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings.” Recall our discussion of the social construction of gender in Chapter 9; just as what we think of as “male” and “female” encompasses far more than biology, the social construction of race suggests that our racial identities encompass far more than just our genetic makeup or physical features.

The process by which understandings of race are used to classify individuals or groups of people is called **racialization**. Historically, racialization meant that certain groups of people came to be labeled as constituting distinct biological groups on the basis of naturally occurring physical features. From the fifteenth century onward, as Europeans came into increased contact with people from different regions of the world, they attempted to “racialize” non-European populations in opposition to the European “white race.” In some instances this racialization took on codified institutional forms, as in the case of slavery in the former British, French, and Spanish colonies in the Americas; slavery in the United States; and the establishment of apartheid in South Africa after 1948.

More commonly, however, everyday political, educational, legal, and other institutions become racialized through legislation. In the United States, de facto racial segregation and racial hierarchies persisted even after state-sanctioned segregation was dismantled during the civil rights era of the late 1960s. Within a racialized system, an individual's social life

and his or her life chances—including education, employment, incarceration, housing, health care, and legal representation—are all shaped and constrained by the racial assignments and racial hierarchies in that system.

Sociologists who study ethnicity in the United States have come to understand that the importance of ethnicity has declined in recent years, at least among whites. As a result, “ethnicity” now includes a choice of whether to be ethnic at all. As we saw earlier in this chapter, more and more whites must also make a choice about which ethnicity to be, given high rates of ethnic intermarriage (Passel, Wang, and Taylor 2010; Pew Research Center 2012b; Qian and Lichter 2011). By contrast, race is not always such a choice for nonwhites. One sociologist who has studied the ways in which many Americans think about their ancestry and backgrounds has written that “the social and political consequences of being Asian or Hispanic or black are not symbolic for the most part, or voluntary. They are real and often hurtful” (Waters 1990). Minority group status can have many negative consequences for the members of the group. One such negative consequence is segregation (discussed later in this chapter).

Despite the increase in the number of people in the United States self-identifying as multiracial, many North Americans continue to believe, mistakenly, that race is a natural category and that human beings can be neatly separated into biologically distinct “races.” This is a legacy of European colonialism and **scientific racism**, or the misuse of science to support racist assumptions. During the sixteenth century, Europeans began to classify animals, people, and the material culture that they collected as they explored the world. In 1735, Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus published what is recognized as the first version of a modern classification scheme of human populations. He grouped human beings into four basic categories: *Europaeus*, *Americanus*, *Asiaticus*, and *Africanus*. Linnaeus assumed that each subgroup had qualities of behavior or temperament that were innate and could not be altered. He acquired much of his data from the writings, descriptions, commentaries, and beliefs of plantation owners, missionaries, slave traders, explorers, and travelers. Thus, his scientific data were shaped by the prejudices of Europeans and the power that they had over the people whom they conquered (Smedley 1993).

Racism

Some see **racism** as a system of domination that operates in social processes and social institutions; others see it as operating in the individual consciousness. Racism can refer to explicit beliefs in racial supremacy such as the systems established in Nazi Germany, in the United States before the civil rights movement, and in South Africa under apartheid.

Yet many have argued that racism is more than simply the ideas held by a small number of bigoted individuals. Rather, racism is embedded in the very structure and operation of society. The idea of **institutional racism** suggests that racism pervades all of society’s structures in a systematic manner. According to this view, institutions such as the police, the health care industry, and the educational system all promote policies that favor certain groups while discriminating against others.

The concept of institutional racism was developed in the United States in the late 1960s by black power activists Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, who believed that white supremacy structured all social relations and that racism was the foundation of the very fabric of U.S. society, rather than merely representing the opinions of a small minority. The term was taken up by civil rights campaigners, and in subsequent years the



Four boys represent the “racial scale” in South Africa—black, Indian, “half-caste” (mixed ethnicity), and white.



racism

The attribution of characteristics of superiority or inferiority to a population sharing certain physically inherited characteristics.

institutional racism

Patterns of discrimination based on ethnicity that have become structured into social institutions.

The Black Lives Matter movement has ignited a nationwide conversation about institutional racism within U.S. police forces and the criminal justice system.



prejudice

The holding of preconceived ideas about an individual or group, ideas that are resistant to change even in the face of new information. Prejudice may be either positive or negative.

discrimination

Behavior that denies to the members of a particular group resources or rewards that can be obtained by others. Discrimination must be distinguished from prejudice: Individuals who are prejudiced against others may not engage in discriminatory practices; conversely, people may act in a discriminatory fashion toward a group even though they are not prejudiced against that group.

existence of institutional racism came to be widely accepted and openly acknowledged in many settings, including law enforcement and the media. A 1990s investigation into the practices of the Los Angeles Police Department, in light of the beating of Rodney King in 1991, found that institutional racism is pervasive within the police force and the criminal justice system. A recent string of high-profile deaths of black men at the hands of police officers in cities such as Ferguson, Missouri; Baltimore, Maryland; and Staten Island, New York, have brought renewed attention to institutional racism in police forces and in American society more generally.

Psychological Interpretations of Prejudice and Discrimination

Psychological theories can help us understand the nature of prejudiced and racist attitudes and why ethnic differences matter so much to people.

PREJUDICE, DISCRIMINATION, AND RACISM

Prejudice, discrimination, and racism are related but distinctive concepts. **Prejudice** refers to opinions or attitudes—positive or negative—held by members of one group toward another. A prejudiced person's preconceived views are often based on hearsay rather than on direct evidence and are resistant to change even in the face of new information. People may harbor favorable prejudices about groups with which they identify and negative prejudices against others. Someone who is prejudiced against a particular group will refuse to give it a fair hearing.

Discrimination refers to actual behavior toward another group. It can be seen in activities that distribute rewards and benefits unequally based on membership in the dominant ethnic groups. It involves excluding or restricting members of specific groups, often defined by "race" or ethnicity, from opportunities that are available to other groups. Discrimination does not necessarily derive directly from prejudice. For example, white home buyers might steer away from purchasing properties in predominantly black neighborhoods, not because

of attitudes of hostility they might feel toward African Americans but because of worries about declining property values. Prejudiced attitudes in this case influence discrimination, but in an indirect fashion.

STEREOTYPES AND SCAPEGOATS

Prejudice operates mainly through the use of **stereotyping**, which means thinking in terms of fixed and inflexible categories. Stereotyping is often closely linked to the psychological mechanism of **displacement**, in which feelings of hostility or anger are directed against objects that are not the real origin of those feelings. People vent their antagonism against **scapegoats**, others who are blamed for problems that are not their fault. Scapegoating is common when two deprived ethnic groups come into competition with each other for economic rewards. People who direct racial attacks against African Americans, for example, are often in a similar economic position to them. They blame blacks for grievances whose real causes lie elsewhere. Scapegoating is normally directed against groups that are distinctive and relatively powerless because they make an easy target.

MINORITY GROUPS

The term **minority group** as used in everyday life can be quite confusing. This is because the term refers to political power and is not simply a numerical distinction. There are many minorities in a statistical sense, such as people with red hair or people who weigh more than 250 pounds, but these are not minorities according to the sociological concept. In sociology, members of a minority group are disadvantaged as compared with members of the **dominant group** (a group possessing more wealth, power, and prestige) and have some sense of group solidarity, of belonging together. The experience of being subject to prejudice and discrimination usually heightens feelings of common loyalty and interests. For example, several major U.S. cities, including Miami, San Antonio, and El Paso, have majority-Latino populations, while Atlanta; Detroit; Baltimore; Gary, Indiana; and Washington, D.C., have predominantly black populations—yet both ethnic groups still lag behind whites in terms of outcomes like education and income (Fulwood 2010).

Members of minority groups, such as Spanish speakers in the United States, tend to see themselves as a people separated or distinct from the majority. Minority groups are sometimes, but not always, physically and socially isolated from the larger community. Although they tend to be concentrated in certain neighborhoods, cities, or regions of a country, their children may often intermarry with members of the dominant group. People who belong to minority groups (for example, Jews) sometimes actively promote endogamy (marriage within the group) in order to keep their cultural distinctiveness alive.

The idea of a minority group is more confusing today than ever before. Some groups that were once clearly identified as minorities, such as Asians and Jews, now have more resources, intermarry at greater rates, and experience less discrimination than they did when they were originally conceived of as minority groups. This highlights the fact that the concept of a minority group is really about disadvantage, rather than a numerical distinction. Perhaps in the future it would be more meaningful for sociologists to use the terms *dominant* and *disadvantaged* to avoid these misunderstandings; of course, these new terms would be fraught with their own problems.

stereotype

A fixed and inflexible category.

displacement

The transferring of ideas or emotions from their true source to another object.

scapegoats

Individuals or groups blamed for wrongs that were not of their doing.

minority group

A group of people who, because of their distinct physical or cultural characteristics, find themselves in situations of inequality within that society.

dominant group

The group that possesses more wealth, power, and prestige in a society.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 Explain the difference between ethnicity and race.
- 2 What does the term *racialization* refer to?
- 3 How does prejudice operate in society?
- 4 Why are Hispanics and African Americans considered minority groups in American society?



Recognize the importance of the historical roots, particularly in the expansion of Western colonialism, of ethnic conflict. Understand the different models for a multiethnic society.



A young girl joins members of the Ku Klux Klan at a demonstration against the Martin Luther King Day holiday in Pulaski, Tennessee.



How Do Ethnic Groups Coexist and Compete?

In an age of globalization and rapid social change, the rich benefits and complex challenges of ethnic diversity are confronting a growing number of states. International migration is accelerating with the further integration of the global economy; the movement and mixing of human populations seem sure to intensify in years to come. Meanwhile, ethnic tensions and conflicts continue to flare in societies around the world, threatening to lead to the disintegration of some multiethnic states and hinting at protracted violence in others. How can ethnic diversity be accommodated and the outbreak of ethnic conflict averted? Within multiethnic societies, what should be the relation between ethnic-minority groups and the majority population? There are four primary models of ethnic integration that have been adopted by multiethnic societies in relation to these challenges: assimilation, the “melting pot,” pluralism, and multiculturalism. These will be discussed shortly.

To fully analyze ethnic relations in current times, we must first take a historical and comparative perspective. It is impossible to understand ethnic divisions today without giving prime place to the impact of the expansion of Western colonialism on the rest of the world. Global migratory movements resulting from colonialism helped create ethnic divisions by placing different peoples in close proximity. We will now delve into this history in more detail.

Ethnic Antagonism: A Historical Perspective

From the fifteenth century onward, Europeans began to venture into previously uncharted seas and unexplored landmasses, pursuing not only the aims of exploration and trade but also conquering and subduing native peoples. They poured out by the millions from Europe to settle in these new areas. In the shape of the slave trade, they also occasioned a large-scale movement of people from Africa to the Americas.

These population flows formed the basis of the current ethnic composition of the United States, Canada, the countries of Central and South America, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. In all these societies, the indigenous populations were decimated by disease, war, and genocide and subjected to European rule. They are now impoverished ethnic minorities. Since the Europeans were from diverse national and ethnic origins, they transplanted various ethnic hierarchies and divisions to their new homelands. At the height of the colonial era, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Europeans also ruled over native populations in many other regions: South Asia, East Asia, the South Pacific, and the Middle East.

For most of the period of European expansion, ethnocentric attitudes were rife among the colonists, many of whom were convinced that, as Christians, they were on a civilizing mission to the rest of the world. Europeans of all political persuasions believed themselves to be superior to the peoples they colonized and conquered. The early period of colonization coincided with the rise of scientific racism, and ever since then, the legacy of European colonization has generated ethnic divisions that have occupied a central place in regional and

Racial & Ethnic Populations

The racial and ethnic categories that are relevant in a particular nation change over time and vary widely among countries.

Israel

Jewish*
75%

Non-Jewish
Mostly Arab
25%

*Of which Israel-born 74.4%, Europe/America/Oceania-born 17.4%, Africa-born 5.1%, Asia-born 3.1%

South Africa

Black African
80.2%

White
8.4%

Colored*
8.8%

Indian/Asian
2.5%

*"Colored" is a term used in South Africa for persons of mixed-race ancestry.

Brazil

White
47.7%

Mulatto
Mixed white and black
43.1%

Black
7.6%

Asian
1.1%

Indigenous
0.4%

Romania

Romanian
83.4%

Hungarian
6.1%

Roma
3.1%

Ukrainian
0.3%

German
0.2%

Other
0.7%

Unspecified
6.1%

United States

White
Non-Hispanic
61.6%

Hispanic or Latino
17.6%

Black or African American
13.3%

Asian
5.6%

American Indian
Includes Alaska native
1.2%

Native Hawaiian
Includes other Pacific Islander
0.2%

2+ Races
2.6%

Australia

English
25.9%

Australian
25.4%

Irish
7.5%

Scottish
6.4%

Italian
3.3%

German
3.2%

Chinese
3.1%

Indian
1.4%

Greek
1.4%

Dutch
1.2%

Other
includes Australian aboriginal
15.8%

Unspecified
5.4%

global conflicts. In particular, racist views distinguishing the descendants of Europeans from those of Africans became central to European racist attitudes.

THE RISE OF RACISM

Why has racism flourished? There are several reasons. The first reason for the rise of modern racism lies in the exploitative relations that Europeans established with the peoples they encountered and conquered. The slave trade could not have carried on had Europeans not constructed a belief system that allowed them to justify their actions by convincing themselves that Africans belonged to an inferior, even subhuman, race. Racism helped justify colonial rule over nonwhite peoples and denied them the rights of political participation that were being won by whites in their European homelands.

Second, an opposition between the colors white and black as cultural symbols was deeply rooted in European culture. White had long been associated with purity, black with evil (there is nothing natural about this symbolism; in some other cultures, it is reversed). The symbol of blackness held negative meanings before the West came into extensive contact with black peoples. These symbolic meanings influenced the Europeans' reactions to blacks when they were first encountered on African shores.

A third important factor leading to modern racism was simply the invention and diffusion of the concept of race itself. Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau (1816–1882), who is sometimes called the father of modern racism, proposed ideas that became influential in many circles. According to de Gobineau, three races exist: white, black, and yellow. The white race possesses superior intelligence, morality, and will power, and these inherited qualities underlie the spread of Western influence across the world. The blacks are the least capable, marked by an animal nature, a lack of morality, and emotional instability. The yellows were described as the “exact opposite” of blacks: restrained, discerning, and hard-working, although not particularly creative.

ETHNIC CONFLICT

The most extreme and devastating form of group relations in human history involves **genocide**, the systematic, planned destruction of a particular group on the grounds of group members' ethnicity, religion, culture, or political views. The most horrific recent instance of brutal destructiveness against such a group was the massacre of 6 million Jews in the German concentration camps during World War II. The Holocaust is not the only example of mass genocide in the twentieth century. Between 1915 and 1923 over a million Armenians were killed by the Ottoman Turkish government. In the late 1970s, 2 million Cambodians died in the Khmer Rouge's killing fields. During the 1990s, in the African country of Rwanda, hundreds of thousands of the minority Tutsis were massacred by the dominant Hutu group. And in the former Yugoslavia, Bosnian and Kosovar Muslims were summarily executed by the Serb majority.

Exploitation of minority groups has been an ugly part of many countries' histories. The separation of the minority from the majority has been institutionalized in the form of **segregation**, a practice whereby racial and ethnic groups are kept physically separate by law, thereby maintaining the superior position of the dominant group. For instance, in apartheid-era South Africa, laws forced blacks to live separately from whites and forbade sexual relations between races. In the United States, African Americans have also

genocide

The systematic, planned destruction of a racial, ethnic, religious, political, or cultural group.

segregation

The practice of keeping racial and ethnic groups physically separate.

assimilation

The acceptance of a minority group by a majority population in which the new group takes on the values and norms of the dominant culture.

melting pot

The idea that ethnic differences can be combined to create new patterns of behavior drawing on diverse cultural sources.

pluralism

A model for ethnic relations in which all ethnic groups in a society retain their independent and separate identities, yet share equally in the rights and powers of citizenship.

experienced legal forms of segregation. In 1967 the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Loving v. Virginia* that the prohibition of interracial marriage violated the right to privacy. At that time racial intermarriage was still a crime in most Southern states. Interracial marriage had been criminalized for much of the United States' history, in every state except Alaska and Hawaii. Economic and social segregation was enforced by laws, such as those requiring blacks and whites to use separate public bathrooms. Even today, de facto segregated residential areas still exist in many cities, leading some to claim that an American system of apartheid has developed (Massey and Denton 1993).

Models of Ethnic Integration

For many years, the two most common positive models of political ethnic harmony in the United States were those of assimilation and the melting pot. **Assimilation** meant that new immigrant groups would assume the attitudes and language of the dominant white community. The idea of the **melting pot** was different—it meant merging different cultures and outlooks by stirring them all together. A newer model of ethnic relations is **pluralism**, in which ethnic cultures maintain their unique practices and communities, yet also participate in the larger society's economic and political life. A recent outgrowth of pluralism is **multiculturalism**, in which ethnic groups exist separately and equally. It does seem at least possible to create a society in which ethnic groups are separate but equal, as is demonstrated by Switzerland, where French, German, and Italian groups coexist in the same society. But this situation is unusual, and it seems unlikely that the United States could come close to mirroring this achievement in the near future.

multiculturalism

The viewpoint according to which ethnic groups can exist separately and share equally in economic and political life.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- What are three reasons racism has flourished in the United States?
- Compare and contrast three forms of ethnic conflicts.
- What is the difference between assimilation and melting pot strategies of ethnic integration?

Why Do Ethnic Groups Migrate?

Today, floods of **refugees** and emigrants move restlessly across different regions of the globe, either trying to escape from conflicts or fleeing poverty in search of a better life. Often they reach a new country only to find they are resented by people who some generations ago were immigrants themselves. Sometimes there are reversals, as has happened in Southern California and other areas of the United States along the Mexican border. Much of what is now California was once part of Mexico. Today, some Mexican Americans might say, the new waves of Mexican immigrants are reclaiming what used to be their heritage.

Migratory Movements

Although migration is not a new phenomenon, it is one that seems to be accelerating as part of the process of global integration. Worldwide migration patterns can be seen as one reflection of the rapidly changing economic, political, and cultural ties among countries. It has been estimated that the world's migrant population in 1990 was more than 80 million



Understand global migration patterns and their impact.

refugees

People who have fled their homes due to a political, economic, or natural crisis.

people, 20 million of whom were refugees. By 2015, the number of migrants was estimated at 244 million (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2016). This number appears likely to continue increasing in the twenty-first century, prompting some scholars to label this the “age of migration” (Castles and Miller 2009).

immigration

The movement of people into one country from another for the purpose of settlement.

emigration

The movement of people out of one country in order to settle in another.

Immigration, the movement of people into a country to settle, and **emigration**, the process by which people leave a country to settle in another, combine to produce global migration patterns linking countries of origin and countries of destination. Migratory movements add to ethnic and cultural diversity in many societies and help shape demographic, economic, and social dynamics. The intensification of global migration since World War II, and particularly over the last three decades, has transformed immigration into an important political issue in many countries. Rising immigration rates in many Western societies have challenged commonly held notions of national identity and have forced a reexamination of concepts of citizenship.

In examining recent trends in global migration, Stephen Castles and Mark Miller (2009) have identified four tendencies that they claim characterize migration patterns today and that are expected to persist in the coming years:

- **Acceleration:** Migration across borders is occurring in greater numbers than ever before.

GLOBAL MAP 10.1

Global Migratory Movements since 1973



Note: Arrow dimensions do not indicate the size of movements.

Source: Stalker 2011

- **Diversification:** Most countries now receive immigrants of many different types, in contrast with earlier times when particular forms of immigration, such as labor immigration or refugees, were predominant.
- **Globalization:** Migration has become more global in nature, involving a greater number of countries as both senders and recipients (Global Map 10.1).
- **Feminization:** A growing number of migrants are women, making contemporary migration much less male dominated than in previous times. The increase in female migrants is closely related to changes in the global labor market, including the growing demand for domestic workers, the expansion of sex tourism and “trafficking” in women, and the “mail-order bride” phenomenon.

GLOBAL DIASPORAS

Another way to understand global migration patterns is through the study of diasporas. The term **diaspora** refers to the dispersal of an ethnic population from an original homeland into foreign areas, often in a forced manner or under traumatic circumstances. References are often made to the Jewish and African diasporas to describe the way in which these populations have become redistributed across the globe as a result of slavery and genocide. Although members of a diaspora are by definition scattered apart geographically, they are held together by factors such as shared history, a collective memory of the original homeland, or a common ethnic identity that is nurtured and preserved.

How Do Ethnic Minorities Experience Life in the United States?

We concentrate for the rest of the chapter on the origins and nature of ethnic diversity in the United States—and its consequences, which have often been highly contentious. More than most other societies in the world, the United States is peopled almost entirely by immigrants. Only a tiny minority, less than 1 percent, of the population today are Native Americans—those whom Christopher Columbus, erroneously supposing he had arrived in India, called Indians.

Before the American Revolution, British, French, and Dutch settlers established colonies in what is now the United States. Some descendants of the French colonists are still to be found in parts of Louisiana. Millions of slaves were brought over from Africa to North America. Huge waves of European, Asian, and Latin American immigrants have washed across the country at different periods since then. The United States is one of the most ethnically diverse countries on the face of the globe. In this section we will pay particular attention to the divisions that have separated whites and nonwhite minority groups such as African Americans and Hispanic Americans. The emphasis is on *struggle*. Members

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 According to Castles and Miller, what four words characterize current and future migration?
- 2 What is diaspora? Explain the role diasporas play in preserving ethnic culture in contemporary societies.



Familiarize yourself with the history and social dimensions of ethnic relations in America.

diaspora

The dispersal of an ethnic population from an original homeland into foreign areas, often in a forced manner or under traumatic circumstances.

of these groups have made repeated efforts to defend the integrity of their cultures and advance their social position in the face of persistent prejudice and discrimination from the wider social environment.

Early Colonization

The first European colonists in what was to become the United States were actually of a quite homogeneous background. At the time of the Declaration of Independence, the majority of the colonial population was of British descent, and almost everyone was Protestant. Settlers from outside the British Isles were at first admitted only with reluctance, but the desire for economic expansion meant having to attract immigrants from other areas. Most came from countries in northwest Europe, such as Holland, Germany, and Sweden; such migration into North America dates initially from around 1820. In the century following, about 33 million immigrants entered the United States. No migrant movement on such a scale had ever been documented, nor has such a migration occurred since.

The early waves of immigrants came mostly from the same countries of origin as the groups already established in the United States. They left Europe to escape economic hardship and religious and political oppression, and for the opportunity to acquire land as the drive westward gained momentum. As a result of successive potato famines that had produced widespread starvation, 1.5 million people migrated from Ireland. The Irish were accustomed to a life of hardship and despair. In contrast with other immigrants from rural backgrounds, most Irish settled in urban industrial areas, where they sought work.

A major new influx of immigrants arrived in the 1880s and 1890s, this time mainly from southern and eastern Europe—the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Russia, and Italy. Each successive group of immigrants was subject to considerable discrimination on the part of people previously established in the country. Negative views of the Irish, for example, emphasized their supposedly low level of intelligence and drunken behavior. But as they were concentrated within the cities, the Irish Americans were able to organize to protect their interests and gained a strong influence over political life. The Italians and Polish, when they reached America, were in turn discriminated against by the Irish.

Asian immigrants first arrived in the United States in large numbers in the late nineteenth century, encouraged by employers who needed cheap labor in the developing industries of the West. Some 200,000 Chinese immigrated to the United States during this period. Most were men, who came with the idea of saving money to send back to their families in China, anticipating that they would also later return there. Bitter conflicts broke out between white workers and the Chinese when employment opportunities diminished. The Chinese Exclusion Act, passed in 1882, cut down further immigration to a trickle until after World War II.

Japanese immigrants began to arrive not long after the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed. They were also subject to great hostility from whites. Opposition to Japanese immigration intensified in the early part of the twentieth century, leading to strict limits, or quotas, being placed on the numbers allowed to enter the United States.

Most migrant groups in the early twentieth century settled in urban areas and engaged in the developing industrial economy. They also tended to cluster in ethnic

What Are You, Anyway?

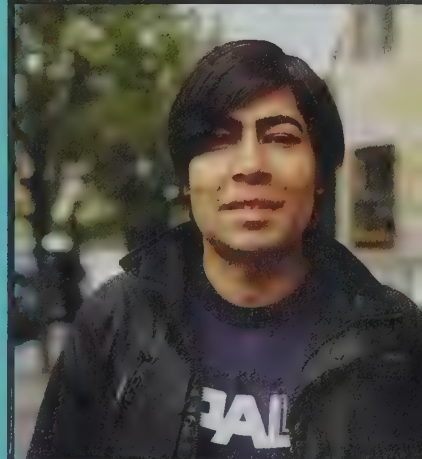
The number of Americans who identify as multiracial has increased dramatically over the past decade and will continue to increase in the future as more and more young adults marry and have children with partners of a race different from their own. As we learned earlier in this chapter, multiracial individuals and families challenge us to reexamine the ways we think about race. What does a “black” person look like? What does a “Latino” person look like? Is it even possible to determine one’s racial identity based on his or her physical features?

Developed by the Race Awareness Project, the Guess My Race app was designed to help users better understand and question the complexities of race. Guess My Race is a game where a user is presented with ten photos of peoples’ faces. For each photo, users are asked to click the one answer (of six possible options) that they believe best describes the person in the picture. The app then reveals the “correct” answer, which is accompanied by a quote from the person explaining why the person identifies as he or she does. For example, one user explained, “I consider myself African American, . . . but most people think I’m Asian because of the shape of my eyes.” Readers are then directed to more information about the history of race identity in the United States and throughout the world, as well as demographic information based on the 2010 Census. According to the app’s website, the program was developed to challenge users’ assumptions about individuals, and about race (Cambridge Diversity Consulting 2013). The app’s creators, cultural anthropologist Michael Baran and children’s game designer Michael Handelman, believe that the app will demonstrate how “something that is considered natural and biological is actually a result of complex historical and cultural constructions” (Cambridge Diversity Consulting 2013).

Baran also believes it is important for app users to interrogate the concept of whiteness. Although many people who are light-complexioned may believe they are simply “white” and that the issue of race does not apply to them, Guess My Race gives users six different options for people who appear to be white—often capturing different ways that whiteness is discussed, such as “elite” or “redneck” (Latour 2011).

Both consumer reviews of the game and assessments by race scholars have been largely positive, noting that the game forces users to think about the complexities of race, to challenge their own assumptions about what different races “look like,” and to learn about the history of racial stratification in the United States. One user criticized the app on the grounds that it conflated race with ethnicity; for example, one of the options included along with a photo of a white person was the adjective *Polish*, which is technically an ethnicity rather than a race (Matthews 2011). However, most believe that the app is a clever way to reveal how race is socially constructed. What do you think? What race or races do you identify with, and why? Do you think that app users looking at your photograph would correctly identify your self-perceived racial identity? Why or why not?

What Race Am I?



Pakistani

Asian

Chinese

Puerto Rican

South American

South Asian

*Apps like What Race Am I?
highlight the fluidity and
complexity of racial identity.*

neighborhoods of their own. Chinatowns, Little Italys, and other clearly defined areas became features of most large cities. The very size of the influx provoked backlash from the Anglo-Saxon segment of the population. One result was the new immigration quotas of the 1920s, which restricted immigration from southern and eastern Europe. Many immigrants found the conditions of life in their new land little better and sometimes worse than in their homelands.

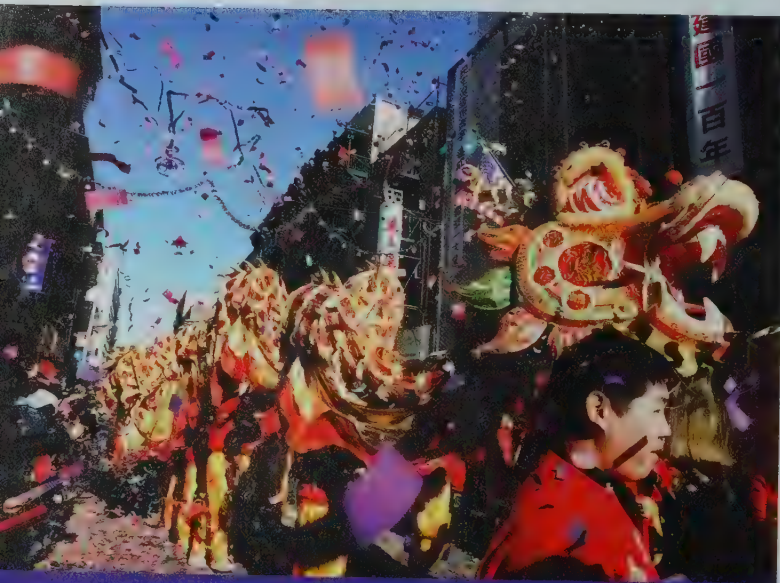
Immigrant America in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

If globalization is understood as the emergence of new patterns of interconnection among the world's peoples and cultures, then surely one of the most significant aspects of globalization is the changing racial and ethnic composition of Western societies. In the United States, shifting patterns of immigration since the end of World War II have altered the demographic structure of many regions, affecting social and cultural life in ways that can hardly be overstated. Although the United States has always been a nation of immigrants (with the obvious exception of Native Americans), most of those who arrived here prior to the early 1960s were European.

As we just discussed, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, vast numbers of people from Ireland, Italy, Germany, Russia, and other European countries flocked to America in search of a new life, giving a distinctive European bent to American culture. (Of course, until 1808, another significant group of immigrants—Africans—came not because America was a land of opportunity but because they had been enslaved.) In

part because of changes in immigration policy, however, more than three-quarters of the nearly 59 million immigrants admitted since 1965 have been Asian or Hispanic. This surge in immigration from Latin America and Asia has significantly altered the racial and ethnic composition of the United States (see Figure 10.1): The Hispanic share of the U.S. population jumped from 4 percent in 1965 to 18 percent in 2015, while the Asian share rose from less than 1 percent in 1965 to 6 percent in 2015 (Pew Research Center 2015j).

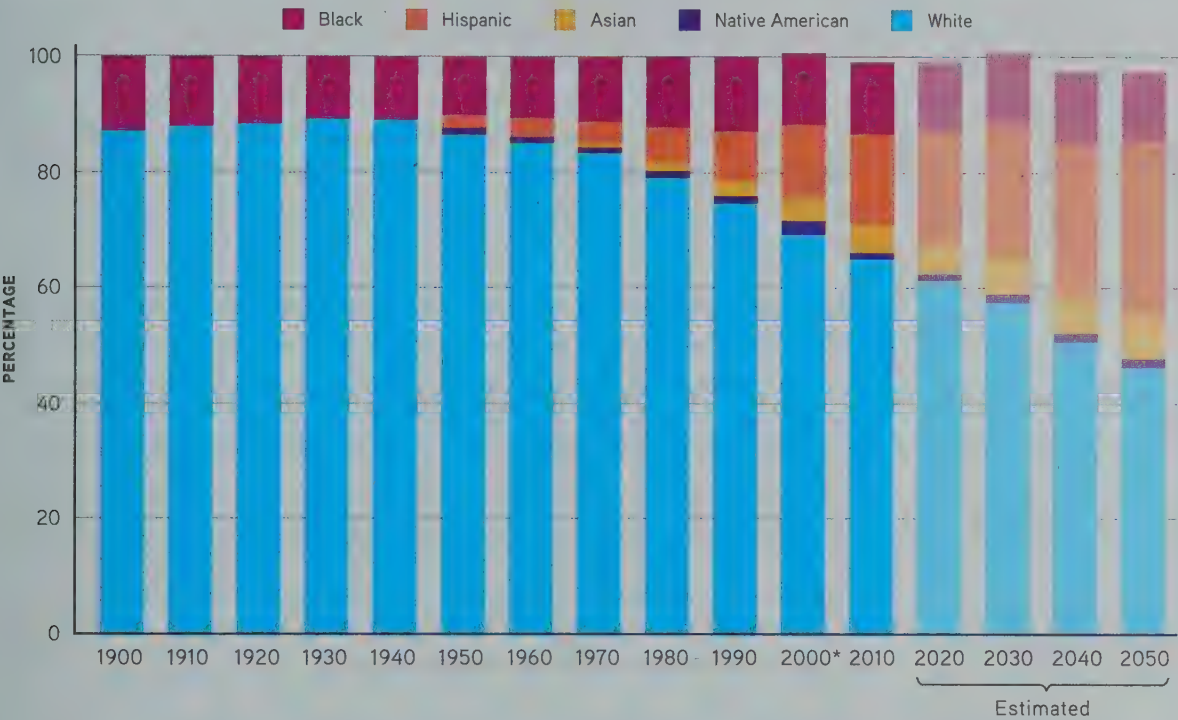
In 2015, 14 percent of the U.S. population was foreign born, up from 5 percent in 1965. Of the immigrant population, 47 percent are Hispanic and 26 percent are Asian (Pew Research Center 2015j). In stark contrast, in 1900 almost 85 percent of the foreign born were European (Duignan and Gann 1998). In 2014, there were an estimated 11.3 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States, about half (49 percent) of



Immigration has a profound effect on social life in the United States.

FIGURE 10.1

Racial and Ethnic Composition of the United States, 1900–2050



*Total percentage exceeds 100 percent because starting in 2000, respondents were allowed to identify themselves as belonging to more than one racial category.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2004, 2010f

whom were Mexican (Krogstad and Passel 2015). The number of immigrants from Mexico, however, has been declining in recent years, from a high of 6.4 million in 2009. While immigration from Latin America has slowed, immigration from Asia has increased; Asian immigrants are projected to become the largest immigrant group by 2055.

Most of these new immigrants have settled in six “port of entry” states: California, New York, Texas, Illinois, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. These states are attractive to new immigrants not necessarily because of the job opportunities they afford, but because they house large immigrant communities into which newcomers are welcomed (Frey and Liaw 1998). As the flow of Asian and Hispanic immigration continues, and as some non-immigrants respond by moving to regions of the country with smaller immigrant populations, the percentage of residents of port-of-entry states who are white will continue to drop. California was approximately 52 percent white in 1996; in 2015 this proportion had dropped to 38 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2016c).

The effect of these demographic changes on everyday social life has been profound. In some California communities, store and street signs are printed in Spanish or Chinese or Vietnamese as well as in English. Interracial marriages are on the rise, ethnic restaurants have proliferated, and the schools are filled with nonwhite children. In fact, nonwhites make up more than two-thirds of the undergraduate population at the University of California at Berkeley, where Asian students represent 40 percent of undergraduate students (UC Berkeley 2013).

Unfortunately, these changes have exacerbated social tensions. Many white Californians have retreated into prosperous suburban enclaves and have grown resentful of immigrants and nonwhites. In his 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump capitalized on the country's growing resentment of immigrants, calling for a ban on all Muslim immigration as well as mass deportations of illegal immigrants and an end to birthright citizenship. Because rates of voter turnout are higher for whites than for other racial groups in the state and because whites control a significant share of the state's wealth, whites have managed to pass a number of laws that seek to preserve opportunities for the "coming white minority." In 1995, the regents of the University of California, in a highly controversial move, decided to abolish affirmative action for the entire nine-campus state university system. Were these decisions based on solid economic and philosophical rationales—the perception that California taxpayers were shouldering too much of the economic burden of illegal immigration or the sense that affirmative action constitutes "reverse discrimination" against whites—or were they motivated principally by the fear of immigrants and other persons different from oneself? Whatever the answer, there can be little doubt that immigration—an important aspect of globalization—is changing the face of American society.

African Americans in the United States

By 1780, there were nearly 4 million slaves in the American South. Because there was little incentive for the slaves to work, white slave owners often resorted to physical punishment. Slaves had virtually no rights in law whatsoever. But they did not passively accept the conditions their masters imposed on them. The struggles of slaves against their oppressive conditions sometimes took the form of direct opposition or disobedience to orders, and occasionally outright rebellion (although collective slave revolts were more common in the Caribbean than in the United States). On a more subtle level, their response took the form of a cultural creativity—a mixing of aspects of African cultures, Christian ideals, and cultural threads woven from their new environments. Some of the art forms their descendants developed, as in music—for example, the invention of jazz—were genuinely new.

Feelings of hostility toward blacks on the part of the white population were in some respects more strongly developed in states where slavery had never been known than in the South itself. Moral rejection of slavery seems to have been confined to a few more educated groups. The main factors underlying the Civil War were political and economic; most northern leaders were more interested in sustaining the Union than in abolishing slavery, although this was the eventual outcome of the conflict. The formal abolition of slavery changed the real conditions of life for African Americans in the South relatively little. The "black codes"—laws limiting the rights of blacks—placed restrictions on the behavior of the former slaves and punished their transgressions in much the same way as

under slavery. Acts were also passed legalizing segregation of blacks from whites in public places. One kind of slavery was thus replaced by another, based on social, political, and economic discrimination.

INTERNAL MIGRATION FROM SOUTH TO NORTH

Industrial development in the North, combined with the mechanization of agriculture in the South, produced a progressive movement of African Americans northward from the turn of the century on. In 1900, more than 90 percent of African Americans lived in the South, mostly in rural areas. Today, less than half of the black population remains in the South; three-quarters now live in northern urban areas. African Americans used to be farm laborers and domestic servants, but over a period of little more than two generations, they have become mainly urban, industrial, and service-economy workers. But African Americans have not become assimilated into the wider society in the same way the successive groups of white immigrants were. They have for the most part been unable to break free from the conditions of neighborhood segregation and poverty that other immigrants faced on arrival. Together with those of Anglo-Saxon origin, African Americans have lived in the United States far longer than most other immigrant groups. What was a transitional experience for most of the later white immigrants has become a seemingly permanent experience for blacks.

In the majority of cities, in both the South and the North, blacks and whites live in separate neighborhoods and are educated in different schools. Demographers have developed a statistic called the *index of dissimilarity*, which tells us the proportion of people who would need to move out of their neighborhood into a new neighborhood in order for the distribution of people in neighborhoods to approximate the overall racial and ethnic breakdown of the United States. According to 2010 Census data, roughly 63 percent of either blacks or whites would have to move in order to desegregate housing fully in the average American city (Nasser 2010).

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Struggles by minority groups to achieve equal rights and opportunities have for a long while been a part of the United States. In contrast with other racial and ethnic minorities, blacks and Native Americans have largely been denied opportunities for self-advancement. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League, founded in 1909 and 1910, respectively, fought for black civil rights but only began to have some real effect after World War II, when the NAACP instituted a campaign against segregated public education. This struggle came to a head when the organization sued five school boards, challenging the concept of separate-but-equal schooling that then prevailed. In 1954, in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously decided that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”

This decision became the platform for the struggle for civil rights from the 1950s through the 1970s. The strength of the resistance from many whites persuaded black leaders that mass militancy was necessary to give civil rights any real substance. In 1955, a black woman, Rosa Parks, was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for declining to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. As a result, almost the entire African American population of the city, led by a Baptist minister, Martin Luther King Jr., boycotted the



Martin Luther King Jr. addresses a large crowd at a civil rights march on Washington in 1963. Born in 1929, King was a Baptist minister, civil rights leader, and winner of the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize. He was assassinated by James Earl Ray in 1968.



transportation system for 381 days. Eventually the city was forced to abolish segregation in public transportation.

Further boycotts and sit-ins followed, with the object of desegregating other public facilities. The marches and demonstrations began to achieve a mass following of blacks and white sympathizers. In 1963, a quarter of a million civil rights supporters staged a march on Washington and cheered as King announced, “We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like the waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” In 1964, the Civil Rights Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, comprehensively banning discrimination in public facilities, education, employment, and any agency receiving government funds. Further bills in following years were aimed at ensuring that African Americans became fully registered voters and outlawed discrimination in housing.

How successful has the civil rights movement been? On one hand, a substantial black middle class has emerged over the last three to four decades. And many African Americans—such as former president Barack Obama, Senator Cory Booker, writer Toni Morrison, literary scholar Henry Louis Gates, media mogul Oprah Winfrey, and rap star Jay Z—have achieved positions of power and influence in the wider society. On the other hand, a large number of African Americans, making up an underclass, live trapped in the ghettos. Scholars have debated whether the existence of the black underclass has resulted primarily from economic disadvantage or from dependency on the welfare system. We will examine the forms of inequality that African Americans and other minority groups continue to experience later in this chapter.

Hispanics and Latinos in the United States

The wars of conquest that created the boundaries of the contemporary United States were directed not only against the Native American population but also against Mexico. The territory that later became California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah—along with a quarter of a million Mexicans—was taken by the United States in 1848 as a result of the American war with Mexico. The terms *Mexican American* and *Chicano* include the descendants of these people, together with subsequent immigrants from Mexico. The term *Latino* refers to people descended from Latin America, while *Hispanic* tends to refer to anyone living in the United States descended from Spanish-speaking regions.

In 2014, the more than 55 million Hispanics in the United States represented 17 percent of the population. The four largest groups of Latinos in the United States today are Mexican Americans (around 35 million), Puerto Ricans (5.3 million), Salvadorans (3.8 million), and Cubans (3.7 million). An additional 10.4 million Spanish-speaking residents are from countries in Central and South America (Stepler and Brown 2016). After the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, the Hispanic population grew at an extraordinary rate—by 53 percent between 1980 and 1990, 58 percent between 1990 and 2000, and almost 10 percent from 2000 to 2010—mainly as a result of the large-scale flow of new immigrants across the Mexican border (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2011g). In recent years, however, immigration from Latin America has slowed (Lopez and Patten 2015).

MEXICAN AMERICANS

Mexican Americans reside mainly in California, Texas, and other southwestern states, although there are substantial groups in the Midwest and in northern cities as well. The

majority work at low-paying jobs. In the post–World War II period up to the early 1960s, Mexican workers were admitted without much restriction. This was followed by a phase of quotas on legal immigrants and deportations of undocumented immigrants. Today, undocumented immigrants continue to cross the border. Large numbers are intercepted and sent back each year, but most simply try again.

Because Mexico is a relatively poor neighbor of the wealthy United States, this flow of people northward is unlikely to cease. Undocumented immigrants can be employed more cheaply than other workers, and they perform jobs that most of the rest of the population would not accept. Legislation passed by Congress in 1986 enabled undocumented immigrants living in the United States for at least five years to claim legal residence. In the past decade, immigration from Mexico has dropped significantly, and more Mexicans have left the United States than entered the country since the Great Recession ended (Gonzalez-Barrera 2015).

Mexicans in the United States typically have levels of economic well-being and educational attainment far below that of native-born Americans. In 2014, 26 percent lived below the poverty line (Lopez 2015). More than two-thirds (68 percent) of Mexicans in the United States are proficient in English; however, only around 10 percent hold bachelor's degrees. Social scientists anticipate that Mexican immigrants and their children may become increasingly assimilated into life in the United States in coming decades, due in part to policies that help them obtain an affordable college education. As of 2014, sixteen states—California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Washington—have passed laws permitting certain undocumented students who have attended and graduated from their primary and secondary schools to pay in-state tuition at state colleges. In addition, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and Hawaii recently passed legislation that allows certain students, regardless of their immigration status, to pay in-state tuition at the state's public colleges and universities. Given that about half of undocumented immigrants in the United States hail from Mexico, these policies will have a major impact on the lives of young Mexican immigrants.

PUERTO RICANS AND CUBANS

Puerto Rico was acquired by the United States through war, and Puerto Ricans have been American citizens since 1917. The island is poor, and many of its inhabitants have migrated to the mainland United States to improve their conditions of life. Puerto Ricans originally settled in New York City, but since the 1960s, they have moved elsewhere. A reverse migration of Puerto Ricans back to the island began in the 1970s. In recent years, however, record numbers of Puerto Ricans have been migrating to the United States to escape the island's decade-long recession. Due to migration to the mainland as well as declining fertility rates among Puerto Rican women, there were more Puerto Ricans living in the United States than on the island in 2013 (Krogstad 2015).

One of the most important issues facing Puerto Rican activists is the political destiny of their homeland. Puerto Rico is at present a commonwealth of the United States. As such, Puerto Ricans residing on the island are U.S. citizens, yet they do not pay federal income tax, nor can they vote for president of the United States. For years, Puerto Ricans have been divided about whether the island should retain its present status, opt for independence, or attempt to become the fifty-first state of the Union.



Young Japanese Americans wait for baggage inspection upon arrival at a World War II assembly center in Turlock, California, in 1942. From here they were transported to one of several internment camps for Japanese Americans.

CONCEPT CHECKS

Briefly contrast the migration experiences of African Americans, Latinos, and Asians in the United States.

How did the civil rights movement help minority groups achieve equal rights and opportunities?

A third Latino group in the United States, Cubans, differs from the two others in key respects. Half a million Cubans fled communism following the rise of Fidel Castro in 1959, and the majority settled in Florida. Unlike other Latino immigrants, they were mainly educated people from white-collar and professional backgrounds. They have managed to thrive within the United States, many finding positions comparable with those they abandoned in Cuba. As a group, Cubans have the highest family income of all Latinos.

A further wave of Cuban immigrants, from less affluent origins, arrived in 1980. Lacking the qualifications held by the first wave, these people tend to live in circumstances closer to those of the rest of the Latino communities in the United States. Both sets of Cuban immigrants are mainly political refugees rather than economic migrants. The later immigrants to a large extent have become the “working class” for the earlier immigrants. They are paid low wages, but Cuban employers tend to take them on in preference to members of other ethnic groups.

The Asian Connection

About 6 percent of the population of the United States is of Asian origin (Pew Research Center 2013c). Chinese, Filipinos (immigrants from the Philippines), and Asian Indians form the largest groups, but there are also significant numbers of Vietnamese, Koreans, and Japanese living in America. And as a result of the war in Vietnam, some 350,000 refugees from that country entered the United States in the 1970s.

Most of the early Chinese immigrants settled in California, where they were employed mainly in heavy industries such as mining and railroad construction. The retreat of the Chinese into distinct Chinatowns was not primarily their choice, but was made necessary by the hostility they faced.

The early Japanese immigrants also settled in California and the other Pacific states. During World War II, following the attack on Pearl Harbor by Japan, all Japanese Americans in the United States were made to report to “relocation centers,” which were effectively concentration camps surrounded by barbed wire and gun turrets. Despite the fact that most of these people were American citizens, they were compelled to live in the hastily established camps for the duration of the war. Paradoxically, this situation eventually led to their greater integration within the wider society, since, following the war, Japanese Americans did not return to the separate neighborhoods in which they had previously lived. They have become extremely successful in reaching high levels of education and income, marginally outstripping whites. The rate of intermarriage of Japanese Americans with whites is now nearly 50 percent.

Following the passage of a new immigration act in 1965, large-scale immigration of Asians into the United States again took place. Foreign-born Chinese Americans today outnumber those brought up in the United States. The newly arrived Chinese have avoided the Chinatowns in which the long-established Chinese have tended to remain; mostly moving into other neighborhoods.

How Does Racial and Ethnic Inequality Affect Your Life?

Since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, has real progress been made in eliminating racial disparities in life chances? Is racial and ethnic inequality primarily the result of a person's racial or ethnic background, or does it reflect a person's class position? In other words, is a black American, for example, more likely to live in poverty because of racial discrimination or because of the lower-class status that many blacks hold? In this section, we will first examine the facts: how racial and ethnic inequality is reflected in terms of educational and occupational attainment, income, health, residential segregation, and political power. We will then look at the divergent social statuses found within the largest racial and ethnic groups. We will conclude by looking at how sociologists have sought to explain racial inequality.

Educational Attainment

Differences between blacks and whites in levels of educational attainment have decreased, but these seem more the result of long-established trends rather than the direct outcome of the struggles of the 1960s. After steadily improving their levels of educational attainment for the last fifty years, African Americans are for the first time close to whites in terms of finishing high school (see Figure 10.2). The proportion of black adults with at least a high school education has increased from about 20 percent in 1960 to 87 percent in 2015. By contrast, 93 percent of white adults and 89 percent of Asian adults, have completed high school (Ryan and Bauman 2016). But not all signs have been positive. While more blacks are attending college now than in the 1960s, a much higher proportion of whites than blacks graduate from college today. The situation is even more dire for black men; throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, two-thirds of all black college graduates were women (Snyder and Dillow 2010). In today's global economy and job market, which value college degrees, the result is a wide disparity in incomes between whites and blacks.

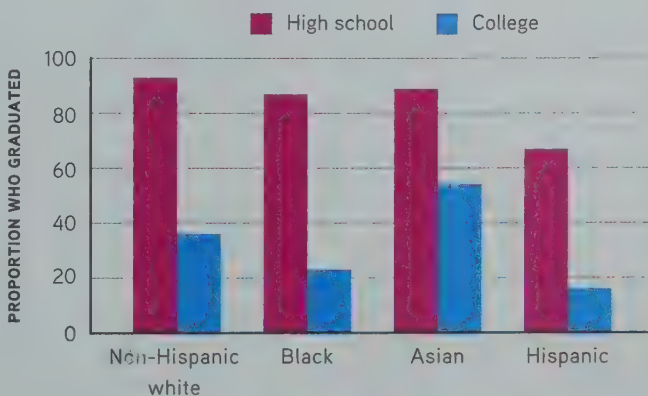
Another negative trend with potentially far-reaching consequences is the large gap in educational attainment between Latinos and both whites and blacks. Hispanics have by far the highest high school dropout rate of any group in the



Learn the forms of inequality experienced by different racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Understand how the history of prejudice and discrimination against ethnic minorities has created conditions of hardship for many, while others have succeeded despite societal barriers.

FIGURE 10.2

Educational Attainment by Race and Ethnicity in 2015



Source: Ryan and Bauman 2016

United States—10.6 percent compared to 5.2 percent for whites and 7.4 percent for blacks. While rates of college attendance and success in graduation have gradually improved for other groups, the rate for Hispanics has held relatively steady since the mid-1980s. In 2015, 67 percent of Hispanic adults had completed high school and less than 16 percent held bachelor's degrees (Ryan and Bauman 2016). It is possible that these poor results can be attributed to the large number of poorly educated immigrants from Latin America who have come to the United States in the last two decades. Many of these immigrants have poor English language skills and their children encounter difficulties in schools.

Employment and Income

As a result of the increase in educational attainment, blacks now hold a slightly higher proportion of managerial and professional jobs than in 1960, though still not in proportion to their overall numbers. In 2014, whites held 81 percent of all management and professional jobs, while blacks and Hispanics each held about 9 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015c).

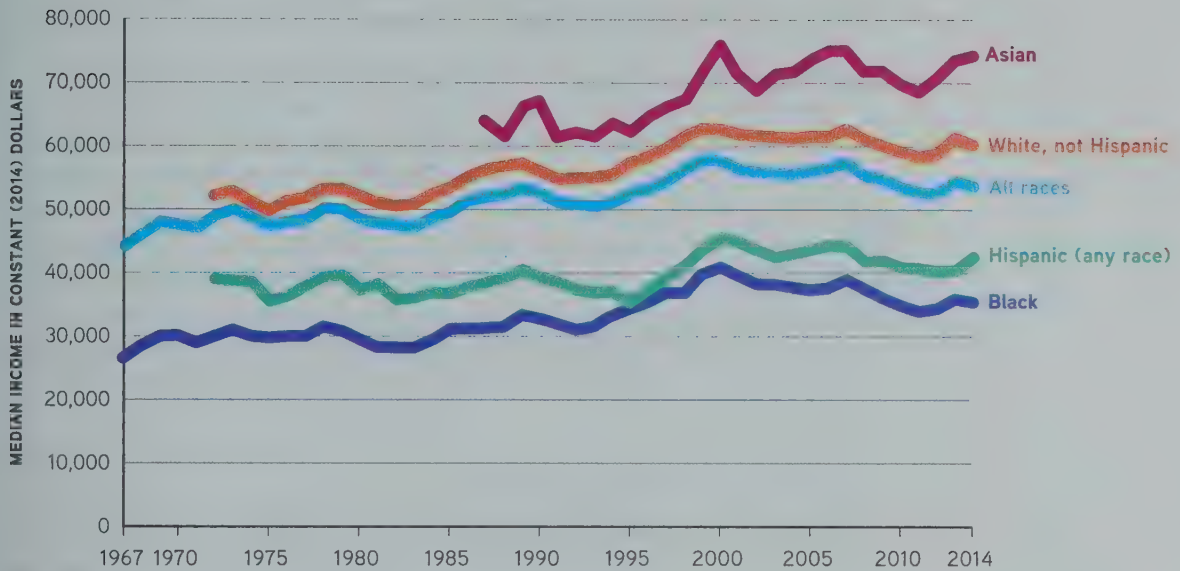
The unemployment rate of black and Hispanic men today outstrips that of whites by the same magnitude as in the early 1960s. The total unemployment rate for blacks and Hispanics is higher than that for whites even in recessionary periods (in 2014, 4.4 percent for whites versus 9.7 percent for blacks and 6.0 percent for Hispanics). However, this gap is considerably smaller among more educated persons ages twenty-five and over. The unemployment rates for adults with a bachelor's degree or more are 2.9, 5.2, and 3.9 percent for whites, blacks, and Hispanics, respectively (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015c).

There has also been some debate about whether employment opportunities for minorities have improved or worsened, especially in the wake of the recent recession. Statistics on unemployment don't adequately measure economic opportunity, since they count only those known to be looking for work. A higher proportion of blacks and Hispanics have simply opted out of the occupational system, neither working nor looking for work. They have become disillusioned by the frustration of searching for employment that is not there. Unemployment figures also do not reflect the increasing numbers of young men from minority groups who have been incarcerated (see also Chapter 6). Finally, although many new jobs were created during the economic boom of the 1990s, most of them either required a college degree or were in lower-paying service occupations. As we just saw, blacks and Hispanics are underrepresented among college graduates.

Nevertheless, the disparities between the annual earnings of blacks and whites are gradually diminishing. As measured in terms of median weekly income of full-time and salaried workers, black men now earn 74 percent of the level of pay of white men (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016h). In 1959, the proportion was 49 percent. Black women fare relatively better but still lag behind white women today, earning just 83 percent as much. The black-white gap in household income, however, remains relatively unchanged (Figure 10.3). In 2014, median household income for blacks was \$35,398, less than 60 percent of median household income for whites that year (\$60,256). Even more stark in the recent recessionary era is the black-white gap in wealth: The median household net worth among whites is 13 times that of blacks (\$141,900 versus \$6,314 in 2013) (Kochhar and Fry 2014).

FIGURE 10.3

Real Median Household Income by Race, 1967–2014



Source: DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015

Though the economic status of blacks appears to have improved, prospects for Hispanics have stagnated or worsened over the same time period (Kochhar, Fry, and Taylor 2011). Between 2000 and 2008, Hispanic household incomes (adjusted for inflation) decreased significantly. Still, Hispanic household poverty remained very similar to that of blacks. In 2014, the poverty rate for Hispanics was 24 percent versus 26 percent for blacks (DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015). The large influx of immigrants, who tend to be poor, has caused some of the decline in average income, but even among Hispanics born in the United States, income levels declined as well. As one Latino group leader commented, “Most Hispanic residents are caught in jobs like gardener, nanny, and restaurant worker that will never pay well and from which they will never advance” (quoted in Goldberg 1997). As a result, Hispanic households lag far behind white households; in 2013, the median white household wealth was ten times that of Hispanics (\$141,900 versus \$13,700) (Kochhar and Fry 2014).

Health

A team of social scientists surveyed the evidence linking health to racial and economic inequalities. After studying data for a number of countries, including the United States, they concluded that for people in the poorest 20 percent of the income distribution, death rates were 1.5–2.5 times those of the highest 20 percent of income earners (Najman 1993). In the United States, the rate of infant mortality for the poorest 20 percent was four times higher than for the wealthiest 20 percent (Najman 1993). When differences were measured between the wealthiest whites and the poorest African Americans, the contrast in infant

mortality rates was even higher—five times higher for blacks than for whites. Between 1999 and 2013, the infant mortality rate for blacks dropped from 14 to 11 deaths per 1,000 births, narrowing the black-white gap in infant mortality by almost 30 percent (CDC 2016d). And while there remains a black-white gap in life expectancy—the average age to which an individual at birth can expect to live—this gap has also decreased in recent years, from nearly 6 years in 1999 to 3.6 years in 2013 (Kochanek, Arias, and Anderson 2016).

How might the influence of poverty and ethnicity on health be countered? Extensive programs of health education and disease prevention are one possibility. Michelle Obama's Let's Move program, for example, recognizes that high rates of obesity among poor ethnic minorities are harmful and seeks to bring exercise and healthy food programs to poorer communities. However, some skeptics argue that such "healthy living" programs tend to work better among more prosperous, well-educated groups and in any case usually produce only small changes in behavior. Increased accessibility to health services would help, but probably to a limited degree. The only really effective policy option, it is argued, would be to attack poverty itself, so as to reduce the income gap between rich and poor (Najman 1993).

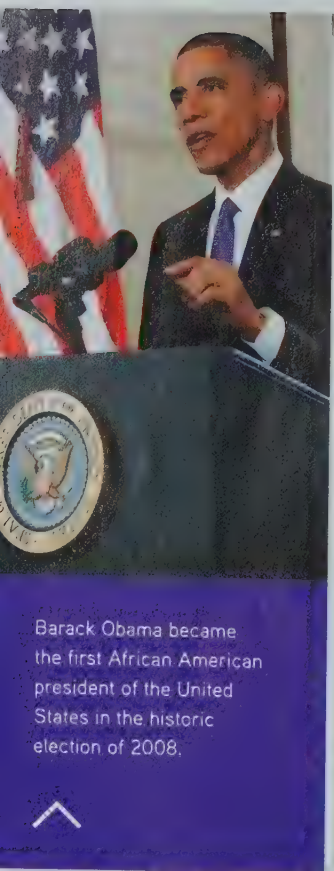
Residential Segregation

Neighborhood segregation seems to have declined little over the past quarter-century. Studies show that discriminatory practices toward black and white clients in the housing market continue (Pager and Shepard 2008). Black and white children now attend the same schools in most rural areas of the South and in many of the smaller- and medium-size cities throughout the country. Most black college students now also go to the same colleges and universities as whites, instead of the traditional all-black institutions (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education 2007). Yet in the larger cities a high level of educational segregation persists as a result of the continuing movement of whites to suburbs or rural environs.

In *American Apartheid* (1993), Douglas Massey and Nancy A. Denton argue that the history of racial segregation and its specific urban form, the black ghetto, are responsible for the perpetuation of black poverty and the continued polarization of black and white. The persistence of segregation, they say, is not a result of impersonal market forces. Even many middle-class blacks still find themselves segregated from white society. For them, as for poor blacks, this becomes a self-perpetuating cycle. Affluent blacks who can afford to live in comfortable, predominantly white neighborhoods may deliberately choose not to because of the struggle for acceptance they know they would face. The black ghetto, the authors conclude, was constructed through a series of well-defined institutional practices of racial discrimination—private behavior and public policies by which whites sought to contain growing urban black populations. Until policymakers, social scientists, and private citizens recognize the crucial role of such institutional discrimination in perpetuating urban poverty and racial injustice, the United States will remain a deeply divided and troubled society.

Political Power

Barack Obama made history when he was elected the first black president of the United States in 2008. His election is part of a larger trend of blacks making tremendous gains in



Barack Obama became the first African American president of the United States in the historic election of 2008.

holding elective offices; the number of black public officials increased from 40 in 1960 to 9,101 in 2000 and more than 10,500 in 2010 (Bositis 2001; Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies 2011). The numbers of black mayors and judges have increased appreciably. Blacks have been voted into every major political office, including in districts where white voters predominate.

In 1992, after congressional districts were reshaped to give minority candidates more opportunity, a record number of African Americans and Latinos were elected to Congress. Yet, these changes are still relatively small scale, and the share of representation that Latinos and African Americans have in Congress is not proportional to their overall numbers in American society. The 114th Congress included forty-seven black members, including two black senators—Tim Scott of South Carolina and Cory Booker of New Jersey—and thirty-eight Hispanic members (Congressional Research Service 2016). In all of its history, the United States has only elected nine black senators. Following the defeat of Senator Carol Moseley-Braun in 1998, the U.S. Senate had no black members until Barack Obama was elected to represent Illinois in 2004.

Gender and Race

The status of minority women in the United States is especially plagued by inequalities. Gender and race discrimination combined make it particularly difficult for these women to escape conditions of poverty. They share the legacy of past discrimination against members of minority groups and women in general. Until about twenty-five years ago, most minority women worked in low-paying occupations such as household work, farm work, or low-wage manufacturing jobs. Changes in the law and gains in education have allowed for more minority women to enter white-collar professions, and their economic and occupational status has improved.

Between 1979 and 2014, inflation-adjusted earnings of black women grew by 19 percent, but this increase lagged behind that of white women, who experienced a 31 percent increase in earnings during the same period (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015a). Although women have made strides in earnings in the past three decades, stark race and gender earnings disparities persist (see Figure 10.4). In 2015, among full-time workers, white women earned about 81 percent as much as white men, while Hispanic women and black women made about 90 percent as much as their male counterparts (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016h).

FIGURE 10.4

Median Weekly Earnings by Race and Sex in 2015*



*Includes full-time and salary workers.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016h

However unequal their status and pay, minority women play a critical role in their communities. They are often the major or sole wage earners in their families. As we saw earlier, black women are much more likely than their male counterparts to graduate from college. Yet their incomes are not always sufficient to maintain a family. Nearly half of all families with children headed by African American or Latino women live at poverty levels.

Divergent Fortunes

When we survey the development and current position of the major ethnic groups in America, one conclusion that emerges is that they have achieved varying levels of success. Whereas successive waves of European immigrants managed to overcome most of the prejudice and discrimination they originally faced and become assimilated into the wider society, other groups have not. These latter groups include two minorities who have lived in North America for centuries, Native Americans and African Americans, as well as Mexicans and Puerto Ricans.

THE ECONOMIC DIVIDE WITHIN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

The situation of blacks is the most conspicuous case of divergent fortunes. A division has opened up between the minority of blacks who have obtained white-collar, managerial, or professional jobs—who form a small black middle class—and the majority, whose living conditions have not improved. In 1960, most of the nonmanual-labor jobs open to blacks were those serving the black community—a small proportion of blacks could work as teachers, social workers, or, less often, lawyers or doctors. No more than about 13 percent of blacks held white-collar jobs, compared with 44 percent of whites. Although there has been significant progress in the fortunes of blacks over the past five decades, pronounced racial differences persist. For example, African Americans are still underrepresented in white-collar jobs. Although blacks account for roughly 13 percent of the U.S. population, they hold 9 percent of all managerial, professional, or related occupations and only 3 percent of chief executives are black; one-quarter of all blacks are employed in service occupations (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015c).

THE ASIAN SUCCESS STORY

Unlike African Americans, other minority groups have outlasted the open prejudice and discrimination they once faced. The changing fate of Asians in the United States is especially remarkable. Until about half a century ago, the level of prejudice and discrimination experienced by the Chinese and Japanese in North America was greater than for any other group of nonblack immigrants. Since that time, Asian Americans have achieved a steadily increasing prosperity and no longer face the same levels of antagonism from the white community. The median income of Asian Americans is now actually higher than that of whites.

The turnaround in the fortunes of Asian Americans is on the whole so impressive that some have referred to the Asian American “success story” as a prime example of what minorities can achieve in the United States. This myth of the “model minority,” however, masks big discrepancies between and within different Asian groups; there are still many Asian Americans, including those whose families have resided in the United States for generations, who live in poverty. For example, while 12 percent of all Asian Americans

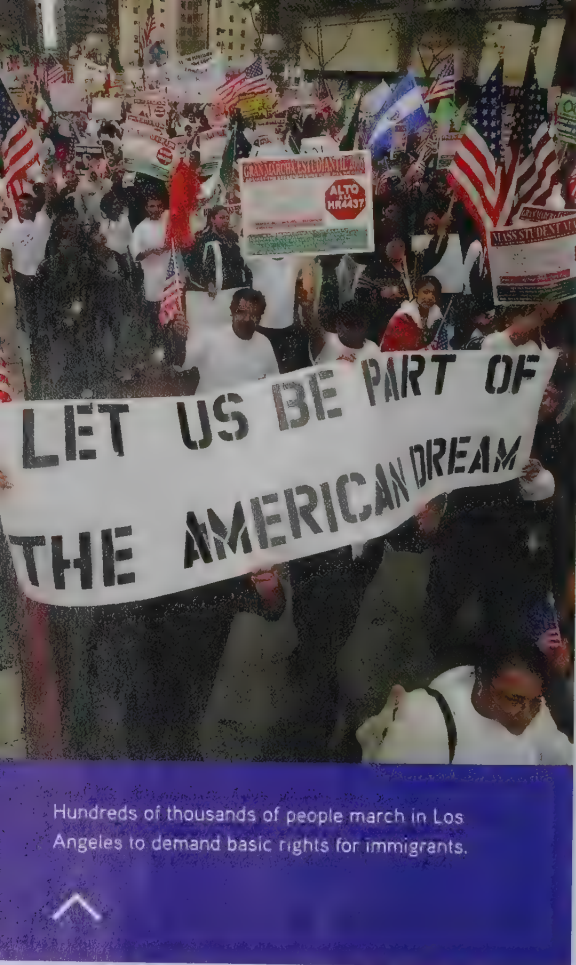
live in poverty, rates vary widely among subgroups, from 8 percent of Japanese Americans to 24 percent of Hmong Americans and 20 percent of Cambodian Americans. And while 70 percent of Indian Americans have a bachelor's degree or more, the same can be said of only 26 percent of Vietnamese Americans and 13 percent of Laotian Americans (Pew Research Center 2013c).

In addition to concealing important differences among Asian American subgroups, holding up Asian Americans as a model minority is problematic for other reasons as well. Other minorities, such as blacks, are often compared to Asians even though they have had very different histories in this country. The misguided assumption is made that if another minority group does not succeed in the United States, it must be because they have not worked as hard as Asians.

Sociologist Jennifer Lee (2012) has argued that some Asian Americans benefit from these positive stereotypes about their racial group. Lee contends that some Asian Americans experience what she calls “stereotype promise,” a phenomenon whereby being viewed through the lens of a positive stereotype—in this case, as smart, hardworking, and disciplined—can actually lead a person to act in a way that affirms the stereotype. In other words, when teachers assume that their Asian American students possess certain positive traits, these preconceived ideas can actually boost students’ performance, thereby reinforcing ideas about Asian Americans being intrinsically smarter and more hardworking. There are unintended consequences to these ideas about “Asian American exceptionalism”: In addition to putting enormous pressure on Asian American students to succeed in school, these ideas also disadvantage Asian American students during the college admissions process (Espenshade and Radford 2009).



While Asian Americans are often referred to as a “model minority” because of the success that Asians as a group have experienced in the United States, not all Asian Americans have had the same immigration experience. Asian Americans are not immune to struggles such as poverty.



Hundreds of thousands of people march in Los Angeles to demand basic rights for immigrants.

LATINOS: A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Miami and Los Angeles both have substantial Latino populations. In Los Angeles, the large majority of Latinos are well down the ladder of privilege and power. But even though both cities experience ethnic tensions, in Miami, Latinos have achieved a position of economic and political prominence not found elsewhere.

In Miami, those of Cuban origin have often moved into positions of considerable influence. Some Cubans have become very successful in business and have become wealthier than the “old” white families that once ran the city. They haven’t been assimilated into the white community but maintain their own customs, institutions, and language. Miami is now a place of “parallel structures” existing alongside one another, each including powerful and wealthy people, not integrated into one unified group. There is much tension, but some Anglo and Cuban politicians now speak of Miami as the capital of the Caribbean—a city not only part of the United States but also looking to the other societies, mostly developing countries, surrounding it.

Los Angeles has been referred to as “the capital of the Third World” because of its large Latino and Asian populations. The city already contained the largest group of Mexicans in the United States in the 1920s. Then, as now, it was Mexicans who performed most of the menial jobs. Then, as now, most Anglos “were at once aware that this was the case,” and “yet they would act as if these people, once they had finished working, went home not to the Old Plaza or, as now, to East L.A., but to another planet” (Rieff 1991).

Understanding Racial Inequality

What distinguishes less fortunate groups such as African Americans and Mexican Americans is not just that they are nonwhite, but that they were originally present in America as colonized peoples rather than willing immigrants. In a classic analysis, Robert Blauner (1972) suggested that a sharp distinction should be drawn between groups that journeyed voluntarily to settle in the new land and those that were incorporated into the society through force or violence. Native Americans are part of American society as a result of military conquest; African Americans were transported in the slave trade; Puerto Rico was colonized as a result of war; and Mexicans were originally incorporated as a result of the conquest of the Southwest by the United States in the nineteenth century. These groups have consistently been the target of racism, which both reflects and perpetuates their separation from other ethnic communities.

But, given that this has been the case for most of American history, what explains the growth of the black middle class? William Julius Wilson (1978; see also Wilson et al. 1987) has argued that race is of diminishing importance in explaining inequalities between whites and blacks. In his view, these inequalities are now based on class rather than skin color. The old racist barriers are crumbling. What remain are inequalities similar to those affecting all lower-class groups.

Are racial inequalities to be explained primarily in terms of class? It is true that racial divisions provide a means of social closure, whereby economic resources can be monopolized by privileged class groups. But the argument that racial inequality should be explained primarily in terms of class domination has never been a satisfactory one. Ethnic discrimination, particularly of a racial kind, is partly independent of class differences: The one cannot be separated from the other.

As we look to the future, scholars continue to debate whether racial inequalities and boundaries will persist or diminish. Most agree that the trend we saw earlier in this chapter, the steady increase in the multiracial population, will have powerful implications for race relations in America. However, whether the implications will be positive or negative remains to be seen. Despite the vitriol triggered by the images of a multiracial family in the Cheerios ad campaign discussed in the chapter opener, optimists believe that intermarriage is an essential step toward transcending race, erasing prejudice and bigotry. Pessimists, however, say that the growth in number and political power of multiracial Americans may lead to even more race stratification and hurt minority groups, especially African Americans (Saulny 2011).

These questions have no easy answers, as we can see from the words of Laura Wood and Michelle López-Mullins, the University of Maryland students whom we met earlier in this chapter. When asked about their views on race in the United States, Wood said, "I don't want a color-blind society at all. I just want both my races to be acknowledged." López-Mullins, however, said, "I want mine not to matter."

CONCEPT CHECKS

- ❑ What are some of the main reasons there is a large gap in educational attainment between Hispanics and blacks in the United States?
- ❑ How do Massey and Denton explain the persistence of residential segregation?
- ❑ Some sociologists argue that racial inequalities should be explained in terms of class rather than race. What are some of the problems associated with social-class-based explanations of racial inequalities?

The Big Picture

Ethnicity and Race

Thinking Sociologically

1. Review the discussion of the assimilation of different American minorities, and then compare the different experiences of Asians and Latinos. Identify the criteria for assimilation and discuss which group has assimilated most readily. Then explain the sociological reasons for the difference in assimilation.
2. Does affirmative action still have a future in the United States? On the one hand, increasing numbers of African Americans have joined the middle class by earning college degrees, gaining professional jobs, and buying new homes. Yet blacks are still far more likely than whites to live in poverty, attend poor schools, and lack economic opportunity. Given these differences, do we still need affirmative action?
3. How would you explain the recent rise in intermarriage in the U.S. What do you think the implications are of the growing mixed-race population? Will it lead to more or less racial stratification and prejudice?

Learning Objectives

What Are Race and Ethnicity?

p. 285

Learn the cultural bases of race and ethnicity and how racial and ethnic differences create sharp divisions in society. Learn the leading psychological theories and sociological interpretations of prejudice and discrimination.

How Do Ethnic Groups Coexist and Compete?

p. 290

Recognize the importance of the historical roots, particularly in the expansion of Western colonialism, of ethnic conflict. Understand the different models for a multiethnic society.

Why Do Ethnic Groups Migrate?

p. 293

Understand global migration patterns and their impact.

How Do Ethnic Minorities Experience Life in the United States?

p. 295

Familiarize yourself with the history and social dimensions of ethnic relations in America.

How Does Social and Ethnic Inequality Affect Your Life?

p. 305

write others have succeeded

Terms to Know

ethnicity • race • theory of racial formation •
racialization • scientific racism • racism •
institutional racism • prejudice • discrimination •
stereotyping • displacement • scapegoats •
minority group • dominant group

genocide • segregation • assimilation • melting
pot • pluralism • multiculturalism

refugees • immigration • emigration • diaspora

Concept Checks

1. Explain the difference between ethnicity and race.
2. What does the term racialization refer to?
3. How does prejudice operate in society?
4. Why are Hispanics and African Americans considered to be minority groups in American society?

1. What are three reasons racism has flourished in the United States?
2. Compare and contrast three forms of ethnic conflicts.
3. What is the difference between assimilation and melting pot strategies of ethnic integration?

1. According to Castles and Miller, which four trends characterize current and future migration?
2. What is diaspora? Explain the role diasporas play in preserving ethnic culture in contemporary societies.

1. Briefly contrast the migration experiences of African Americans, Latinos, and Asians in the United States.
2. How did the civil rights movement help minority groups achieve equal rights and opportunities?

1. What are some of the main reasons there is a large gap in educational attainment between Hispanics and blacks in the United States?
2. How do Massey and Denton explain the persistence of residential segregation?
3. Some sociologists argue that racial inequalities should be explained in terms of class rather than race. What are some of the problems associated with social class-based explanations of racial inequalities?

11

Families and Intimate Relationships



Maternity Leave

p. 345



Same-sex marriage supporters celebrate outside the Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C. On June 26, 2015, the Court ruled in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that same-sex couples have the right to marry nationwide.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

How do sociological theories characterize families?

Review the development of sociological thinking about families and family life.

How have families changed over time?

Understand how families have changed over the last 300 years. See that although a diversity of family forms exists in different societies today, widespread changes are occurring that relate to the spread of globalization.

What do marriage and family in the United States look like today?

Learn about patterns of marriage, child-bearing, divorce, remarriage, and child-free families. Analyze how different these patterns are today compared with other periods.

Why does family violence happen?

Learn about sexual abuse and violence within families.

How do new family forms affect your life?

Learn some alternatives to traditional marriage and family patterns that are becoming more widespread.





In the early 1960s, Edith Windsor was a young woman living and working in New York. With her master's degree in math from New York University, she was the rare woman working at IBM as a computer programmer. Edith was also a woman in love.

She had met Thea Spyer, a clinical psychologist, at Portofino, a restaurant in New York's Greenwich Village that was a popular hangout for gay women. After several years of dating, Thea proposed to Edith in 1967, offering her a brooch, rather than an engagement ring, to symbolize their commitment. Even though Thea and Edith couldn't legally marry at that time, they went on to live together as a loving couple for more than four decades.

In 2007, Thea's health declined, and doctors told the couple that Thea had only a short time to live. The couple wanted to formalize their union before Thea died, so they promptly flew to Toronto, Canada—one of the few places where a same-sex couple could marry at the time—and tied the knot. Just two years later, Thea died (Gabbatt 2013).



Edith Windsor, plaintiff in the *United States v. Windsor* case, celebrates the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the Defense of Marriage Act.

family

A group of individuals related to one another by blood ties, marriage, or adoption, who form an economic unit, the adult members of which are often responsible for the upbringing of children.

kinship

A relation that links individuals through blood ties, marriage, or adoption.

marriage

A socially and legally approved sexual relationship between two individuals.

Edith, then eighty years old and widowed with health problems of her own, soon learned that the IRS was ordering her to pay \$363,053 in federal estate taxes on her inheritance from Thea. Edith—knowing full well that heterosexual couples who were legally married did not have to pay a comparable tax—was angry at the injustice. Married couples, according to the federal tax code, are allowed to transfer money or property from spouse to spouse upon death without having to pay estate taxes—a rule referred to as “unlimited marital deduction” (Coplan 2011). Although the state of New York, where Edith lived, recognized her marriage to Thea, the federal government refused to treat them the same way as other married couples because of a federal law called the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which defines marriage as “a legal union between one man and one woman.” This injustice impelled Edith to challenge the constitutionality of DOMA and seek a refund of the estate tax she had been forced to pay. In 2010, Edith sued the national government.

In June 2013, after more than two years of appeals and legal red tape, the U.S. Supreme Court declared DOMA to be unconstitutional in the landmark *United States v. Windsor*. The ruling meant that married same-sex couples must receive the same federal benefits, rights, and privileges afforded to all other Americans. Gay marriage celebrated another big victory that day when the Supreme Court cleared the way for same-sex marriage in California.

Yet an even more important and path-breaking Supreme Court decision was handed down on June 26, 2015, when the Court ruled by a five to four vote that the U.S. Constitution guarantees individuals the right to same-sex marriage. Technically, the ruling says that states cannot prohibit the issuing of marriage licenses to same-sex couples or deny recognition of lawfully performed out-of-state marriage licenses to same-sex couples. This ruling invalidated same-sex marriage bans and effectively made same-sex marriage legal in every state in the nation (Liptak 2015). The decision was widely celebrated for providing gays and lesbians with the same right to marriage that their heterosexual peers had enjoyed for centuries.

Our choices about dating, marriage, cohabitation, divorce, and having children may seem highly personal and based on our desire for love and companionship, or adventure and freedom. Yet sociologists recognize that our choices are powerfully shaped by cultural beliefs and social structures such as laws. Whether, when, and under what conditions Edith and Thea could marry were dictated by law. Yet cultural factors, including social norms and subcultural or religious beliefs, also shape our decisions regarding our family lives, as well as our attitudes toward others' families. For example, while the majority of Americans today support gay marriage, these attitudes vary widely by generation, religious views, and even geographic region. More than 70 percent of those born after 1981 support the legalization of gay marriage, whereas just 38 percent of those born between 1928 and 1945 do so. While just 27 percent of evangelical Christians support gay marriage, 80 percent of persons who are unaffiliated with religious organizations are in favor (Pew Research Center 2016). Understanding families in contemporary society requires a sociological imagination that takes into account both personal preferences as well as the powerful impact of social structures and cultural beliefs.

Sociological research on families typically involves descriptive or scientific studies that aim to solve some of the most interesting puzzles about marriage and families in the contemporary world. Taken together, the work of these researchers is fascinating and demonstrates that sociology can give us insights that are by no means obvious.



(Left) An extended Kazak family in Mongolia. Kazaks usually live in extended families and collectively herd their livestock. The youngest son will inherit the father's house, and the elder sons will build their own houses close by when they get married. (Right) Parents wait for the train with their daughter. How is a nuclear family different from an extended family?

Basic Concepts

Before delving into questions about why and how people form their families, some basic concepts require review. A **family** is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections, the adult members of which assume responsibility for caring for children. **Kinship** refers to connections among individuals, typically established either through marriage or through the lines of descent that connect blood relatives (mothers, fathers, offspring, grandparents, etc.). **Marriage** can be defined as a socially and legally acknowledged and approved sexual union between two adult individuals. When two people marry, they become kin to each other; the marriage bond also, however, connects a wider range of kinspeople. Parents, brothers, sisters, and other blood relatives become relatives of the partner through marriage.

In virtually all societies, sociologists and anthropologists have documented the presence of the **nuclear family**, two adults living together in a household with biological or adopted children. In most traditional societies, the nuclear family was part of a larger kinship network of some type. When close relatives in addition to a married couple and children live either in the same household or in a close and continuous relationship with one another, we speak of an **extended family**. An extended family might, for example, include grandparents, brothers and their wives, sisters and their husbands, aunts, and nephews.

Families can also be divided into **families of orientation** and **families of procreation**. The first is the family into which a person is born or adopted; the second is the family into which one enters as an adult and within which a new generation of children is brought up. A further important distinction concerns place of residence. In the United States, when a couple forms a permanent union, they are usually expected to set up an independent household, separate from either partner's family of orientation. This can be in the same region in which one of the partner's parents live, but it may be in some different

nuclear family

A family group consisting of an adult or adult couple and their dependent children.

extended family

A family group consisting of more than two generations of relatives.

family of orientation

The family into which an individual is born or adopted.

family of procreation

The family an individual initiates through marriage or by having children.

monogamy

A form of marriage in which each married partner is allowed only one spouse at any given time.

polygamy

A form of marriage in which a person may have two or more spouses simultaneously.

polygyny

A form of marriage in which a man may have two or more wives simultaneously.

town or city altogether. In some other societies, however, everyone who marries or forms a permanent partnership is expected to live close to or within the same dwelling as the parents of one of the two partners.

In Western societies, marriage, and therefore family, is associated with **monogamy**. It is illegal for a man or woman to be married to more than one individual at any one time. But in many parts of the world, monogamy is far less common than it is in Western nations. In his classic research, George Murdock (1967, 1981) compared several hundred societies from 1960 through 1980 and found that **polygamy**, a marriage that allows a husband or wife to have more than one spouse, was permitted in over 80 percent (see also Gray 1998). There are two types of polygamy: **polygyny**, in which a man may be married to more than one woman at the same time, and **polyandry**, much less common, in which a woman may have two or more husbands simultaneously. Of the 1,231 societies tracked, Murdock found that just 15 percent were monogamous, 37 percent had occasional polygyny, 48 percent had more frequent polygyny, and less than 1 percent had polyandry (Murdock 1981). Yet recent work suggests that polygamy has grown less common over time, due to multiple social and economic conditions, including increasing levels of democracy, a declining acceptance of arranged marriage, an increase in marriages based on a desire for love and companionship, and strides in the education and human rights protections afforded to women. Polygyny is widely considered disadvantageous to women, and as such, has declined as women gain more rights and power in many parts of the world (Bailey and Kaufman 2010).

How Do Sociological Theories Characterize Families?

Sociologists with diverse theoretical orientations have studied family life. Many of the perspectives that prevailed just a few decades ago now seem much less convincing in light of recent research and important changes in the social world. Nevertheless, it is valuable to briefly trace the evolution of sociological thinking before turning to contemporary approaches to studying families.

Functionalism

The functionalist perspective sees society as a set of social institutions that perform specific functions to ensure continuity and consensus. According to this perspective, families perform important tasks that contribute to society's basic needs and help perpetuate the existence of major social institutions and practices. Sociologists working in the functionalist tradition have regarded the nuclear family as fulfilling certain specialized roles in modern societies. With the advent of industrialization, families became less important as a unit of economic production and more focused on reproduction, child rearing, and socialization.

Review the development of sociological thinking about families and family life.

polyandry

A form of marriage in which a woman may have two or more husbands simultaneously.

According to the American sociologist Talcott Parsons, the family's two main functions are *primary socialization* and *personality stabilization* (Parsons and Bales 1955). **Primary socialization** is the process by which young children learn the cultural norms of the society into which they are born. **Personality stabilization** refers to the role that families play in assisting adult family members emotionally. Marriage is the arrangement through which adult personalities are supported and kept healthy. In industrial society, families may play a critical role in stabilizing adult personalities. This is because the nuclear family is often distanced from its extended kin and is unable to draw on larger kinship ties as families could before industrialization.

Parsons regarded the nuclear family as the unit best equipped to handle the demands of industrial society. In the “conventional family,” one adult can work outside the home while the second adult cares for the home and children. In practical terms, this specialization of roles within the nuclear family involved the husband adopting the “instrumental” role as breadwinner and the wife assuming the “affective,” emotional role in domestic settings.

Parsons's view of families is now widely regarded by sociologists as inadequate and outdated. Functionalist theories of families have come under heavy criticism for justifying the domestic division of labor between men and women as something natural and unproblematic. Moreover, functionalist perspectives presume that a male-female married couple is essential for the successful rearing of children and for the efficient operation of households; Parsons failed to consider that same-sex and single-parent families may run efficiently and effectively parent and socialize children. He also failed to recognize that in many families, wives may be better suited to breadwinning and their husbands better suited to child rearing, or that the two would share both tasks equally.

Parsons's views reflect the historical period in which he was living and working. The immediate post-World War II years were a period when same-sex relationships were hidden if not outright illegal in some parts of the United States. Divorce and single parenthood were relatively rare and often stigmatized. This era also saw women returning to their traditional domestic roles and men reassuming positions as sole breadwinners; this arrangement was rational for the family, as men typically earned far more than women (Becker 2009). We can criticize functionalist views of families on other grounds, however. In emphasizing the importance of families in performing certain functions, Parsons and other functionalist theorists neglect the role that other social institutions—such as government, media, and schools—play in socializing children. Functionalist theories also neglect variations in family forms that do not correspond to the model of the nuclear family. Families that did not conform to the white, suburban, middle-class “ideal” were seen as deviant.

Feminist Approaches

For many people, families provide a vital source of solace and comfort, love and companionship. Yet families can also be a locus for exploitation, loneliness, and inequality. Feminism has had a great impact on sociology by challenging the vision of the family as a harmonious and egalitarian realm. In the 1960s, one of the first dissenting voices was that of the American feminist Betty Friedan. In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan described the isolation

primary socialization

The process by which children learn the cultural norms of the society into which they are born. Primary socialization occurs largely in one's family.

personality stabilization

According to the theory of functionalism, the role families play in assisting adult members emotionally. Marriage between adults is the arrangement through which adult personalities are supported and kept healthy.

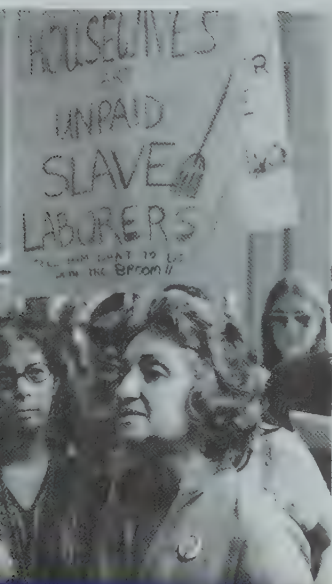
and boredom that gripped many suburban American housewives, who felt relegated to an endless cycle of child care and housework.

During the 1970s and 1980s, feminist perspectives dominated most debates and research on families. If previously the sociology of families had focused on family structures, the historical development of the nuclear and extended family, and the importance of kinship ties, feminism succeeded in directing attention inside families to examine the experiences of women in the domestic sphere. Many feminist writers have questioned the vision of families as cooperative units based on common interests and mutual support. They have sought to show that the presence of unequal power relationships within families means that certain family members tend to benefit more than others.

Feminist writings have emphasized a broad spectrum of topics, but three main themes are of particular importance. One of the central concerns is the *domestic division of labor*—the way in which tasks are allocated among members of a household. Feminist sociologists have undertaken studies on the way domestic tasks, such as child care and housework, are shared between men and women. Findings have shown that women continue to bear the main responsibility for domestic tasks and enjoy less leisure time than men, despite the fact that more women are working in paid employment outside the home than ever before (Bianchi et al. 2007; Hochschild and Machung 1989). In same-sex couples, partners tend to share housework more equally than heterosexual couples do, highlighting the complex ways that gender shapes household arrangements (Goldberg, Smith, and Perry-Jenkin 2012).

Second, feminists have drawn attention to the *unequal power relationships* that exist within many families. One topic that has received increased attention as a result of this is the phenomenon of domestic violence. Intimate partner violence (IPV), marital rape, incest, and the sexual abuse of children have all received more public attention as a result of feminists' claims that the violent and abusive sides of family life have long been ignored in both academic contexts and legal and policy circles. Feminist sociologists have sought to understand how families serve as an arena for gender oppression and even physical abuse. For example, through much of U.S. history, a husband had the legal right to engage his wife in coerced or forced sex. Due in large part to efforts of feminist activists and scholars, marital rape became illegal in all fifty states in 1993 (Hines, Malley-Morrison, and Dutton 2012).

The study of *caring activities* is a third area in which feminists have made important contributions. This is a broad realm that encompasses a variety of processes, from child care to elder care. Sometimes caring means simply being attuned to someone else's psychological well-being—several feminist writers have been interested in “emotion work” within relationships. Not only do women tend to shoulder concrete tasks such as cleaning and child care, but they also invest large amounts of emotional labor in maintaining personal relationships (Duncombe and Marsden 1993). While caring activities are grounded in love and deep emotion, they are also a form of work that demands an ability to listen, perceive, negotiate, and act creatively. Caring work also happens outside of one's family; thousands of women find work in jobs that require caring for others. Ironically, jobs that involve caring, such as child-care worker, nanny, or elderly companion, are among the lowest paid of all occupations, and such jobs are typically held by women of color and immigrants in the United States (Macdonald 2011; Rodriquez 2011).



Women's rights activist Betty Friedan participates in a New York City march commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of women's suffrage in August 1970.

New Perspectives in the Sociology of Families

In the past decade, an important body of sociological literature on families has emerged that draws on feminist perspectives but is not strictly informed by them. Of primary concern are the larger transformations that are taking place in family forms—the formation and dissolution of families and households and the evolving expectations within individuals' personal relationships. The rise in divorce and single parenting, the emergence of "reconstituted families" and gay families, and the popularity of cohabitation and child-free families are all subjects of concern among conservative political and religious groups. Yet these transformations cannot be understood apart from the larger changes occurring in our society. Attention must be paid to the shifts occurring at the societal, and even global, level if we are to grasp the link between personal transformations and larger patterns of change.

How Have Families Changed over Time?

Sociologists once thought that prior to the modern period, the extended or multigenerational family was the predominant family form in Western Europe. Research has shown this view to be mistaken. The nuclear family seems long to have been preeminent. Premodern household size was larger than it is today, but the difference is not especially great. In the United States, for example, throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, the average household size was 4.75 persons. The current average is 2.5 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015d). This low number is partly due to the high proportion of Americans who live alone today, especially older widowed women and young professionals who maintain their own homes (Klinenberg 2012). Since the earlier figure includes domestic servants, the difference in family size is small.

Further, more Americans are living in multigenerational households today than ever before. In 2014, a record 60.6 million Americans, or 19 percent of the total population, lived in a family household that contained at least two adult generations or a grandparent and at least one other generation (Cohn and Passel 2016). This pattern is caused partly by the recent economic recession and home foreclosures, which forced families to live together. Young college graduates, in particular, are moving back into their parents' home in unprecedented numbers, as they face bleak job prospects. In 2014, 31 percent of adults between the ages of twenty-four and twenty-nine lived in multigenerational households (Fry and Passel 2014). The large and growing immigrant population and the rising number of single or divorced parents who reside with their own parents have also contributed to this trend.

Finally, the number of grandparents living with and raising their grandchildren has increased steadily since the 1990s. These households are often referred to as "skip-generation" households because the "middle" generation (parents) is not present. Social problems such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic and "three strikes" policies, which put a disproportionate number of young African American men in jail, created a context where the young children of the deceased or imprisoned would go to live with their grandmothers (Baker, Silverstein, and Putney 2008).

CONCEPT CHECKS

- According to the functionalist perspective, what are two main functions of families?
- According to feminist perspectives, what three aspects of family life are sources of concern? Why are these three aspects troubling to feminists?



Understand how families have changed over the last 300 years. See that although a diversity of family forms exist in different societies today, widespread changes are occurring that relate to the spread of globalization.



The classic television show *Father Knows Best* ran from 1954 to 1963. The show featured a stay-at-home mother, breadwinner father, and three children.

“The Way We Never Were”: Myths of the Traditional Family

Were families of the past as peaceful and harmonious as many people recall it, or is this simply an idealized fiction? As Stephanie Coontz points out in her book *The Way We Never Were* (1992), as with other visions of a golden age of the past, the rosy light shed on the “traditional family” dissolves when we look back to previous times to see what things were really like.

Popular lore depicts the family of colonial America as disciplined and stable, the ideal arrangement. However, colonial families suffered from the same disintegrative forces as their counterparts in Europe. Especially high death rates meant that the average length of marriages was less than twelve years, and more than half of all children saw the death of at least one parent by the time they were twenty-one. The admired discipline of the colonial family was rooted in the strict authority of parents over their children. The way in which this authority was exercised would be considered exceedingly harsh by today’s standards.

In the Victorian period, wives were more or less forcibly confined to the home. According to Victorian morality, women were supposed to be strictly virtuous, while men were sexually licentious: Many visited prostitutes and paid regular visits to brothels. Spouses often had little to do with each other, communicating only through their children. Moreover, domesticity wasn’t even an option for poorer groups of this period. African American slaves in the southern United States lived and worked in what were frequently appalling conditions. In the factories and workshops of the North, families worked long hours with little time for home life. Children often worked long hours under dangerous conditions in factories until states started to pass compulsory schooling laws in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By 1918, every state required children to complete elementary school, which virtually eliminated the pool of child workers (Graham 1974).

Our most recent memory draws us to the 1950s as the time of the ideal American family. This was a period when large numbers of white middle-class women worked only in the home, while men were held responsible for earning a family wage. Yet large numbers of women didn’t actually want to retreat to a purely domestic role and felt unfulfilled and trapped. Many women had held paid jobs during World War II as part of the war effort. They lost these jobs when men returned from the war. Moreover, men were still emotionally removed from their wives and often exercised a strong sexual double standard, seeking sexual adventures for themselves but setting strict codes for their spouses.

Betty Friedan’s best-selling book *The Feminine Mystique* first appeared in 1963, but its research referred to the 1950s. Friedan struck a chord in the hearts of thousands of women when she spoke of the “problem with no name”: the oppressive nature of a domestic life bound up with child care, domestic drudgery, and a husband who often prioritized work over his family life.

Changes in Family Patterns Worldwide

Just as family structure and family life in the United States have shifted over the past three centuries, family life has also been transformed across the globe. In some areas, such



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From 1978 to 2015, China maintained a very strict one-child policy. The government promoted the benefits of one-child families through billboards and other national media.

as more remote regions in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific Rim, traditional family systems are little altered. In most countries in the Global South, however, widespread changes are occurring. The origins of these changes are complex, but several factors can be picked out as especially important. One is the spread of Western culture. Western ideals of romantic love, for example, have spread to societies in which they were previously unknown. One study found evidence of romantic love in nearly 147 of the 166 traditional societies studied in sub-Saharan Africa, East Eurasia, and elsewhere (Jankowiak and Fisher 1992).

Another factor is the development of centralized government in areas previously composed of autonomous smaller societies. People's lives are influenced by their involvement in a national political system; moreover, governments make active attempts to alter traditional ways of behaving. Because of the problem of rapidly expanding population growth, states frequently introduce programs advocating smaller families, for example, by promoting the use of contraception. One of the world's most effective population control programs was the one-child policy in China, implemented in 1978. Births subsequently dropped from 5 per woman in the 1970s to 3 in 1980 to an estimated 1.6 in 2015 (Central Intelligence Agency 2015). However, in November 2015, the Chinese government relaxed this policy. Married couples are now allowed to have a second child. There are many reasons behind the government's decision to change the policy, including public anger about a policy viewed as highly restrictive, widespread use of abortion when women became pregnant with a second child, and fears that the small cohorts of young people would not be sufficient to support much larger cohorts of older adults in China (Buckley 2015).

A further influence on family life is the large-scale migration from rural to urban areas. Often men go to work in towns or cities, leaving family members in the home village. Alternatively, a nuclear-family group will move as a unit to the city. In both cases, traditional family forms and kinship systems may become weakened. Finally, and perhaps most important, employment opportunities away from the land and in such organizations as

government bureaucracies, mines, plantations, and—where they exist—industrial firms tend to have disruptive consequences for family systems previously centered on agricultural production in the local community.

DIRECTIONS OF CHANGE

Families are being transformed throughout the globe today, with extended family systems giving way to the predominance of the nuclear family. This was first documented by William J. Goode in his book *World Revolution in Family Patterns* (1963), and subsequent research has shown that these changes continue. Building on Goode's work, sociologists have identified seven important changes that have characterized global family change over the past half-century:

1. Clans, or small family groups based on shared heredity, and other types of kin groups are declining in their influence.
2. There is a general trend toward the free choice of a spouse.
3. The rights of women are becoming more widely recognized, in respect to both the initiation of marriage and decision making within families.
4. Kin marriages are becoming less common.
5. Higher levels of sexual freedom are developing in societies that were very restrictive.
6. Birth rates are declining, meaning that women are giving birth to fewer babies.
7. There is a general trend toward the extension of children's rights.

In many countries, especially Western industrial societies, five additional trends have occurred within the past three decades:

1. An increase in the number of births that occur outside of marriage.
2. A liberalization of laws and norms regarding divorce.
3. An increase in nonmarital cohabitation among romantic partners.
4. An increasing age at first marriage and first birth.
5. A growing number of and acceptance for same-sex couples and their families.

Taken together, most Westernized and an increasing number of nations in the Global South have witnessed a slow yet gradual decline of the nuclear family as the preeminent family form. Given the ethnically diverse character of the United States, there are considerable variations in family and marriage within the country. The most striking of these differences are between whites and blacks; Asian American families resemble whites in many ways, while Latino patterns are highly varied. These differences reflect long-standing economic and historical factors that shape family formation. We will consider the reasons for these differences and then move on to examine divorce, remarriage, stepparenting, cohabitation, and childbearing in relation to contemporary patterns of family life.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. Briefly describe changes in family size over the past three centuries.
2. How has Stephanie Coontz dispelled the myth of the peaceful and harmonious family believed to exist in past decades?
3. Give two examples of problems facing families in past centuries.
4. What are four conditions that have contributed to changing family forms throughout the world?
5. Name at least two recent shifts in family life that relate to the spread of globalization.
6. How has migration from rural to urban areas affected family life?
7. What are the seven most important changes occurring in families worldwide?

What Do Marriage and Family in the United States Look Like Today?

The United States has long had high marriage rates; over 90 percent of adults in their mid-fifties today are or have been married (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2013c). However, recent evidence shows that the age at which Americans marry for the first time has risen sharply in recent decades (Figure 11.1). In 2015, the median age at first marriage in the United States was twenty-seven for women and twenty-nine for men; this marks a dramatic increase over 1960, when the median ages were twenty and twenty-three years for men and women, respectively (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015f). Sociologists offer several explanations for this trend.

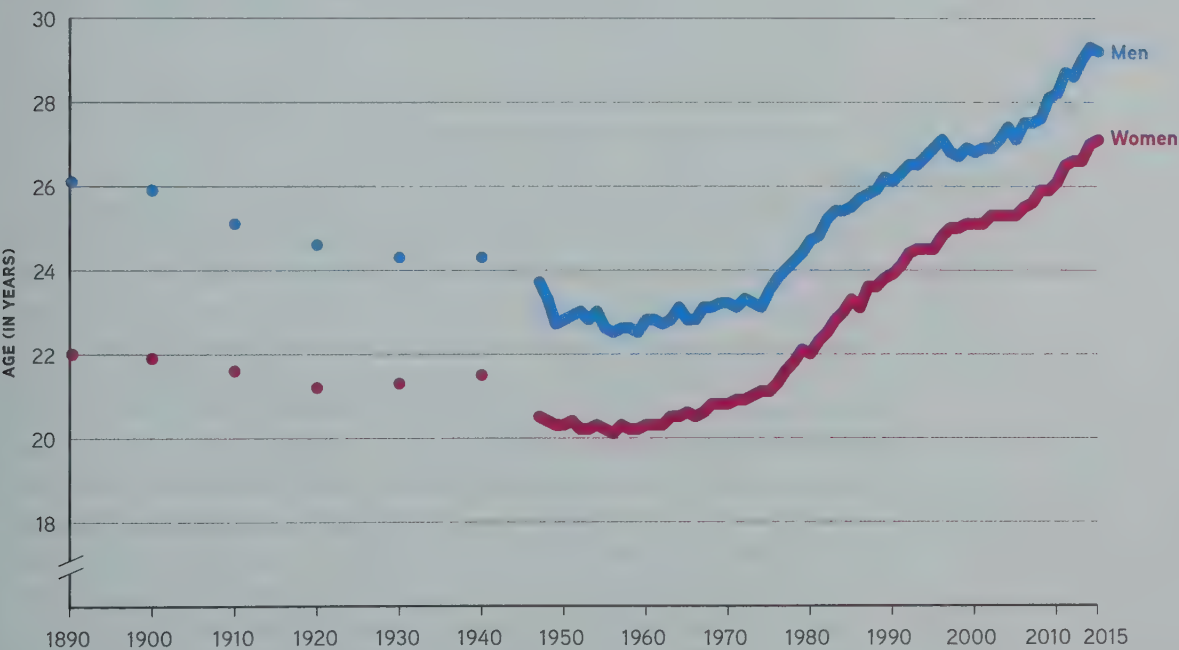
First, some researchers contend that increases in cohabitation among younger people account for the decreases (or delays) in marriage among this group. In past decades, young



Learn about patterns of marriage, childbearing, and divorce. Analyze how different these patterns are today compared with other periods.

FIGURE 11.1

Median Age at First Marriage



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015f

people who wanted to live with their romantic partner typically married them, given the stigma of “living in sin” and having sexual relations with a person to whom one was not legally married. Within the past three decades, however, cohabitation has grown exponentially in popularity among young adults, alongside the disappearing stigma of premarital sexual relations. Second, increases in postsecondary school enrollment, especially among women, are partially responsible for delays in marriage. Most couples prefer to delay marriage until they have completed their formal schooling (Wang and Parker 2014).

Third, women's increased participation in the labor force often leads to delays in marriage as women work to establish their careers before marrying and starting a family (Goldstein and Kenney 2001). Labor force participation also increases economic independence among women. By earning their own income, many women no longer need a male breadwinner in their home. The flip side of the economic independence argument is the idea that the deterioration of men's economic position since the late 1980s has made them less attractive mates and less ready to marry (Sweeney 2002).

Finally, some researchers believe that modernization, changing gender roles, and a shift in attitudes that promote individualism make marriage less important than it once was. This sharp increase in age at first marriage has led researchers to debate whether marriage is simply being delayed or whether it is being foregone all together. According to Census Bureau predictions, a sizeable proportion of today's young adults will remain single for life (Wang and Parker 2014).

As noted earlier, an extraordinary increase in the proportion of people living alone in the United States has also taken place over recent years—a phenomenon that partly reflects the high levels of marital separation and divorce. A record 28 percent of households now consist of only one person, and the percentage of Americans who live alone has doubled over the last fifty years (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015d; Klinenberg 2012). There has been a particularly sharp rise in the proportion of individuals living alone in the forty-five-to-sixty-four age bracket.

Some people still suppose that the average American family is made up of a married couple and their children. This is very different from the real situation: Just one-fifth of U.S. households today are the “traditional” family, down from a quarter a decade ago and 43 percent in 1950 (Tavernise 2011). One reason is the rising rate of divorce: A substantial proportion of the population live either in single-parent households or in stepfamilies. The expectation that the “traditional” family includes a working husband and stay-at-home wife is also a thing of the past. Dual-career marriages and single-parent families are now the norm. Although men historically were the only breadwinners or the higher earners in the marriage, this pattern is rapidly changing; women outearn their husbands in roughly one in four households today (Wang, Parker, and Taylor 2013).

There are also significant differences in patterns of childbearing between parents in the 1950s and later generations. The birth rate rose sharply just after World War II and again during the 1950s. Women in the 1950s had their first child earlier than later generations did, and their subsequent children were born closer together. Since the late 1960s the average age at which women have their first child has risen steadily. In 2015, the average age of first-time moms was twenty-seven, seven years older than in the early 1960s (Mathews and Hamilton 2016). The proportion of women giving birth in their thirties and forties has also increased sharply. In 1976 only 20 percent of births were to women over

age thirty. By 2015 this proportion had grown to more than 30 percent (Mathews and Hamilton 2016). The number of births to women ages thirty-five to thirty-nine has increased even more dramatically—by over 52 percent between 1990 and 2010 (Mathews and Hamilton 2014).

Family structures and patterns are powerfully shaped by both structural and cultural factors. Structural factors—including shifts in educational attainment, economic prospects of young adults, and whether one has the legal right to marry—have a powerful influence on the ways families are formed. At the same time, cultural factors—ranging from attitudes toward marriage, sexuality, and cohabitation to beliefs about the appropriate context for raising children—shape family lives. For these reasons, American families vary widely based on factors such as social class, race, ethnicity, religion, and even the geographic region where one lives. We briefly focus on the ways that race and social class shape family life in the contemporary United States.

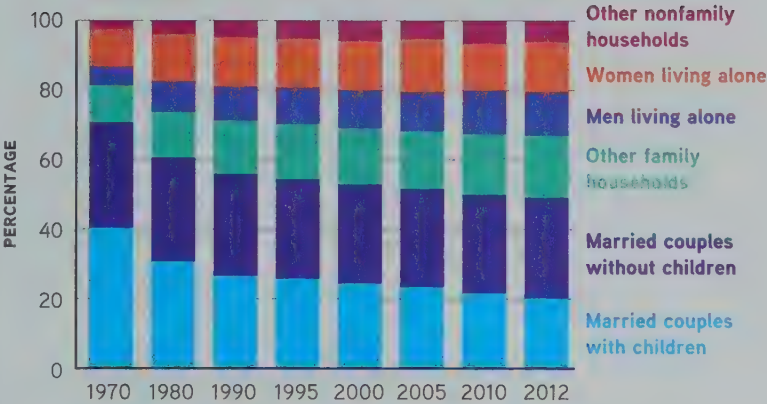
Race, Ethnicity, and American Families

Sociologists have documented stark differences in family structure among Native American, Latino, African American, and Asian American families. Early studies suggested that these differences reflected cultural differences, including beliefs about the importance of marriage and about the importance of being economically self-sufficient (Lewis 1969). However, in recent decades, scholars have placed much greater emphasis on structural factors, recognizing that socioeconomic resources, including education, and the opportunity to work in jobs that provide a living wage, are among the key factors that contribute to racial and ethnic differences in family structure—most notably, the greater tendency of whites and Asians (relative to blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans) to marry, remain married, and have children within marriage.

NATIVE AMERICAN FAMILIES

Kinship ties are very important in Native American families. As noted family demographer Andrew Cherlin (2005) observes, “Kinship networks constitute tribal organization; kinship ties confer identity” for Native Americans. However, for those who live in cities or away from reservations, kinship ties may be less prominent. Native Americans have higher rates of intermarriage than any other racial or ethnic group. According to 2010 U.S. Census data, more than half of all Native Americans don’t marry other natives. By way of comparison, nearly 95 percent of whites marry other whites, and more than 85 percent of African Americans marry other blacks (Ahtone 2011).

FIGURE 11.2
Households by Type



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2013a

Native American women have a low overall birth rate, but a high percentage of these births occur outside of marriage and to teenage women. Compared to all U.S. women, a high proportion of Native American births are to women under age twenty (11 percent compared to 6 percent for women of all ethnicities) and Native American women have the youngest mean age of mother at first birth (twenty-three). Furthermore, nearly two-thirds of all births to Native American women in 2014 were to unmarried women (Hamilton et al. 2015). These patterns are powerfully shaped by structural factors, including limited access to higher education, high unemployment rates, high levels of poverty, and high rates of mortality and imprisonment among young men, thus leaving young women without steady partners (Sandefur and Liebler 1997). Native Americans are also at particularly high risk of domestic violence; yet, as we will see later in this chapter, family violence can afflict persons of any ethnicity (Grossman and Lundy 2007).

LATINO FAMILIES

Latinos are heterogeneous when it comes to family patterns. Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans are three of the largest Hispanic subgroups (Stepler and Brown 2016). In 2014, Mexicans constituted 64 percent of the Hispanic population, Puerto Ricans constituted 10 percent (down from 12.0 percent in 1990), and Cubans were just 3.7 percent; the rest of the Hispanic population was made up of much smaller groups from many Latin American nations (Stepler and Brown 2016).

Mexican American families have a high birth rate and often live in multigenerational households. Economically, Mexican American families are more successful than Puerto Rican families but less so than Cuban families. Defying cultural stereotypes of a Mexican American home with a male breadwinner and female homemaker, more than half of all Mexican American women are in the labor force (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015c). However, this is often out of necessity rather than desire. Many Mexican American families would prefer the breadwinner-homemaker model but are constrained by finances (Hurtado 1995).

Mexican family members often must grapple with separation from one another. Often, family members will migrate from Mexico to the United States sequentially, where one person (usually the father) secures a job and sends money or “remittances” back to his family. The plans for the rest of the family to move to the United States and reunite are often delayed or halted due to immigration laws (Smokowski and Bacallao 2011). Even after family members arrive, those who are undocumented may risk deportation, again causing family separation (Chang-Muy 2009).

The case is very different for Puerto Ricans, because Puerto Rico is a U.S. commonwealth. Because of their status as U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans move freely between Puerto Rico and the mainland. When barriers to immigration are high, only the most able (physically, financially, and so on) members of a society can move to another country; but because Puerto Ricans face fewer barriers, even the least able can manage the migration process. Thus, they are the most economically disadvantaged of all the major Hispanic groups. Puerto Rican families have a higher percentage of children born to unmarried mothers than any other Hispanic group—64 percent in 2014 (Hamilton et al. 2015). Only African Americans (70 percent) and Native Americans (66 percent) had higher rates of births to unmarried women (Hamilton et al. 2015). However, consensual unions—cohabiting

relationships in which couples consider themselves married but are not legally married—are often the context for births to unmarried mothers. Puerto Ricans may respond to tough economic times by forming consensual unions as the next best option to a more expensive legal marriage (Landale and Fennelly 1992).

Cuban American families are the most prosperous of all the Hispanic groups but less prosperous than whites (Brown and Patten 2013). Most Cuban Americans settled in the Miami area, forming enclaves in which they rely on other Cubans for their business and social needs (such as banking, schools, and shopping). The relative wealth of Cuban Americans is driven largely by family business ownership. In terms of childbearing, Cuban Americans have lower levels of fertility than non-Hispanic whites and equally low levels of nonmarital fertility, suggesting that economic factors are equally if not more important than cultural factors in shaping family lives in the United States (Brown and Patten 2013).

AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES

Black and white families differ dramatically in terms of family structure (Figure 11.3). Blacks have higher rates of childbearing outside marriage, are less likely ever to marry, and are less likely to marry after having a nonmarital birth. These differences are of particular interest to sociologists because single parenthood in the United States is associated with high rates of poverty (Harknett and McLanahan 2004).

The contemporary state of black families has deep historical roots. More than forty years ago, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965) described black families as “disorganized” and caught up in a “tangle of pathology.” Moynihan, among others, sought reasons for this in the history of the black family. For one thing, the circumstances of slavery prevented blacks from maintaining the cultural customs of their societies of origin; for example, members of similar tribal groups were dispersed to different plantations. Also, although some owners treated their slaves considerately and fostered their family life, others regarded them as little better than livestock and inherently promiscuous and, therefore, unworthy of marriage. After emancipation, new cultural experiences and structural factors threatened black families. Among these were new forms of discrimination against African Americans, changes in the economy such as the development of sharecropping in the South after the Civil War, and the migration of black families to northern cities early in the twentieth century (Jones 1986).

FIGURE 11.3
Living Arrangements of White and Black Children in 2015



Source: Child Trends 2015

A persistent puzzle facing researchers is the question of why black and white family patterns have diverged even further since the 1960s, when Moynihan's study was published and a time when public benefits for poor families were expanded dramatically. Here we focus on contemporary factors that have contributed to the increasingly large gap in the structure of black and white families. In 2015, married couples accounted for 51 percent of all white households yet just 27 percent of all black households (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015d). According to the U.S. Census, a household is composed of one or more people who occupy a housing unit. Not all households contain families; for instance, a household could include unmarried roommates. In 1960, 21 percent of African American families with children under eighteen were headed by females; the comparable rate among white families was 8 percent. By 2015, the proportion of black families with children under eighteen that were female-headed had risen to 54 percent, while the comparable proportion for white families was 21 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015e).

To focus only on race differences draws attention away from the fact that there is great diversity even within racial and ethnic groups, where middle-class and upper-middle-class black families tend to resemble white families in terms of their structure. For example, female-headed families are more prominently represented among poorer blacks. We will elaborate later in the chapter on the ways that race and class intersect to shape family experiences.

One social condition that contributes to high rates of nonmarital childbearing (and consequently, female-headed households) is what sociologist William Julius Wilson calls a shortage of "marriageable" black men (1987). Marriage opportunities for heterosexual women are constrained if there are not enough men employed in the formal labor market. A woman will be less inclined to marry a man who is not earning a living wage and may instead opt to have and raise her child on her own, rather than enter a marital union marked by financial instability. Contemporary research provides some support for Wilson's "marriageable male" hypothesis. Recent research confirms that one of the best predictors of whether parents marry after a nonmarital birth is the availability of eligible partners in a geographic area (Harknett and McLanahan 2004), demonstrating the continued importance of marriage markets even after the birth of a child.

African Americans are often embedded in larger and more complex family networks than whites, but these ties are a source of both support and strain. In a now-classic study, white anthropologist Carol Stack (1997) lived in a black ghetto community in Illinois to study the support systems that poor black families formed. Getting to know the kinship system from the inside, she demonstrated that families adapted to poverty by forming large, complex support networks. Thus, a mother heading a one-parent family is likely to have a close and supportive network of relatives to depend on. Yet, these family ties often place demands—especially on older African American women, who are more likely than any other group to live with and raise their grandchildren. They step into this role when their own children, or the grandchildren's parents, can no longer adequately fulfill their parenting role. For many older black women, family ties are a source of strain and demand as well as social support (Hughes et al. 2007).

ASIAN AMERICAN FAMILIES

Family forms in the United States vary widely by race and ethnicity, as well as immigrant status. One of the primary features of Asian American families is that of dependence

on the extended family, a practice that some sociologists attribute to cultural beliefs related to filial piety, or respect for and a sense of responsibility for caring for one's elders (Bengtson et al. 2000). In 2014, 28 percent of Asians in the United States resided in multigenerational households, compared with just 12 percent of whites (Cohn and Passel 2016). In many Asian cultures, family concerns are often a priority over individual concerns. Family members' interdependence also helps Asian Americans prosper financially. Asian American family and friend networks often pool money to help their members start a business or buy a house. This help is reciprocated as more of the recipients who prosper as a result then contribute to other family members. The result is a median family income for Asian Americans that is higher than the median family income for non-Hispanic whites.

As each generation of Asian Americans grows increasingly acculturated to life in the United States, scholars predict that they will come to resemble white families more and more (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2012b). This process may be further hastened by outmarriage. Of all couples who wed in 2013, a record-high 12 percent were interracial. Asians are more likely than other racial groups to "marry out": 28 percent of Asians who wed in 2013 married someone of a different race, compared to just 7 percent of whites (Wang 2015).

Although there is less research on differences among various Asian American subgroups than among Hispanic subgroups, some fertility differences have been established. Chinese American and Japanese American women have much lower fertility rates than any other racial or ethnic group, due partly to their high levels of educational attainment. These differences in educational attainment reflect a range of economic factors, including the type of jobs their parents held, the conditions under which their families emigrated to the United States, and their language skills. As women remain in school and delay marriage and childbearing, they typically go on to have fewer children. Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino families have lower levels of nonmarital fertility than all other racial or ethnic groups, including non-Hispanic whites. Low levels of nonmarital fertility combined with low levels of divorce for most Asian American groups demonstrate the cultural emphasis on marriage as the appropriate forum for family formation and maintenance (Pew Research Center 2013c).

Social Class and the American Family

Sociologists studying racial and ethnic differences in American families are always keenly aware of the role that social class plays. As we learned earlier in this book, whites, blacks, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asians differ starkly with respect to their levels of education, the kinds of jobs they hold, their income, their savings, and whether they own homes. Economic and occupational stability is a powerful influence on families, where those with richer resources are more likely to marry and have children within (rather than outside of) marriage. Even studies that focus primarily on race are essentially studies of social class. For example, while some early work (Lewis 1969; Stack 1997) attributed racial differences in the organization of the extended family to cultural or interpersonal factors, contemporary researchers have concluded that "the differences between black and white extended family relationships are mainly due to contemporary differences in social and economic class positions of group members" (Sarkisian and

While young adults of lower- and working-class backgrounds are more likely to marry young and bear children young.



Gerstel 2004). Most scholars today agree that cultural factors are less significant than structural obstacles.

This leads to a thought-provoking and policy-relevant question: Are racial differences in family formation due primarily to economic or to cultural factors? One of the problems with the culture versus structure debate is that there is relatively little research on middle-class black families or low-income white families, which makes it difficult to disentangle whether cultural factors or structural factors are primarily driving racial differences in terms of family formation.

Recent studies show that race and class each have distinctive and often complicated influences on family behavior. For instance, while whites from working-class and poor backgrounds—often residing in the southern United States—report very strong ideological support for marriage and bearing children within marriage, their behaviors often depart from these conservative ideals. White young adults of lower- and working-class backgrounds are much more likely than their wealthier peers to get pregnant prior to marriage, to marry young, and subsequently to divorce (Cahn and Carbone 2010). Because they often do not attend college, they marry young and bear children young—often before they are financially or emotionally prepared. As a result, they often struggle unsuccessfully with the challenges of marriage and babies, and ultimately they divorce. Middle-class young adults, by contrast, often cohabit while in school or working in their first jobs, so they marry later and bear children later. Delaying marriage until they are emotionally and financially ready is one of the key reasons college-educated young whites have lower rates of divorce than their more economically disadvantaged counterparts (Cahn and Carbone 2010).

Dating and Mating Online

How did you meet your last romantic partner? Perhaps you met at a party or sat next to each other in your introduction to sociology course. Can you remember what it was that drew you to him or her? Was there something subtle or unexpected that signaled to you there might be an attraction, like a tone of voice, a wink, or light touch to the shoulder? Or did you already have a clear-cut notion of the kind of person you wanted to date—maybe someone tall, or who shared your religious background, or who had professional goals similar to your own—and you carefully surveyed those whom you saw as an “appropriate” partner, before making your move?

While popular music suggests that two strangers will lock eyes across a crowded room and true love will follow, in our current digital age, meetings often happen in a far less romantic and more strategic way. Dozens of smartphone apps like Tinder, Bumble, Adventurely, and Happn allow people to search through endless photos of eligible partners and screen them, or “swipe right,” based on personal preferences like education, occupation, age, height, body weight, gender, sexual orientation, and race. GPS functionality allows users to find like-minded people in their vicinity at any given time (Wortham 2013).

Although apps may take the romance and intrigue out of dating, they do fulfill a practical function. Young people can shop for a date in exactly the same way they would shop for a new car; they can specify precisely what they want and search for potential partners who possess those traits. From a sociological perspectives, many apps provide strong evidence that norms of “homogamy,” or dating and marrying a partner similar to oneself, are still pervasive in U.S. society. New studies also show that apps provide evidence of “hypergamy,” or the preference

for women, typically, to partner with a man with richer socioeconomic resources than her own.

For instance, sociologist Kevin Lewis (2013) analyzed data from more than 126,000 dating site users and found that users tended to show the greatest interest in those of their same ethnic background. He analyzed only the first message sent and first reply of each user. He found the strongest tendency to initiate contact within one’s own race among East and South Asians and Indians and weakest among whites. He found that while users would respond to a message from someone from a different ethnic or racial group, this open-mindedness was relatively short-lived; most would promptly return to their old patterns of communicating only with members of their own group.

Lewis’s analyses also uncovered evidence that users hold dating preferences consistent with “highly gendered status hierarchies.” For instance, women tend to seek out men with more education and more income than they themselves have. Although men also sought educated partners, they tended to show greatest interest in women with a college education—“no more and no less.” Racial hierarchies also emerged. White men, Lewis found, enjoyed a privileged position, receiving the most initial messages, while black women received the fewest.

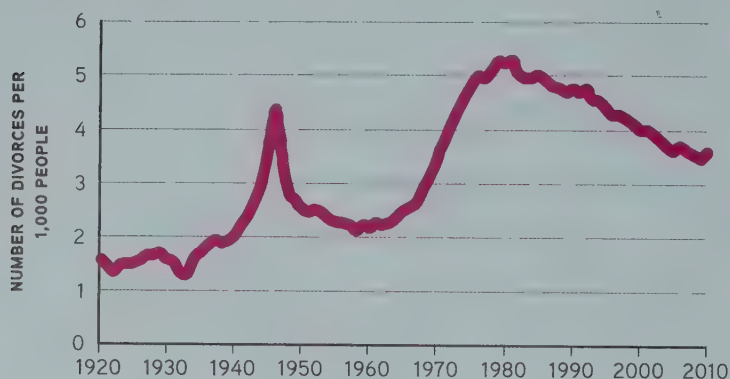
Thinking about sociological writings on family formation, what do you see as the pros and cons of such apps? Why do you think app users, and daters more generally, prefer to date someone of their racial background? How would you explain women’s preferences for men who are more educated and wealthy than themselves? What cultural and structural factors may underlie the patterns found in Lewis’s study?

Dating apps like the League, which narrows the dating pool to Ivy League graduates, provide evidence of modern homogamy.



FIGURE 11.4

Divorce Rate in the United States



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2013g

Research comparing middle-class blacks with their less advantaged counterparts was very scarce until the past decade, when scholars began study middle-class black families (Lacy 2007; Landry and Marsh 2011; Patillo 2013). Although middle-class black families are much more likely than their less economically advantaged peers to live in married-couple households, recent studies have detected a new form of middle-class black family, especially among young adults: the single-person household. Due in part to the shortage of marriageable men described earlier, college-educated black women often live on their own without a romantic partner (Marsh et al. 2007). Studies of intersectionality, or the complex interplay between race and class, provide important insights into the ways both culture and structure shape family lives.

Divorce and Separation

While divorce rates—calculated by looking at the number of divorces per 1,000 married men or women per year—increased steadily through the 1970s and 1980s, they have leveled off and even declined since the 1990s (Figure 11.4). Attitudes have changed in tandem, with a stark decline in the proportion of Americans who disapprove of divorce.

Divorce has a substantial impact on children. Since 1970, more than 1 million American children per year have been affected by divorce. In one calculation, about half of children born in 1980 became members of a one-parent family. Since two-thirds of women and three-fourths of men who are divorced eventually remarry, most of these children nonetheless grew up in a family environment, often acquiring new step-siblings in the process. Remarriage rates are substantially lower for African Americans. Only 32 percent of black women and 55 percent of black men who divorce remarry within 10 years. White children are more than twice as likely as black children (74 versus 34 percent) to reside in a home with two parents, whether two biological parents or one biological parent and a stepparent (Child Trends 2015).

The economic well-being of women and children declines in the immediate aftermath of divorce. According to a 1996 study, the living standards of divorced women and their children on average fell by 27 percent in the first year following the divorce settlement. By contrast, the average standard of living of divorced men rose by 10 percent. Most court judgments left the former husband with a high proportion of his income intact; therefore, he had more to spend on his own needs than while he was married (Peterson 1996). The main reason for the gender gap is that women typically earn less than men and take time out of the labor market to raise children. Many cannot return to work or cannot easily secure high-paying jobs upon divorcing.

Of special interest to family demographers is the fact that the women with the most resources—especially education—are increasingly following trajectories that provide their children with greater resources, primarily by delaying fertility and being more involved in the labor market. In contrast, women who have the fewest resources—low levels of educational attainment or few economic resources—are increasingly following a trajectory of early fertility and infrequent employment. These different trajectories are problematic because they lead to even higher levels of inequality in the future educational, economic, and health experiences of children (McLanahan 2004).

Much research demonstrates that young adults from financially disadvantaged homes are less likely to attend college, and thus are more likely to marry younger—often right after high school. As a result, they tend to hold lower-paying jobs than their counterparts who graduate from college. Marrying young, before one is emotionally and financially ready, is considered one of the most powerful predictors of divorce (Elliott and Simmons 2011). In this way, early marriage and subsequent divorce play a role in perpetuating social class disadvantage across generations.

Other factors showing a positive correlation to the likelihood of divorce:

- Parental divorce (people whose parents divorce are more likely to divorce themselves)
- Premarital childbearing (people who marry after having children are more likely to divorce)
- Marriage at an early age (people who marry as teenagers have a higher divorce rate)
- Low incomes (divorce is more likely among couples with low incomes) (Amato 2010)

REASONS FOR DIVORCE

Why did divorce become increasingly common throughout the latter half of the twentieth century? There are several reasons, which involve wider changes in modern societies and social institutions. First, changes in the law have made divorce easier. Today, individuals may file for a “no-fault” divorce, which doesn’t require evidence that one spouse is at “fault.” Through the first six decades of the twentieth century, by contrast, one party had to prove that the other was at fault, necessitating compelling evidence of abuse, neglect, infidelity, or other forms of mistreatment that could be difficult to prove from a legal standpoint (Marvell 1989).

Second, except for a few wealthy people, marriage no longer reflects the desire to perpetuate property and status across generations. The fact that little stigma now attaches to divorce is not only partly the result of these developments but also adds momentum to them. Third, there is a growing tendency to evaluate marriage in terms of personal satisfaction. Higher divorce rates do not indicate dissatisfaction with marriage as such, but an increased determination to make it a rewarding and satisfying relationship for the individual spouses, with a reduced desire to stay (unhappily) married “for the sake of the children” (Cherlin 2010).

DIVORCE AND CHILDREN

The effects of divorce on children are difficult to gauge. How contentious the relationship is between the parents prior to separation, the age of a child at the time, whether there are

siblings, the availability of grandparents and other relatives, the child's relationship with his or her individual parents, and how frequently the child continues to see both parents can all affect the process of adjustment. Since children whose parents are unhappy with each other but stay together may also be affected, assessing the consequences of divorce for children is doubly problematic.

Some of the earliest studies of divorce consequences were based on clinical samples—that is, populations of people seeking counseling; these found that children often suffer a period of marked emotional anxiety following the separation of their parents. Judith Wallerstein and Joan Kelly (1980) studied 131 children of 60 families in Marin County, California, following the separation of the parents. The researchers found evidence of both short- and long-term deleterious consequences of parental divorce. Almost all the children experienced intense emotional disturbance at the time of the divorce. Yet even ten or fifteen years later, nearly half the then-young-adult children reported difficulties in their romantic relationships, compromised self-esteem, and a sense of underachievement. However, these harmful effects partly reflect the fact that the study was based on a clinical sample; by definition, all had already been seeking professional help for their troubles prior to the start of the study.

In sharp contrast, more recent studies based on population-based samples find that the majority of people with divorced parents do not have serious mental health problems. Syntheses of decades of research have identified several common consequences of divorce for children (Amato 2001; Amato and Keith 1991):

- Almost all children experience an initial period of intense emotional upset after their parents separate.
- Most resume normal development without serious problems within two years after the separation.
- A minority of children experiences some long-term problems as a result of the breakup that may persist into adulthood.

Remarriage and Stepparenting

Before 1900, almost all marriages in the United States were first marriages. Most remarriages involved at least one widowed person. With the progressive rise in the divorce rate, the level of remarriage also began to climb, and in an increasing proportion of remarriages at least one person was divorced. Today, fully 40 percent of marriages involve at least one previously married person and 20 percent involve two previously married persons (Livingston 2014). For younger adults, remarriages typically follow divorce, whereas for older persons the second walk down the aisle is taken by widows and widowers (Sweeney 2010).

The rise in rates of remarriage has been accompanied by rising numbers of stepfamilies. A **stepfamily** refers to a family in which at least one partner has children from a previous marriage. Many who remarry become stepparents of children who regularly visit rather than live in the same household. By this definition, the number of stepfamilies is much greater than official statistics indicate, because the statistics usually refer only to families with whom stepchildren live. Stepfamilies give rise to kin ties resembling those of some

stepfamily

A family in which at least one partner has children from a previous marriage.

traditional societies in non-Western countries. Children may now have two “mothers” and two “fathers”—their biological parents and their stepparents. Some stepfamilies regard all the children and close relatives (including grandparents) from previous marriages as part of their family.

When two families merge and become a stepfamily, challenges may arise. First, there is usually a biological parent living elsewhere whose influence over the child or children remains powerful. Cooperative relations between divorced individuals often become strained when one or both remarry. Second, since most stepchildren belong to two households, the possibilities of clashes of habits and outlooks are considerable (Fine, Coleman, and Ganong 1998). There are few established norms defining the relationship between stepparent and stepchild. Should a child call a new stepparent by name, or is “Dad” or “Mom” more appropriate? Should the stepparent play the same part in disciplining the children as the natural parent? The difficulties in negotiating these decisions often intensify in later life as aging parents need to turn to their children for caregiving, and stepchildren may not willingly oblige (Sherman, Webster, and Antonucci 2013).

Single-Parent Households

Single-parent households have become increasingly common. There are two main pathways to single-parent households: divorce and nonmarital childbearing. In 1950, only 4 percent of all children in the United States were born to unmarried parents; by 2014, 40 percent of all children were born outside of marriage (Hamilton et al. 2015). Although we often think of nonmarital births as births to teenagers—often abandoned by their male partners—the data show otherwise. An increasingly large number of nonmarital births are to men and women in their twenties who are delaying marriage but not delaying childbearing (Cherlin 2010). In fact, the majority of all nonmarital births today occur within cohabiting relationships (Curtin, Ventura, and Martinez 2014). Although the mother may be legally “unmarried,” both she and her child may very well have a dedicated and involved male figure in their lives and in their home (Kennedy and Bumpass 2008).

The vast majority of single-parent households are headed by women because unmarried women often do not maintain contact with the birth father of the child and may even prefer to raise a child on their own. Moreover, in the case of divorce, the mother usually obtains primary custody of the children. There were 11.8 million single-parent families in the United States in 2015. Of these, 84 percent were headed by women and 16 percent by men. Overall, 30 percent of all families with children under eighteen are single-parent families, while an additional



There is a strong link between single parenthood and poverty. More than a third of black single mothers live in poverty.

5 percent are cohabiting parents who are not legally married to one another (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015e).

Most people do not wish to be single parents, but a growing minority choose to become so, setting out to have a child or children without the support of a spouse or partner. “Single mothers by choice” is an apt description of some parents, normally those who possess sufficient resources to manage satisfactorily as a single-parent household. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the most rapidly increasing rates of nonmarital births between the years 2007 and 2012 were to unmarried women ages thirty-five and older. During the same time period, rates of nonmarital births among younger women either declined or stayed stable. Women in their late thirties and forties today recognize that they can have a child on their own without facing the stigma that plagued single mothers in earlier generations. Many also have the financial means to support a child on their own (Curtin, Ventura, and Martinez 2014). For the majority of unmarried or never-married mothers, however, the reality is different: There is a high correlation between the rate of births outside marriage and indicators of poverty and social deprivation. As we saw earlier, these influences are very important in explaining the high proportion of single-parent households among black families in the United States.

A debate exists among sociologists about the impact on children of growing up with a single parent. The most exhaustive set of studies carried out to date, by Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur (1994), rejects the claim that children raised by only one parent do just as well as children raised by both parents. A large part of the reason is economic—the sudden drop in income associated with divorce. But about half of the disadvantage comes from inadequate parental attention and lack of social ties. Separation or divorce weakens the connection between child and father, as well as the link between the child and the father’s network of friends and acquaintances. On the basis of wide empirical research, the authors conclude that it is a myth that there are usually strong support networks or extended family ties available to single mothers (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994).

Others have been quick to point out that although children who grow up in a single-parent home are on average disadvantaged, it is better for children’s mental health if parents in extremely high-conflict marriages divorce than if they stay together (Amato et al. 1995; Musick and Meier 2010). This suggests that divorce may benefit children growing up in high-conflict marriages but may harm children whose parents have relatively low levels of marital conflict before divorcing.

CONCEPT CHECKS

Briefly describe changes in family structure in the United States since 1960.

Contrast both general and nonmarital fertility rates among whites, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans in the United States.

What are the main reasons divorce rates increased sharply during the latter half of the twentieth century?

How does divorce affect the well-being of children?

Why Does Family Violence Happen?

Family relationships—between spouses, parents and children, brothers and sisters, or more distant relatives—can be warm and fulfilling. But they can also be full of extreme tension, driving people to despair or imbuing them with a deep sense of anxiety and guilt.

Learn about sexual abuse and violence within families.

Family discord can take many forms. The two broad categories of family violence are *child abuse* and *intimate partner violence (IPV)*. Violence within families is perpetrated primarily by men. Because of the sensitive and private nature of violence within families, it is difficult to obtain national data on levels of domestic violence. Data on child abuse are particularly sparse because of the issues of cognitive development and ethical concerns involved in studying child subjects.

Child Abuse

The most common definition of child abuse is serious physical harm (trauma, sexual abuse with injury, or willful malnutrition) with intent to injure. One national study of married or cohabiting adults indicated that about 3 percent of respondents abused their children in 1993, though cohabiting adults are no more or less likely to abuse their children than married couples (Brown 2004; Sedlak and Broadhurst 1996).

More recent statistics are based on national surveys of child welfare professionals. However, these surveys miss children who are not seen by professionals or reported to state agencies. Researchers estimate that as many as 50 to 60 percent of child deaths from abuse or neglect are not recorded (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services 2008). Statistics based on the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System indicate that in 2014 an estimated 702,000 children were victims of abuse or neglect. Of these, 75 percent suffered neglect, 17 percent suffered physical abuse, and 8 percent were sexually abused. Also, 92 percent of child abuse or neglect was perpetrated by the child's parents, and 6 percent by other relatives of the victim. Fully 44 percent of all victims of child abuse or neglect were white, and 21 percent were black (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services 2016).

The effects of child abuse can linger for years, if not decades, after the child escapes the abusive situation; recent studies show that adult men and women who suffered physical or sexual abuse in childhood are at elevated risk of multiple health conditions in midlife, including depression, chronic pain (Goldberg 1994), sleep problems (Greenfield et al. 2011), and metabolic syndrome (Lee, Tsenkova, and Carr 2014). Some evidence also suggests that victims of child abuse are more likely to commit abuse against partners and their own children, thus amplifying and perpetuating the cycle of abuse for future generations (Widom, Czaja, and DuMont 2015).

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Abuse of one's spouse or romantic partner is widespread in the United States. A 1985 study by Murray Straus and his colleagues found that IPV had occurred at least once in the past year in 16 percent of all marriages and at some point in the marriage in 28 percent of all marriages. This does not, however, distinguish between severe acts, such as beating up and threatening with or using a gun or knife, and less severe acts, such as slapping, grabbing, or shoving. When the authors disaggregated this number, they found that approximately 3 percent of all husbands admitted perpetrating at least one act of severe violence on their spouse in the previous year, but this is likely an underestimate.

More recent data, based on the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS), find even higher rates of severe violence among both married and nonmarried romantic partners (Breiding et al. 2014). For instance, these data from 2011 show that

16 percent of women and 10 percent of men had ever experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner during their lifetimes. Severe physical violence by an intimate partner (including acts such as being hit with something hard, being kicked or beaten, or being burned on purpose) was reported by 22 percent of women and 14 percent of men during their lifetimes.

Trend data can tell us about the prevalence of IPV, but not the nature of or context giving rise to abuse. Michael Johnson (1995) has identified two broad types of IPV: “patriarchal terrorism,” which is perpetuated by feelings of power and control, versus “common couple violence,” which generally relates to a specific incident and is not rooted in power or control. Sociological studies show that IPV is closely related to structural factors, including low levels of power among women, and cultural factors, including widespread acceptance of violence and beliefs that male power is equated with violence (Jewkes 2002). Violence is particularly likely to occur among couples whose relationships are marked by conflict, especially conflicts about finances, jealousy, substance use, and the husband’s belief that his wife is violating traditional gender roles. Women who are more empowered educationally, economically, and socially are most protected from IPV (Jewkes 2002).

CONCEPT CHECKS

- How do social scientists measure and track patterns of child abuse?
- Describe structural and cultural factors that are linked with intimate partner violence.

How Do New Family Forms Affect Your Life?

Cohabitation

If current statistics are any indicator, roughly half of all students reading this textbook will live with their romantic partner before marrying. **Cohabitation**—in which a couple live together in a sexual relationship without being married—has become increasingly widespread in most Western societies. The proportion of young couples who cohabit has risen steeply, from 11 percent in the early 1970s to 44 percent in the early 1980s and slightly below 50 percent today (Copen, Daniels, and Mosher 2013).

While for some cohabitation may be a substitute for marriage, for many it is viewed as a stage in the process of relationship building that precedes marriage. Men and women differ in their reasons for cohabiting. One recent study conducted focus group interviews with cohabiting men and women and found that both genders said their primary motives for cohabiting included spending time together, sharing expenses, and evaluating compatibility. Men, however, were concerned about the loss of freedom marriage would entail, whereas women worried that cohabitation would further delay marriage (Huang et al. 2011).

For most young adults today, cohabitation does not end in marriage. Only about 35 percent of cohabiters married their partners within three years of starting to live together. Increasingly, evidence shows that rather than being a “stage in the process” between dating and marriage, cohabitation may be an end in itself. For a very small subset, cohabitation is preferable to remarriage. Long-time cohabiters with no plans to marry say that they prefer cohabitation due to their unease about the meanings

Learn some alternatives to traditional marriage and family patterns that are becoming more widespread.

cohabitation

Two people living together in a sexual relationship of some permanence without being married to each other.

associated with marriage and concerns about what marriage does to the relationship (Hatch 2015).

For some couples, cohabitation is “marriage-like” in that it is a context for bearing and rearing children. In the early 1980s, 29 percent of all nonmarital births were to those in cohabiting unions. In the 2010–2014 period, more than half of all nonmarital births were to cohabiting couples (Curtin, Ventura, and Martinez 2014). Part of the reason more babies are born into cohabiting unions is that pregnant women today don’t feel the same social pressure to marry their partner as they would have in past years. In the past, unmarried couples who got pregnant might have had a “shotgun” wedding before the birth of the baby. Currently, however, only 11 percent of pregnant single women are married by the time the child is born. Fewer unmarried couples—whether cohabiting or not—are marrying before the birth of their child. There has, however, been an increase in the rate at which unmarried women begin cohabiting with their partner once they find out they are pregnant: Currently, 11 percent of pregnant single women begin cohabiting by the time the baby is born—the same number that marry to “legitimize” a pregnancy.

The United States is certainly not alone in the increasing prevalence of cohabitation. Many European countries are experiencing similar, and in some cases much greater, proportions of unions beginning with cohabitation rather than marriage. The northern European countries of Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, along with France, show particularly high rates of cohabitation. However, unions in the southern European countries of Spain, Greece, and Italy—along with Ireland and Portugal—still largely begin with marriage.

DOES LIVING TOGETHER HELP REDUCE THE CHANCES FOR DIVORCE?

As we noted earlier, most readers of this textbook will cohabit before marrying. How will this experience of cohabitation affect their marriages? Many college students believe that by living with a boyfriend or girlfriend, they will learn whether they’re right for each other and thus have more successful marriages. As early as the 1960s, anthropologist Margaret Mead (1966) predicted that living together would allow people to make better decisions about marriage. Yet some studies suggest that those who live with their partners before marrying them are slightly more likely to divorce than individuals who do not cohabit before marriage (Goodwin et al. 2010). How could this be so?

Sociologists offer two explanations: the *selection explanation* and the *experience of living together explanation*. The selection explanation proposes that people who live together would be more likely to divorce even if they hadn’t ever lived together before marriage. That is, the very people who would choose to cohabit differ from those who don’t, and the traits that distinguish the two groups are associated with their chances of divorcing. For example, people who cohabit are less religious than those people who refuse to cohabit (Kamp Dush, Cohan, and Amato 2003). People who are less religious would be less likely to stay married in any event, whereas people who are more religious would be more likely to stay married.

Although the selection explanation suggests that there is nothing inherent about cohabitation that promotes divorce, the competing explanation suggests that living together is the kind of experience that erodes belief in the permanence of marriage. As people go through their twenties living with various partners, they develop a sense that

relationships can be started and ended easily and that they have many options for intimate relations outside of marriage (Teachman 2003).

Which explanation is right? The best evidence seems to indicate that while cohabitation may slightly increase the probability of divorce, the majority of divorces among those who cohabit is due to the fact that people who choose to live together before marrying have characteristics (such as low levels of religiosity) that would make divorce more likely for them anyway. Recent evidence also suggests that these patterns vary across historical time. One recent analysis found that the association between cohabitation and divorce was due in large part to selection during the 1980s when cohabitation was uncommon and limited to particular demographic subgroups, such as financially disadvantaged persons or those who eschewed marriage. However, evidence of selection effects had disappeared by the early 2000s, when cohabitation was widespread and relatively “universal,” with young people from all walks of life (not just disadvantaged backgrounds) opting for this living arrangement (Lu et al. 2012).

One other interesting fact bears on this discussion. People who cohabit only with the person they marry have as low a divorce rate as people who never cohabit. Perhaps this is because such people don't live together with enough partners to get a sense that relationships can be started and ended at will. Or perhaps it is because the very kinds of people who would live with only one partner have characteristics, such as higher religiosity, that keep divorce down. Overall, though, sociologists agree that there is little evidence that living together “causes” divorce.

Same-Sex-Parent Families

LGBT college students today can look forward to a much more accepting social world than the one that greeted generations before them. Many gays and lesbians now live in stable relationships as couples, and this number is projected to increase dramatically with the 2015 Supreme Court decision guaranteeing the right to marriage for all. According to estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, there are currently more than 780,000 same-sex families in the United States, roughly 334,000 of whom report themselves as married (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015a).

Alongside the increase in same-sex marriage, same-sex couples are forming families with children in unprecedented numbers. Nearly one-fifth of same-sex-couple households include children, 72 percent of whom live with female same-sex couples and 28 percent of whom reside with male same-sex couples (Payne and Manning 2015). According to the Williams Institute, an estimated 37 percent of LGBT-identified persons have been a parent, and an estimated 6 million children in the United States have lived with a gay parent at some point in their lives (Gates 2013). Although lesbian couples may have a child by donor insemination and gay men may rely on a surrogate to carry a biological child, LGBT-identified persons are far more likely than heterosexuals to have a child through adoption. Same-sex couples raising children are four times more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to be raising an adopted child, and more than six times as likely to be raising foster children (Gates 2013).

The legal, cultural, and technological landscapes facing gay parents and their children have changed dramatically in recent years. Increasingly tolerant attitudes toward LGBT persons have been accompanied by a growing tendency for courts to allocate

Maternity Leave

Of the 185 countries included in a 2014 report by the International Labor Organization, all but two countries—the United States and Papua New Guinea—mandate paid leave for new mothers. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, new mothers are given an average of almost 27 weeks of leave.

Length of Maternity Leave (in weeks)



Note: All the countries featured pay 80%–100% of previous earnings for the entire period of leave.

Source: International Labor Organization 2014



The balance of studies shows that sexual orientation has no bearing on one's capacity to be a loving parent.

second parent adoption

A family in which one partner adopts a child and the other partner applies to be a second parent or co-parent.

custody of children to mothers living in lesbian relationships. Roughly one out of every five same-sex couples is raising adopted children, and all 50 states now allow LGBT individuals to adopt a child, although states vary in their policies regarding **second parent adoption** (where one partner adopts a child and the partner applies to be a second or co-parent) and **joint adoption** (where the partners adopt a child together) (Family Equality Council 2014). Popular media images in recent years, such as the film *The Kids Are All Right*, depict same-sex parents as providing the same love and guidance as heterosexual parents.

One reason for this growing acceptance of gay adoption and parenting is that widespread consensus has emerged among scholars that the ability to parent effectively is not related to sexual orientation. Although one recent and controversial study argued that children of parents who had ever had a same-sex relationship would go on to face greater adversity, this study has since been discredited for its serious methodological limitations (Regnerus 2012). The most persuasive and comprehensive reviews of scientific research to date, including the American Psychological Association's (2005) review of sixty studies and the American Academy of Pediatrics' (2013) seminal report, have concluded that "children growing up in households headed by gay men or lesbians are not disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents" (Perrin, Cohen, and Caren 2013). The sixty studies considered a range of outcomes, including school performance, social adjustment, and emotional well-being, concluding that children's well-being is much more closely tied to their parents' "sense of competence and security"—and the "social and economic support" they provided their children—than sexual orientation.

For example, Rosenfeld (2010) finds that children of gay parents are just as likely as the children of straight parents to progress successfully throughout their school grades without being left back. Part of the reason children fare equally well regardless of parental sexual orientation is that sexual orientation has no bearing on one's capacity to be a loving parent. Moreover, children of same-sex couples usually share a common peer and school environment with children of heterosexual couples. As such, their experiences at school and with peers are very similar regardless of their parents' romantic preferences (Rosenfeld 2010). Most studies also show no differences in the psychological adjustment of children raised by same-sex or opposite-sex parents; for example, several studies of teenagers show no differences in their depressive symptoms,

anxiety, self-esteem, or risk of ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) (Gattrell and Bos 2010; Lamb 2012).

Although children of gay or straight parents are neither significantly advantaged nor disadvantaged, some studies point out a small number of differences. For example, sociologists Judith Stacey and Timothy Biblarz (2001) reviewed twenty-one studies dating back to the 1980s and found that children in gay households are more likely to buck stereotypical male-female behavior. For example, boys raised by lesbians appear to be less aggressive and more nurturing than boys raised in heterosexual families. Daughters of lesbians are more likely to aspire to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, and astronauts. Heterosexual mothers tend to encourage sons to participate in historically “masculine” games and activities, such as Little League, and daughters in more “feminine” pursuits, such as ballet. In contrast, lesbian mothers had no such interest; their preferences for their children’s play were gender neutral. The balance of evidence shows that children of gay parents are just as happy, healthy, and academically successful as their peers raised by heterosexual parents, and they may have more flexible views of gender and gender-typed behaviors.

Being Single

The broad category of “single” encompasses both people who have never married and those who have married but are now single due to divorce, separation, or widowhood. The number of people classified as single has increased dramatically in recent decades. Several factors have contributed to this trend. First, people are marrying later than ever. That means that more and more people in their twenties, thirties, and even forties are unmarried, either cohabiting with a nonmarital partner or waiting for the “right one” to come along. Second, the rise and stabilization of divorce rates over the past half-century mean that many more people are living on their own when their marriage ends. Third, the “graying of the U.S. population” is accompanied by growing numbers of older adults whose partners have died and who now are technically “single” and live alone as widows and widowers. Fourth, the “stigma” of being single has diminished, due in part to television shows such as *Sex and the City*, which glamorized the lifestyles of “single and fabulous” women. As such, many more Americans are happily choosing to live their lives on their own (Byrne and Carr 2005; Klinenberg 2012a).

Yet are people really happy on their own, or are they better off being married? A large literature dating back to Émile Durkheim’s classic *Suicide* (1966; orig. 1897) argues that social ties, especially marriage and parenthood, are essential to one’s physical, social, and emotional well-being. Contemporary studies also show that divorced and widowed people report more sickness, depression, and anxiety compared with their married counterparts, although much of this disadvantage reflects the strains that precede a marital transition (such as a husband’s illness or marital strife) as well as the strains that follow from the dissolution, such as financial worries or legal battles (Carr and Springer 2010).

But what about people who are long-term singles or who choose to live alone without a spouse or partner? To date, these individuals are relatively rare, as more than 90 percent of American adults do ultimately marry. However, researchers have projected that as many as one in five Millennials (those born in the 1980s and thereafter) will never marry. Many reasons are given, including the four reasons cited in this

joint adoption

A family in which both partners adopt a child together.

section's opening paragraph; however, Millennials are particularly likely to face financial obstacles to marriage, given their high levels of unemployment, school debt, and tendency to live with their parents rather than on their own during their twenties (Wang and Parker 2014).

Yet is lifelong singlehood a bad thing? Are their lives marked by loneliness and isolation? Research by sociologist Eric Klinenberg and others finds that living alone can “promote freedom, personal control, and self-realization—all prized aspects of contemporary life” (Klinenberg, 2012b). After interviewing more than 300 people who live alone, he found that they had more, rather than less, social interaction than their married counterparts, and much of their social interactions were those they sought out by choice: encounters with friends, volunteering, arts events, classes, and other meetings that rounded out their lives. These patterns hold among older adults and younger adults alike. As Klinenberg observes, for many people, living alone and being able to choose how and with whom they spend their time is a sought-after luxury.

Taken together, research showing that people who live alone (by choice) are no better or worse off than their partnered peers underscores one of the core themes of the sociology of families: There is no one “best” or “typical” way in which Americans arrange their social lives. It is the freedom to choose one's relationships that is essential to one's happiness.

Being Child-Free

The number of Americans who do not have children increased steadily throughout the 1980s and 1990s, yet has recently dipped (Livingston 2015). Calculating precisely who is childless is difficult; researchers historically have classified a woman as having no children if she has had zero children by age forty-four. Using this metric, the proportion of women ages forty to forty-four with no children climbed from 10 percent in 1986 to 15 percent in 1986 to 20 percent in 2006; rates dropped to 15 percent by 2014.

White women are considerably more likely than black, Asian, or Hispanic women to be child-free (17 versus 15, 13, and 10 percent, respectively). Women with a college degree or higher are more likely than high school graduates or dropouts to have no children. Most studies find that a relatively small fraction of these women are involuntarily childless; with advances in health and technology, the proportion who cannot physically bear children is modest. Rather, the reasons are often social and psychological, including not having a partner with whom one would want to have a child, a preference for a child-free lifestyle, concerns about the environment and bringing a child into an unsafe world, and concerns about whether one has the financial and emotional wherewithal to have a child (Connidis & McMullin 1996; Jacobson & Heaton 1991).

Childlessness was historically viewed as a stigmatized identity, a mark of a “barren” woman or a woman who was “selfish” and prioritized her own career pursuits over motherhood (May 1997). However, in recent decades, childlessness has been increasingly recognized as a status that is desirable and even preferable for many women and men. Those who do not have children have myriad opportunities to “give back” to the next generation by volunteering or caring for nieces or nephews, should they choose to do so (Sandler 2013).

Decisions about our family lives are among the most important ones we make. As we have seen in this chapter, marrying (or staying single), having (or not having) children—whether with a partner or on our own—and staying married (versus divorcing) are personal choices. Yet they are also powerfully shaped by other social factors, including our birth cohort, race, ethnicity, and social class. Although our personal preferences and values may shape our choices, the relationship between values and personal decision making is complex. Our personal decisions are also shaped by social institutions, including the law and the economy.

When Edith Windsor, whom we met in the chapter opener, was a young woman in the 1960s, she was unable to marry her longtime love, Thea Spyer. Edith and Thea lived together as a loving couple for more than forty years but were not allowed to legally marry until 2007. Their relationship ultimately changed history by leading to the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 2013 and the Supreme Court decision in 2015 guaranteeing individuals the right to same-sex marriage. This historic verdict ensures that all Americans have the right to marry, eliminating once and for all a structural barrier to marriage equality.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 Why has cohabitation become so common in the United States and worldwide?
- 2 Does cohabitation lead to divorce? Why or why not?
- 3 What are two factors that have contributed to the rise in the number of people classified as single?
- 4 What are two main reasons for being child-free?

The Big Picture

Families and Intimate Relationships

Thinking Sociologically

1. Using this textbook's presentation, compare the characteristics of contemporary white non-Hispanic, Asian American, Latino, and African American families.
2. Increases in cohabitation and single-parent households suggest that marriage may be beginning to fall by the wayside in our contemporary society. However, this chapter claims that marriage and family remain firmly established institutions in our society. Explain the rising patterns of cohabitation and single-parent households and show how these seemingly paradoxical trends can be reconciled with the claims offered by this textbook.

Learning Objectives

How Do Sociological Theories Characterize Families?

p. 320

Review the development of sociological thinking about families and family life.

How Have Families Changed over Time?

p. 323

Understand how families have changed over the last 300 years. See that although a diversity of family forms exists in different societies today, widespread changes are occurring that relate to the spread of globalization.

What Do Marriage and Family in the United States Look Like Today?

p. 328

Learn about patterns of marriage, childbearing, divorce, remarriage, and child-free families. Analyze how different these patterns are today compared with other periods.

Why Does Family Violence Happen?

p. 340

Learn about sexual abuse and violence within families.

How Do New Family Forms Affect Your Life?

p. 360

Learn about some alternatives to traditional family forms and family patterns that are more widespread.

Terms to Know

ly • kinship • marriage • nuclear family •
nded family • family of orientation • family
recreation • monogamy • polygamy •
gyny • polyandry • primary socialization •
onality stabilization

Concept Checks

1. According to the functionalist perspective, what are two main functions of families?
2. According to feminist perspectives, what three aspects of family life are sources of concern? Why are these three aspects troubling to feminists?

1. Briefly describe changes in family size over the past three centuries.
2. How has Stephanie Coontz dispelled the myth of the peaceful and harmonious family believed to exist in past decades?
3. Give two examples of problems facing families in past centuries.
4. What are four conditions that have contributed to changing family forms throughout the world?
5. Name at least two recent shifts in family life that relate to the spread of globalization.
6. How has migration from rural to urban areas affected family life?
7. What are the seven most important changes occurring in families worldwide?

family

1. Briefly describe changes in family structure in the United States since 1960.
2. Contrast both general and nonmarital fertility rates among whites, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans in the United States.
3. What are the main reasons divorce rates increased sharply during the latter half of the twentieth century?
4. How does divorce affect the well-being of children?

1. How do social scientists measure and track patterns of child abuse?
2. Describe structural and cultural factors that are linked with intimate partner violence.

abitation • second parent adoption •
adoption

1. Why has cohabitation become so common in the United States and worldwide?
2. Does cohabitation lead to divorce? Why or why not?
3. What are two factors that have contributed to the rise in the number of people classified as single?
4. What are two main reasons for being child-free?

12

Education and Religion

Educational Attainment



Malala Yousafzai has become an internationally recognized advocate for girls' education. At age fifteen in 2012, Malala was shot and gravely wounded by members of the Taliban. Malala survived the injury and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

Why are education and literacy so important?

Know how and why systems of mass education emerged in the United States. Know some basic facts about the education system and literacy rates of developing countries.

What is the linkage between education and inequality?

Become familiar with the most important research on whether education reduces or perpetuates inequality. Learn the social and cultural influences on educational achievement.

How do sociologists think about religion?

Learn the elements that make up religion. Know the sociological approaches to religion developed by Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, as well as the religious economy approach.

How does religion affect life throughout the world?

Understand the various ways religious communities are organized and how they have become institutionalized. Recognize how the globalization of religion is reflected in religious activism in poor countries and the rise of religious nationalist movements.

How does religion affect your life in the United States?

Learn about the sociological dimensions of religion in the United States.





Most young American men and women take for granted that they will graduate high school, and even go on to college or graduate school. Yet in some parts of the world, young women have to fight to receive even a middle-school education. For the remarkable Malala Yousafzai, her desire to receive an education nearly cost the teenager her life.

In October 2012, when Malala was just fifteen years old, she was shot in the head and neck as she rode the bus home from her school in Mingora in the Swat district of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The gunmen were members of the Taliban, an Islamic fundamentalist group that has long oppressed women. The Taliban had set an edict that girls in Mingora could not attend school after the age of fifteen. They had reportedly blown up more than 100 schools and threatened to blow up others. But why would they single out Malala for attack?

Several years earlier, Malala had maintained a blog and had spoken out publicly against the Taliban's mistreatment of girls and women. In one of her early public speeches, the bold teenager asked, "How dare the Taliban take away my basic right to education?" By challenging



At age seventeen, Malala became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Recently, she co-founded the Malala Fund, organizing projects in six countries to advocate for girls' education and empower girls to become leaders.

the religious beliefs of the Taliban and advocating for the education of girls and women, Malala had made herself a target (Peer 2012; Yousafzai and Lamb 2013).

The shooting of Malala sent shockwaves throughout the world. In the days after her attack, she lay unconscious at a local hospital in critical condition. As her condition stabilized, she was sent to a hospital in England for continued care. Her health improved, but she remained at risk; members of the Taliban publicly stated that they still intended to kill Malala and her father, a poet and social activist. Malala ultimately triumphed, however. She made a full recovery, wrote a book documenting her ordeal (Yousafzai and Lamb 2013), and became an internationally recognized heroine—an advocate for women's education worldwide. She received a litany of awards, including the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize. Malala also graced the cover of *Time* magazine and was named one of the 100 most influential people in the world. Her ordeal also called attention to the state of girls' education in Pakistan, as well as other parts of the world where a high school diploma is not a taken-for-granted part of teenagers' lives. Just 2.5 percent of Pakistan's gross domestic product is dedicated to education. According to United Nations data, 5.6 million children in Pakistan are not attending school, and nearly 60 percent of them are female. Due in part to this gender gap in education, a stark gender gap in literacy rates persists; 33 percent of young women ages fifteen to twenty-four (versus just 20 percent of their male peers) are illiterate, meaning that they cannot read or write (UNESCO 2016).

Malala's story highlights many important themes at the core of the sociology of education and the sociology of religion. Education is a social institution that teaches individuals how to be active, engaged members of society. Through education, we become aware of the common characteristics we share with other members of society and gain at least some knowledge about our society's geographical and political position in the world and its history. The educational system both directly and indirectly exposes young people to the lessons that they will need to learn to become players in other major social institutions such as the economy and the family. Yet education also gives us power; it provides us with the intellectual resources to scrutinize the world around us. As we saw in Chapter 7, formal education also provides the tools and credentials needed to seek gainful employment and, in some cases, to become upwardly mobile economically. It's mainly for these reasons that the Taliban so opposed Malala and other girls receiving an education: It would give them freedom, independence, and knowledge of a world beyond the confines of their insular Muslim community.

Like education, religion is an institution that exercises a socializing influence. However, while education is intended to be universalistic and to expose all young people to similar messages, religious institutions vary widely in the values, beliefs, and practices that they espouse. Some religions, for example, teach that all persons are created equal, whereas others are based on a foundation of oppression, where some groups are viewed as morally superior to and more worthy than others. Sociologists of religion try to assess under what conditions religion unites communities and under what conditions it divides them. The study of religion is a challenging enterprise that places special demands on the sociological imagination, as we must be sensitive to individual beliefs that may be rooted in faith more so than science.

This chapter focuses on the socializing processes of education and religion. To study these issues, we look at how present-day education developed and analyze its socializing influence. We also look at education in relation to social inequality and consider how far the educational system exacerbates or reduces such inequality. Then we move to studying

religion and the different forms that religious beliefs and practices take. We also analyze the various types of religious organizations and the effect of social change on the position of religion in the wider world.

Why Are Education and Literacy So Important?

The term *school* has its origins in a Greek word meaning “leisure,” or “recreation.” In premodern societies, schooling existed for the few who had the time and resources available to pursue the cultivation of the arts and philosophy. For some, their engagement with schooling was like taking up a hobby. For others, such as religious leaders or priests, schooling was a way of gaining skills and thus increasing their ability to interpret sacred texts. But for the vast majority of people, growing up meant learning by example the same social habits and work skills as their elders. Learning was a family affair—there were no schools for the mass of the population. Since children often started to help with domestic duties and farming work at very young ages, they rapidly became full-fledged members of the community.

Education in its modern form, the instruction of pupils within specially constructed school premises, gradually emerged in the first few years of the nineteenth century, when primary schools began to be constructed in Europe and the United States. One main reason for the rise of large educational systems was the process of industrialization, with its ensuing expansion of cities.

Education and Industrialization

Until the first few decades of the nineteenth century, most of the world's population had no schooling whatsoever. But as the industrial economy rapidly expanded, there was a great demand for specialized schooling that could produce an educated, capable workforce. As occupations became more differentiated and were increasingly located away from the home, it was impossible for work skills to be passed on directly from parents to children.

As educational systems became universal, more and more people were exposed to abstract learning (of subjects like math, science, history, and literature), rather than to the practical transmission of specific skills. In a modern society, people have to be furnished with basic skills—such as reading, writing, and calculating—and a general knowledge of their physical, social, and economic environment, but it is also important that they know how to learn, so that they are able to master new, sometimes very technical, forms of information. An advanced society also needs pure research and insights with no immediate practical value, in order to push out the boundaries of knowledge. For example, developing complex reasoning skills, the ability to debate the merits of competing theories, and an understanding of philosophical and religious debates are three skills essential to a cultured and well-educated society.

In the modern age, education and other qualifications became an important stepping-stone into job opportunities and careers. For example, colleges and universities



Know how and why systems of mass education emerged in the United States. Know some basic facts about the education system and literacy rates of developing countries.

With the spread of industrialization, the demand for educated workers increased. The newly expanded education systems emphasized basic skills like reading, writing, and mathematics instead of specific skills for work.



not only broaden people's minds and perspectives but are expected to prepare new generations of citizens for participation in economic life. Think about your own college education. Perhaps you're required to take certain general-education courses to provide you with a broad base of knowledge; you might also take very specific courses in your major that help prepare you for your future career. It can be difficult to achieve the right balance between receiving a generalist education and mastering concepts and skills related to one's chosen profession. Specialized forms of technical, vocational, and professional training often supplement pupils' liberal arts education and facilitate the transition from school to work. Internships, for example, allow young people to gain specific knowledge applicable to their future careers.

Although schools and universities seek above all to provide students with a well-rounded education, policymakers and employers are concerned with ensuring that education and training programs produce a stream of graduates who can meet a country's employment demands. Yet in times of rapid economic and technical change, the priorities of the educational system don't always match up with the availability of professional opportunities. The rapid expansion of a country's health care system, for example, would dramatically increase the demand for trained health professionals, laboratory technicians, capable administrators, and computer systems analysts familiar with public health issues.

The complex relationship between the educational system and the country's employment demands may be further complicated by an emerging trend: home schooling. Between 2000 and 2011, the number of students who were home schooled increased steadily; an estimated 1.8 million (or 3.4 percent of all) children are currently home schooled

(U.S. Department of Education 2013). **Home schooling** means that a child is taught by his or her parents, guardians, or a team of adults who oversee the child's educational development. The curriculum studied by home-schooled children varies widely from state to state; some states mandate quite strict curricula, while others are much more lax and provide the parent with great leeway.

A survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education in 2012 queried parents about their motivation for home schooling their children. The most frequently cited reasons were a concern about the school environment (91 percent), a desire to provide moral instruction (77 percent), and dissatisfaction with the academic instruction at other schools (74 percent). It remains to be seen how well home schooling prepares young adults for the future challenges of college or employment in the United States. Only one study to date has examined how college students who were home schooled compare with their classmates who attended regular high schools. The researchers found that home-schooled young adults enjoyed higher ACT scores, grade point averages, and graduation rates compared with other college students (Cogan 2010). However, many sociologists would like to see these findings confirmed in other samples before concluding that home schooling provides the same benefits as traditional schools.

Sociological Theories of Education

Sociologists have debated why formal systems of schooling developed in modern societies by studying the social functions that schools provide. Functionalist theory focuses on the way schooling helps contribute to the stability of society. For example, some have argued that mass education promotes feelings of nationalism and aids the development of national societies comprising citizens from different regions who would know the same history and speak a common language (Ramirez and Boli 1987). Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning of class or celebrating Constitution Day are among the ways that schools promote a sense of national identity among students. In this approach, the content of education is particularly important in creating a common culture.

Conflict theory is less concerned with the content of an official curriculum and focuses instead on the ways that schooling reproduces social inequality (we will further explore the link between education and inequality later in the chapter). Working within this perspective, Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue that the expansion of education was brought about by employers' need for certain personality characteristics in their workers—self-discipline, dependability, punctuality, obedience, and the like—which are all taught in schools.

Another influential conflict perspective comes from the sociologist Randall Collins, who has argued that the primary social function of mass education derives from the need for diplomas and degrees to determine one's credentials for a job, even if the work involved has nothing to do with the education one has received. Over time, the practice of credentialism results in demands for higher credentials, which require higher levels of educational attainment. Jobs that thirty years ago would have required a high school diploma now require a college degree. Since educational attainment is closely related to class position, credentialism reinforces the class structure within a society (Collins 1971, 1979).

home schooling

The practice of parents or guardians educating their children at home, for religious, philosophical, or safety reasons.



Schools promote a sense of national identity among students through customs such as the Pledge of Allegiance.



Education and Literacy in the Developing World

literacy

The ability to read and write.

Literacy is the “baseline” of education. Without it, schooling cannot proceed. We take it for granted in the West that the majority of people are literate, but this is only a recent development in Western history. The rise of literacy in Europe was closely tied to sweeping social transformations, particularly the Protestant Reformation, which brought individual study of the Bible, and the rise of modern science. Literacy spread during the Reformation and Renaissance eras due largely to the development of printing from movable type. Compulsory schooling, established in Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century, was perhaps the most important influence on the high rates of literacy in the world today (Barton 2006).

During the period of colonialism, colonial governments regarded education with some trepidation. Until the twentieth century, most believed indigenous populations were too primitive to be worth educating. Later, education was seen as a way of making local elites acclimate to European ways of life. To some extent, this backfired: The majority of those who led anti-colonial and nationalist movements were educated elites who had attended schools in Europe. They were able to compare firsthand the democratic institutions of the European countries with the absence of democracy in their lands of origin.

The education that the colonizers introduced usually focused on issues relevant to Europe, not the colonial areas themselves. Educated Africans in the British colonies knew about the kings and queens of England and read Shakespeare but knew next to nothing about their own countries' histories or cultural achievements. Policies of educational reform since the end of colonialism have not completely altered the situation even today. Partly as a result of the legacy of colonial education, which was not directed toward the majority of the population, the educational system in many developing countries is top heavy: Higher education is disproportionately developed, relative to primary and secondary education. The result is a correspondingly overqualified group that, having attended colleges and universities, cannot find white-collar or professional jobs. Given the low level of industrial development, most of the better-paid positions are in government, and there are not enough of those to go around.

Today, 40 percent of the population ages fifteen and older in the least-developed countries are illiterate. Literacy rates are lowest in sub-Saharan Africa (65 percent) and South and West Africa (70 percent). Fully two-thirds of the global illiterate adult population are women (UNESCO 2016). In recent years, some developing countries, recognizing the shortcomings of the curricula inherited from colonialism, have tried to redirect their educational programs toward the rural poor. They have had limited success because usually there is insufficient funding to pay for the scale of the necessary innovations. As a result, countries such as India have begun programs of self-help education. Communities draw on existing resources without creating demands for high levels of financing. Those who can read and write and who perhaps possess job skills are encouraged to take others on as apprentices.

CONCEPT CHECKS

Why did schooling become widespread only after the Industrial Revolution?

What are some of the functions of formal schooling?

What are the three of the most frequently cited reasons for home schooling?

What are some of the reasons there are many illiterate people in the developing world?

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is a key indicator of human development. The level and distribution of educational attainment has a strong impact on social outcomes, such as child mortality, fertility, and income distribution.

Proportion of School-Age Population Enrolled in Secondary School*



Mean Years of Schooling**

United Kingdom	13.1	China	7.5
United States	12.9	Kenya	6.3
Russian Federation	12.0	India	5.4
Japan	11.5	Afghanistan	3.2
Mexico	8.5	Senegal	2.5

*Proportions can exceed 100% due to the inclusion of over-aged and under-aged students because of early or late school entrance and grade repetition.

**Average number of years of education received by people ages 25 and older.

Source: United Nations Development Programme, 2016.

What Is the Linkage between Education and Inequality?

> Become familiar with the most important research on whether education reduces or perpetuates inequality. Learn the social and cultural influences on educational achievement.

The expansion of education in both developing and wealthy nations has always been closely linked to the ideals of democracy. Reformers value education for its own sake—for the opportunity it provides for individuals to develop their capabilities. Yet education has also consistently been seen as a means of promoting equality. Access to universal education, it has been argued, could help reduce disparities of wealth and power. But are educational opportunities truly equal for everyone? Has education in fact proved to be a great equalizer? Much research has been devoted to answering these questions.

“Fire in the Ashes”

Over the past three decades, the journalist Jonathan Kozol has studied schools in about thirty neighborhoods around the United States. Through this work, he has vividly shown how unequal schools are in the United States and that these inequalities powerfully influence students’ lives as they enter adulthood. Beginning with his earliest research, conducted between 1988 and 1990, Kozol didn’t follow a special logic when he chose the schools in his study. He simply went where he happened to know teachers, principals, or ministers. What startled him most was the segregation within these schools and the inequalities among them. Kozol brought these terrible conditions to the attention of the American people in his bestselling book *Savage Inequalities* (Kozol 1991).

In his passionate opening chapter, he first took readers to East St. Louis, Illinois, a city that has been roughly 98 percent black for the past several decades. At the time of Kozol’s research, the city had no regular trash collection and few jobs. Three-quarters of its residents were living on welfare at the time. City residents were forced to use their backyards as garbage dumps, which attracted a plague of flies and rats during the hot summer months. East St. Louis also had some of the sickest children in the United States, with extremely high rates of infant death and asthma, poor nutrition, and extremely low rates of immunization. Among the city’s other social problems were crime, dilapidated housing, poor health care, and lack of education.

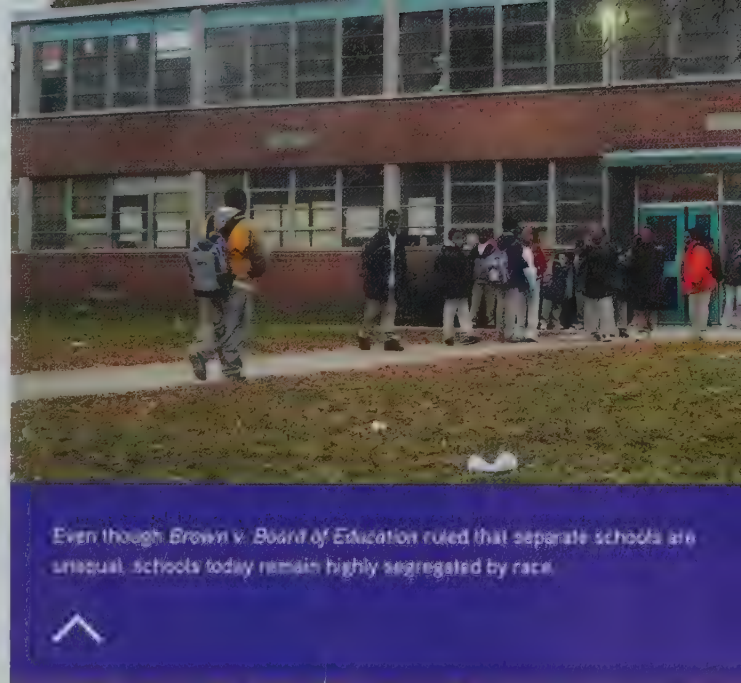
Kozol showed how the problems of the city affected the school on a daily basis. Teachers often had to hold classes without chalk or paper. One teacher commented on these conditions affecting her teaching: “I have no materials with the exception of a single textbook given to each child. If I bring in anything else—books or tapes or magazines—I bring it in myself. . . . The AV equipment in the school is so old that we are pressured not to use it.” Comments from students reflected the same concerns. “I don’t go to physics class because my lab has no equipment,” said one student. Only 55 percent of the students in this high school ultimately graduated, about one-third of whom went on to college.

Kozol also wrote about the other end of the economic spectrum, describing the experiences of students in a wealthy suburban school in Westchester County outside New York

City. Two-thirds of the senior class were enrolled in an advanced placement (AP) class. Kozol visited an AP class and asked students about their views on inequalities within the educational system. Students at this school were aware of the economic advantages that they enjoyed at both home and school. They were also aware of the disadvantages experienced by students in inner-city school districts. Although many believed that equalizing resources across schools was a laudable goal, they thought it would make little difference in the long run because the poor students lacked motivation and would fail because of the many other problems in their lives. These students also realized that equalizing spending could have adverse effects on their school. As one student observed, "If you equalize the money, someone's got to be shortchanged. I don't doubt that [poor] children are getting a bad deal. But do we want everyone to get a mediocre education?"

More than two decades later, Kozol went back and revisited the neighborhoods and children he studied to find out what had happened to them. His portraits are often depressing, with many of the children from the poorer districts growing up to be troubled adults. Their lives often were derailed by alcohol abuse, unwanted pregnancies, murders, prison time, and even suicide. Yet Kozol did find that a handful of the students succeeded even though the odds were stacked against them. Most of these resilient children had been fortunate to have especially devoted parents, support from their religious community, or a serendipitous scholarship opportunity. As Kozol notes in his 2012 book *Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years among the Poorest Children in America*, "These children had unusual advantages: Someone intervened in every case." For example, one young girl named Pineapple, whom Kozol met when she was a kindergartner, went on to graduate college and become a social worker. Pineapple attended a school that Kozol described as "almost always in a state of chaos because so many teachers did not stay for long." A local minister helped her get scholarships to private schools. The daughter of Spanish-speaking immigrants, Pineapple had to work hard to overcome deficits in reading, writing, and basic study skills, but she and her older sister both were the first in their family to finish high school and go to college (Kozol 2012).

While the personal tales of Pineapple and her sister are inspiring, Kozol's analyses reveal that very little has improved in the past two decades. For example, there remain vast disparities in educational spending in largely black and Latino central cities versus largely white well-to-do suburbs. He reported that in 2002–2003, New York City spent \$11,627 on each public school child, while in Nassau County, the towns of Manhasset and Great Neck spent \$22,311 and \$19,705, respectively. These patterns weren't limited to the New York area but rather were found throughout the United States. Because school funding tends to come from local property taxes, wealthier areas generate more funding for schools, while poorer neighborhoods with few lavish private homes have far less money for schools. As with his earlier studies of East St. Louis, Kozol visited schools that were



just a few miles apart geographically but that offered vastly different educational opportunities. While suburban white schools would offer advanced math, literature, and an array of arts electives, the nearby primarily black school would offer classes like hairdressing, typing, and auto shop. Ten years later, the situation hasn't changed: In 2013, the Chicago Ridge School District, where two-thirds of students come from low-income families, spent \$9,794 per child. Less than an hour north, in a wealthy Chicago suburb, the Rondout District spent \$28,639 per student (Turner et al. 2016).

Kozol's poignant journalistic account of educational inequality has become part of our nation's conventional wisdom on the subject of educational inequality. But many sociologists have argued that although Kozol's book is a moving portrait, it provides an inaccurate and incomplete view of educational inequality. Why would Kozol's research not be compelling? There are several reasons, including the unsystematic way that he chose the schools that he studied. Sociologists, however, have proposed a variety of theories and identified myriad factors that contribute to the inequality and differential outcomes that Kozol witnessed in the schools he visited.

Coleman's Study of "Between-School Effects" in American Education

Studies comparing how schools differ from one another (or "between-school effects" studies) have been the focus of sociological research on the educational system for the past three decades. One of the classic investigations of educational inequality was undertaken in the United States in the 1960s. As part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the commissioner of education was required to prepare a report on educational inequalities resulting from differences of ethnic background, religion, and national origin. James Coleman, a sociologist, was director of the research program. The outcome was a study, published in 1966, based on one of the most extensive research projects ever carried out in sociology.

Information was collected on more than half a million pupils who were given a range of achievement tests assessing verbal and nonverbal abilities, reading levels, and mathematical skills. Sixty thousand teachers also completed forms providing data for about 4,000 schools. The report found that a large majority of children went to schools that effectively segregated black from white. Almost 80 percent of schools attended by white students contained only 10 percent or fewer African American students. White and Asian American students scored higher on achievement tests than did blacks and other ethnic-minority students. Coleman had supposed his results would also show schools that were mainly African American to have worse facilities, larger classes, and inferior buildings than schools that were predominantly white. But surprisingly, the results showed far fewer differences of this type than had been anticipated.

Coleman therefore concluded that the material resources provided in schools made little difference to educational performance; the decisive influence was the children's backgrounds. In Coleman's words, "Inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighborhood, and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school" (Coleman et al. 1966). There was, however, some evidence that students from deprived backgrounds who formed close friendships with those from more favorable circumstances were likely to be more successful educationally. The findings of Coleman's study have been replicated many times over the past decades,

most notably by Christopher Jencks and colleagues (Jencks et al. 1972; Schofield 1995). In 2011 black students, on average, attended schools that were 48 percent black; white students, on average, attended schools that were only 9 percent black (Bohrnstedt 2015).

Tracking and “Within-School Effects”

The practice of **tracking**—dividing students into groups that receive different instruction on the basis of assumed similarities in ability or attainment—is common in American schools. In some schools, students are tracked only for certain subjects; in others, for all subjects. Sociologists have long believed that tracking partly explains why schooling seems to have little effect on existing social inequalities, since being placed in a particular track labels a student as either able or otherwise. Children from more privileged backgrounds, in which academic work is encouraged, are likely to find themselves in the higher tracks early on—and by and large stay there.

In a classic study of school tracking, Jeannie Oakes (1985) studied twenty-five middle schools and high schools, both large and small and in both urban and rural areas, and concentrated on differences within schools rather than among them. She found that although several schools claimed they did not track students, virtually all of them had mechanisms for sorting students into groups on the basis of purported ability and achievement to make teaching easier. In other words, they employed tracking but did not choose to use the term *tracking* itself. Oakes found that tracking made both teachers and students label students based on their track—high ability, low achieving, slow, average, and so on. Individual students in these groups came to be defined by teachers, other students, and themselves in terms of such labels. A student in a “high-achieving” group was considered a high-achieving person—smart and quick. Pupils in a “low-achieving” group came to be seen as slow, below average. What is the impact of tracking on students in the “low” group? A subsequent study by Oakes found that these students received a poorer education in terms of the quality of courses, teachers, and textbooks made available to them (Oakes 1990). Moreover, tracking had a negative impact primarily on students who were poor, and particularly on African American and Latino students.

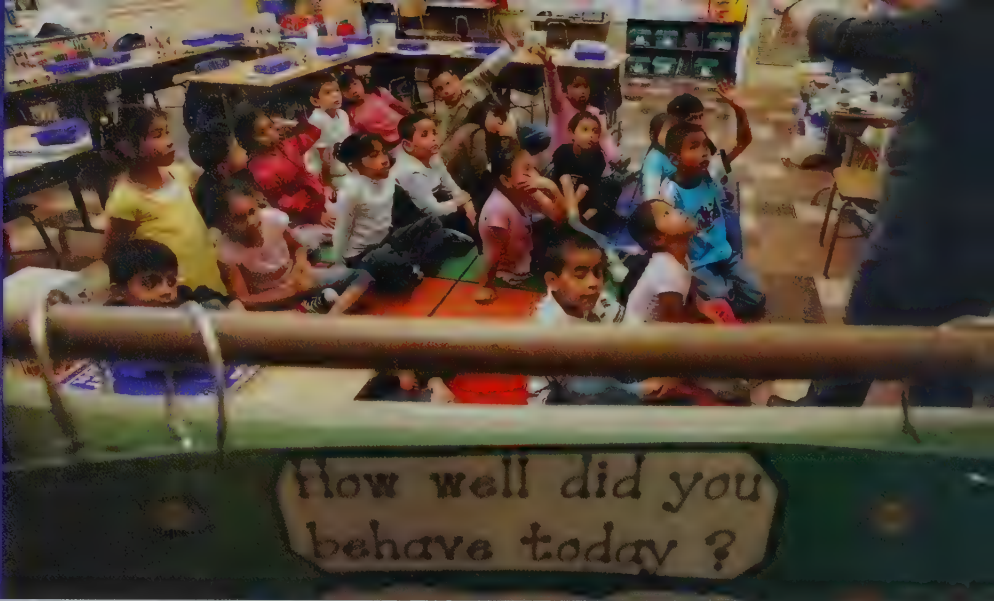
Despite these negative consequences, school systems typically track students because of the assumption that bright children learn more quickly and effectively in a group of others who are equally able, and that clever students are held back if placed in mixed groups. This assumption is partially supported by a pathbreaking study by the sociologist Adam Gamoran. He and his colleagues agreed with Oakes’s conclusions that tracking reinforces previously existing inequalities for average or poor students. However, they also found that tracking has positive benefits for “advanced” students (Gamoran et al. 1995).

tracking

Dividing students into groups that receive different instruction on the basis of perceived similarities in ability.

The Social Reproduction of Inequality

As we mentioned earlier, the educational system provides more than formal instruction: It socializes children to get along with one another, teaches basic skills, and transmits elements of culture such as language and values. Sociologists have looked at education as a form of social reproduction, a concept discussed in Chapter 1 and elsewhere. In the context of education, *social reproduction* refers to the ways in which schools help perpetuate social and economic inequalities across the generations. A number of sociologists have argued that the hidden curriculum is the mechanism through which social reproduction occurs.



In addition to the official curriculum of reading, writing, and calculating, there exists a hidden curriculum in schools whereby students are instructed on how to behave.

hidden curriculum

Traits of behavior or attitudes that are learned at school but not included within the formal curriculum—for example, gender differences.

The **hidden curriculum** addresses the fact that much of what is learned in school has nothing directly to do with the formal content of lessons. The hidden curriculum teaches children that their role in life is “to know their place and to sit still with it” (Illich 1983). Children spend long hours in school and get an early taste of what the world of work will be like, learning that they are expected to be punctual and apply themselves diligently to the tasks that those in authority set for them.

In their classic study of social reproduction, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) provide an example of how the hidden curriculum works. Modern education, they propose, is a response to the economic needs of industrial capitalism. Schools help provide the technical and social skills required by industrial enterprise, and they instill discipline and respect for authority in the future labor force. Authority relations in school, which are hierarchical and place strong emphasis on obedience, directly parallel those dominating the workplace. Under the current system, schools “are destined to legitimize inequality, limit personal development to forms compatible with submission to arbitrary authority, and aid in the process whereby youth are resigned to their fate” (1976, 266). If there were greater democracy in the workplace and more equality in society at large, Bowles and Gintis argue, a system of education could be developed that would provide for greater individual fulfillment.

Adherents of this perspective don't completely dismiss the content of the official curriculum. They accept that the development of mass education has had many beneficial consequences, including low illiteracy rates compared with premodern times. But because education has expanded mainly as a response to economic needs, schooling has not become the “great equalizer”; rather, within the current economic and political system, schooling reproduces social class stratification and merely produces for many the feelings of powerlessness that continue throughout their experience in industrial settings.

Intelligence and Inequality

Suppose differences in educational attainment, and in subsequent occupations and incomes, directly reflected differential intelligence. In such circumstances, it might be

argued, there is in fact equality of opportunity in the school system for people to find a level equivalent to their innate potential. For years, psychologists, geneticists, statisticians, and others have debated whether there exists a single human capability that can be called **intelligence** and, if so, whether it rests on innately determined differences. Intelligence is difficult to define because, as the term is usually employed, it covers qualities that may be unrelated to one another. We might suppose, for example, that the “purest” form of intelligence is the ability to solve abstract mathematical puzzles. However, people who are very good at such puzzles sometimes show low capabilities in other areas.

Since the concept has proved so resistant to definition, some psychologists have proposed (and many educators have by default accepted) that intelligence should simply be regarded as “what **IQ (intelligence quotient)** tests measure.” Most IQ tests consist of a mixture of conceptual and computational problems. The tests are constructed so that the average score is 100: Anyone scoring below is thus labeled “below-average intelligence,” and anyone scoring above is “above-average intelligence.” In spite of the fundamental difficulty in measuring intelligence, IQ tests are widely used in research studies, as well as in schools and businesses.

Scores on IQ tests do in fact correlate highly with academic performance (which is not surprising, since IQ tests were originally developed to predict success at school). They therefore also correlate closely with social, economic, and ethnic differences, since these are associated with variations in levels of educational attainment. White students score better, on average, than African Americans or members of other disadvantaged minorities. The relationship between race and intelligence is best explained by social rather than biological causes, according to a team of Berkeley sociologists in their 1996 book *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth* (Fischer et al. 1996). The authors conducted this research as a way to rigorously evaluate the controversial claims made by Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray in their book *The Bell Curve* (1994), which argued that the black-white gap in IQ is due in part to genetic differences in intelligence. All societies have oppressed ethnic groups. Low status, often coupled with discrimination and mistreatment, leads to socioeconomic deprivation, group segregation, and a stigma of inferiority. The combination of these forces often prevents racial minorities from obtaining education, and consequently, their scores on standardized intelligence tests are lower.

The average lower IQ score of African Americans in the United States is remarkably similar to that of deprived ethnic minorities in other countries—such as the “untouchables” in India (who are at the very bottom of the caste system), the Maori in New Zealand, and the *burakumin* of Japan. Children in these groups score an average of 10 to 15 IQ points below children belonging to the ethnic majority. Such observations strongly suggest that the IQ variations between African Americans and whites in the United States result from social, cultural, and economic—rather than genetic—factors.

Educational Reform in the United States

Research done by sociologists has played a major role in reforming the educational system. The object of James Coleman's research, commissioned as part of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, was not solely academic; it was undertaken to influence policy. Education has long

intelligence

Level of intellectual ability, particularly as measured by IQ (intelligence quotient) tests.

IQ (intelligence quotient)

A score attained on tests of symbolic or reasoning abilities.

functional literacy

Having reading and writing skills that are beyond a basic level and are sufficient to manage one's everyday activities and employment tasks.



In 1970 a U.S. judge in North Carolina ordered that black students be bused to white schools and that white students be bused to black schools in an attempt to end the de facto segregation of public schools caused by white students living in predominantly white neighborhoods and black students living in predominantly black neighborhoods.

been a political battleground. In the 1960s, partly in response to Coleman's work, some politicians, educators, and community activists pushed for universal access to high-quality education through such initiatives as busing programs to mitigate racial segregation, bilingual education programs, multicultural education, open admissions to college, the establishment of ethnic studies programs on campuses, and more equitable funding schemes. Such initiatives were seen as supporting civil rights and equality. Educational policies in the twenty-first century have similarly intended to provide quality education to all children and close the achievement gap. However, scholars disagree about how successful recent policies have been in meeting this goal.

One important target of educational policy today is improving levels of **functional literacy** in the United States. Literacy is more than the ability to read and write; literacy is also the ability to process complex information in our increasingly technology-focused society. The National Center for Education Statistics breaks literacy into three components: prose literacy, document literacy, and quantitative literacy. *Prose literacy* means that a person can look at a short piece of text to get a small piece of uncomplicated information. *Document literacy* refers to a person's ability to locate and use information in forms, schedules, charts, graphs, and other informational tables. *Quantitative literacy* is the ability to do simple addition. In the United States today, only 13 percent of the population is proficient in these three areas (Kutner et al. 2007). Of course, the United States is a country of immigrants, who, when they arrive, may not be able to read and write, and who may also have trouble with English. However, this doesn't explain why America lags behind most other industrial countries in terms of its level of functional literacy.

Some policymakers believe that one of the most effective ways to enhance literacy and other academic outcomes is through formal testing and benchmarking of student progress. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002, aims to improve academic outcomes for all children and to close achievement gaps. As we saw in Chapter 7, rates of high school graduation and college attendance vary dramatically by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. At the top of the act's agenda is instituting **standardized testing**, in which all students in a state take the same test under the same conditions, as a means of measuring students' academic performance. The act also provides a strong push for school choice; that is, in the spirit of competition, parents are to be given choices as to where they send their children to school. Low-performing schools, at risk of losing students, may jeopardize their funding and eventually be closed. Another significant implication of NCLB is that for the first time since 1968, states are not required to offer non-English-speaking students bilingual education. Instead, the act emphasizes learning English over using students' native language to support learning objectives and favors English-only program models. NCLB also provides support for a "zero tolerance" approach to school discipline that was first mandated in the 1990 Gun-Free School Act.

The NCLB has been widely criticized, as teachers must "teach to the test." Critics have argued that the emphasis on standardized testing as the means of assessment encourages teachers to teach a narrow set of skills that will increase students' test performance, rather than helping them to acquire an in-depth understanding of important concepts and skills (Hursh 2007). Because teachers and principals at underperforming

schools risk job loss, some critics have described the program as a punitive model of school reform. They also note that achievement gaps have not changed and that the policy neglects the important fact that the broader socioeconomic context affects school functioning.

In 2012, recognizing that the NCLB may not be effective for all school systems, President Barack Obama granted waivers from NCLB requirements to thirty-two states, allowing them to develop their own standards and exempting them from the 2014 targets set by NCLB. In exchange for that flexibility, those states “have agreed to raise standards, improve accountability, and undertake essential reforms to improve teacher effectiveness,” the White House said in a statement. The Obama administration also implemented its own program, called Race to the Top, that rewards states that demonstrate improvements in student outcomes, including closing achievement gaps, increasing graduation rates, and better preparing students for college. States competing for the more than \$4 billion in grant money had to outline plans for developing and adopting common standards and assessments; building data systems that track student growth; recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers; and improving the lowest-achieving schools. Like NCLB, however, Race to the Top has been roundly criticized for relying too heavily on high-stakes testing and also failing to address the true causes of low student achievement, namely poverty and lack of opportunity (Dillon 2010).

The crisis in American schools won't be solved in the short term, and it won't be solved by educational reforms alone, no matter how well intended. In fact, a 2006 study by the U.S. Department of Education found that schools identified as most in need of improvement were disproportionately urban, high-poverty schools, and that school poverty and district size were more powerful predictors of school success than any policies actually implemented by the schools (U.S. Department of Education 2006). A further unintended consequence of the current emphasis on testing is that schools have narrowed their course offerings to focus much more heavily on tested subject areas while cutting time in science, social studies, music, art, and physical education (Center on Education Policy 2007).

The lesson of sociological research is that inequalities and barriers in educational opportunity reflect wider social divisions and tensions. While the United States remains wracked by racial tensions, and the polarization between decaying cities and affluent suburbs persists, the crisis in the school system is likely to prove difficult to turn around.

What is to be done? Some have proposed giving schools more control over their budgets (a reform that has been carried out in Britain). The idea is that more responsibility for and control over budgeting decisions will create a greater drive to improve the school. Further proposals include the re-funding of federal programs such as Head Start to ensure healthy early-childhood development and thus save millions of dollars in later costs. Others have called for the privatization of public education, a proposal that has gained numerous supporters in recent years. Yet others call for more vast reforms. Jean Anyon's (2005) analysis of how political and economic forces influence schooling concludes that economic reforms, such as job creation and training programs and corporate tax reform, are necessary in order for schools to improve.

standardized testing

A procedure whereby all students in a state take the same test under the same conditions.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 According to Kozol, how does education become an equalizer in American society? Why or why not?
- 2 How do Coleman's findings differ from the results of Kozol's research? Whose theory, in your opinion, can better explain the racial gap in educational achievement?
- 3 What effect does tracking have on academic achievement?
- 4 How do schools perpetuate existing inequalities across generations?
- 5 Explain the relationship between race and intelligence. Do you find the evidence compelling?
- 6 Describe the components and critiques of the No Child Left Behind Act and Race to the Top.



Learn the elements that make up religion. Know the sociological approaches to religion developed by Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, as well as the religious economy approach.

How Do Sociologists Think about Religion?

While modern education emerged in the nineteenth century, religion is one of the oldest human institutions. Cave drawings suggest that religious beliefs and practices existed more than 40,000 years ago. According to anthropologists, there have probably been about 100,000 religions throughout human history (Hadden 1997a). Sociologists define **religion** as a cultural system of commonly shared beliefs and rituals that provides a sense of meaning and purpose by creating an idea of reality that is sacred, all-encompassing, and supernatural (Berger 1967; Durkheim 1965, orig. 1912; Wuthnow 1988). There are three key elements in this definition:

religion

A set of beliefs adhered to by the members of a community, incorporating symbols regarded with a sense of awe or wonder together with ritual practices. Religions do not universally involve a belief in supernatural entities.

theism

A belief in one or more supernatural deities.

1. **Religion is a form of culture.** You will recall from Chapter 2 that culture consists of the shared beliefs, values, norms, and material conditions that create a common identity among a group of people. Religion shares all of these characteristics.
2. **Religion involves beliefs that take the form of ritualized practices.** All religions have a behavioral aspect—special activities that identify believers as members of the religious community.
3. **Perhaps most important, religion provides a sense of purpose—a feeling that life is meaningful.** It does so by explaining what transcends or overshadows everyday life in ways that other aspects of culture (such as an educational system or a belief in democracy) typically cannot (Geertz 1973; Wuthnow 1988).

What is absent from the sociological definition of religion is as important as what is included: Nowhere is there mention of God. We often think of **theism**—a belief in one or more supernatural deities (the term originates from the Greek word for God)—as basic to religion, but this is not necessarily the case. Some religions, such as Buddhism, believe in the existence of spiritual forces rather than a particular God.

Four broad conditions set the stage for the sociological study of religion:

1. **Sociologists are not concerned with whether religious beliefs are true or false.** From a sociological perspective, religions are regarded not as being decreed by God but as being socially constructed by human beings. As a result, sociologists put aside their personal beliefs when they study religion. They are concerned with the human rather than the divine aspects of religion. Sociologists ask: How is the religion organized? How is it related to the larger society? What explains its success or failure in recruiting and retaining believers? The question of whether a particular belief is “good” or “true,” however important it may be to the believers of the religion under study, is not something that sociologists are able to address as sociologists. (As individuals, they may have strong opinions, but one hopes that they can keep these opinions from biasing their research.)
2. **Sociologists are especially concerned with the social organization of religion.** Religions are among the most important institutions in society. They are



(Left) Surrounded by his parents and rabbi, a thirteen-year-old Jewish boy reads from the Torah during his Bar Mitzvah, effectively becoming a man in the eyes of his synagogue. (Right) In a Catholic church in Brooklyn, an infant is baptized into the Christian faith when a priest ceremonially anoints him or her with holy water. What are some similarities and differences among the rituals of various religions?



a primary source of the deepest-seated norms and values. At the same time, religions are typically practiced through an enormous variety of social forms. The sociology of religion is concerned with how different religious institutions and organizations actually function. The earliest European religions were often indistinguishable from the larger society, as religious beliefs and practices were incorporated into daily life. This is still true in many parts of the world today. In modern industrial society, however, religions have become established in separate, often bureaucratic, organizations, and so sociologists focus on the organizations through which religions must operate in order to survive (Hammond 1992).

3. **Sociologists often view religions as a major source of social solidarity because religions provide their believers with a common set of norms and values.** Religious beliefs, rituals, and bonds help to create a “moral community” in which all members know how to behave toward one another (Wuthnow 1988). If a single religion dominates a society, the religion may be an important source of social stability. However, religion can also be oppressive if, like the Taliban, it requires absolute conformity to a particular set of beliefs and punishes those who deviate from these beliefs. For example, the attempted murder of Malala Yousafzai, whom we met in the chapter’s opener, was an effort by some Taliban leaders to punish a young girl who defied their beliefs.
4. **Sociologists tend to explain the appeal of religion in terms of social forces rather than purely personal, spiritual, or psychological factors.** For many people, religious beliefs are a deeply personal experience, involving a powerful

sense of connection with forces that transcend everyday reality. Sociologists do not question the depth of such feelings and experiences, but they are unlikely to limit themselves to a purely spiritual explanation of religious commitment. Some researchers argue that people often “get religion” when their fundamental sense of a social order is threatened by economic hardship, loneliness, loss or grief, physical suffering, or poor health (Berger 1967; Glock 1976; Schwartz 1970; Stark and Bainbridge 1980). In explaining the appeal of religious movements, sociologists are more likely to focus on the problems of the social order than on the psychological response of the individual.

Theories of Religion

Sociological approaches to religion are strongly influenced by the classical theories of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. None of the three was religious himself, and they all believed that religion would become less and less significant in modern times. Each argued that religion was fundamentally an illusion: The very diversity of religions and their obvious connection to different societies and regions of the world made the claims by their advocates inherently implausible. An individual born into an Australian society of hunters and gatherers would hold different religious beliefs from someone born into the caste system of India or into the Catholic Church of medieval Europe.

MARX: RELIGION AND INEQUALITY

In spite of the influence of his views on the subject, Karl Marx never studied religion in any detail. His thinking on religion was derived mostly from the writings of Ludwig Feuerbach, who believed that through a process he called **alienation**, human beings tend to attribute their own culturally created values and norms to divine forces or gods because they do not understand their own history. Thus, the story of the Ten Commandments given to Moses by God is a mythical version of the origins of the moral precepts that govern the lives of Jewish and Christian believers.

Marx accepted the view that religion represents human self-alienation. In a famous phrase, Marx declared that religion is the “opium of the people.” Religion defers happiness and rewards to the afterlife, he said, teaching the resigned acceptance of existing conditions in the earthly life. Attention is thus diverted from injustices in this world by the promise of what is to come in the next. Religious belief also can provide justifications for those in power. For example, “The meek shall inherit the earth” suggests attitudes of humility and nonresistance to oppression.

DURKHEIM: RELIGION AND FUNCTIONALISM

In contrast to Marx, Émile Durkheim spent a good part of his intellectual career studying religion, concentrating particularly on totemism, an ancient form of religion practiced by aboriginal Australians and Native Americans. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, first published in 1912, is perhaps the most influential single study in the sociology of religion (1965). Durkheim connected religion not with social inequalities or power but with the overall nature of the institutions of a society. His argument was that totemism represented religion in its most “elementary” form—hence the title of his book.

alienation

The sense that our own abilities as human beings are taken over by other entities. The term was originally used by Karl Marx to refer to the projection of human powers onto gods. Subsequently he used the term to refer to the loss of workers’ control over the nature and products of their labor.

Durkheim defined religion in terms of a distinction between the sacred and the profane. **Sacred** objects and symbols, he held, are treated as apart from the routine aspects of day-to-day existence—the realm of the **profane**. A totem (an animal or plant believed to have particular symbolic significance), Durkheim argued, is a sacred object, regarded with veneration and surrounded by ritual activities. These ceremonies and rituals, in Durkheim's view, are essential to unifying the members of groups.

Durkheim's theory of religion is a good example of the functionalist tradition in sociology. To analyze the function of a social behavior or social institution like religion is to study the contribution it makes to the continuation of a group, community, or society. According to Durkheim, religion has the function of uniting a society by ensuring that people meet regularly to affirm common beliefs and values.

WEBER: THE WORLD RELIGIONS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Whereas Durkheim based his arguments on a restricted range of examples, Max Weber embarked on a massive study of religions worldwide. No scholar before or since has undertaken a task of this scope. Weber's writings on religion differ from those of Durkheim because they concentrate on the connection between religion and social change, something to which Durkheim gave little direct attention. They also contrast with those of Marx because Weber argued that religion was not necessarily a conservative force; on the contrary, religiously inspired movements have often produced dramatic social transformations. Thus, Protestantism, particularly Puritanism, according to Weber, was the source of the capitalistic outlook found in the modern West. The early entrepreneurs were mostly Calvinists. Their drive to succeed, which helped initiate Western economic development, was originally prompted by a desire to serve God. Material success was a sign of divine favor.

Weber conceived of his research on the world religions as a single project. His discussion of the impact of Protestantism on the development of the West was connected to a comprehensive attempt to understand the influence of religion on social and economic life in various cultures. After analyzing Eastern religions, Weber concluded that they provided barriers to the development of industrial capitalism such as that which took place in the West. Eastern civilizations, he observed, were oriented toward different values, such as escape from the toils of the material world.

Weber regarded Christianity as a salvation religion. According to such religions, human beings can be “saved” if they are converted to the beliefs of the religion and follow its moral tenets. The notions of “sin” and of being rescued from sinfulness by God's grace are important. They generate a tension and an emotional dynamism essentially absent from the Eastern religions. Salvation religions have a “revolutionary” aspect. Whereas the religions of the East cultivate an attitude of passivity or acceptance within the believer, Christianity demands a constant struggle against sin and so can stimulate revolt against the existing order. Religious leaders—such as Luther or Calvin—have arisen who reinterpret existing doctrines in such a way as to challenge the extant power structure.

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE CLASSICAL VIEW

Marx, Durkheim, and Weber each identified some important general characteristics of religion, and in some ways their views complement one another. Marx was correct

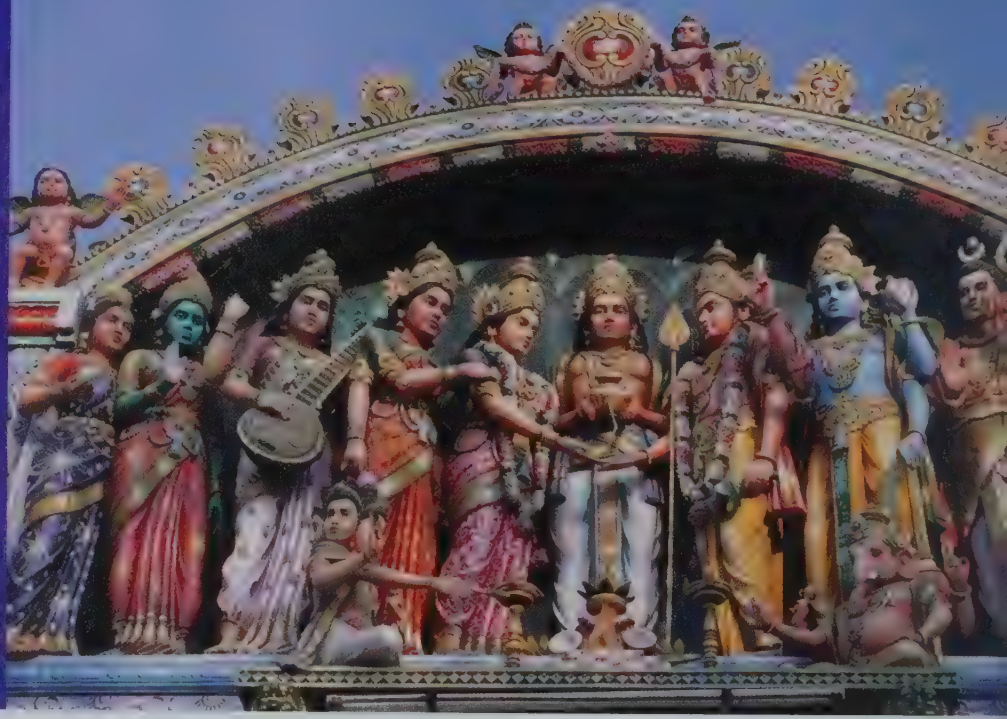
sacred

Describing something that inspires awe or reverence among those who believe in a given set of religious ideas.

profane

That which belongs to the mundane, everyday world.

In his research on the social and economic influence of religions around the world, Max Weber categorized Eastern religions as “other-worldly” and Christianity as a “salvation religion.” Weber believed that Hinduism stresses escaping material existence to locate a higher plane of being, which cultivates an attitude of passivity. In contrast, he argued that Christianity and its emphasis on salvation and constant struggle could stimulate revolt against the existing order.



secular thinking

Worldly thinking, particularly as seen in the rise of science, technology, and rational thought in general.

secularization

A process of decline in the influence of religion. Secularization can refer to levels of involvement with religious organizations (such as rates of church attendance), the social and material influence wielded by religious organizations, and the degree to which people hold religious beliefs.

to claim that religion often has ideological implications, serving to justify the interests of ruling groups at the expense of others. There are innumerable instances of this in history. For example, the European missionaries who sought to convert “heathen” peoples to Christian beliefs were no doubt sincere in their efforts. Yet their teachings contributed to the destruction of traditional cultures and the imposition of white domination. Almost all Christian denominations tolerated, or endorsed, slavery in the United States and other parts of the world into the nineteenth century. Doctrines were developed proclaiming slavery to be based on divine law, disobedient slaves being guilty of an offense against God as well as their masters (Stampp 1956).

Weber also emphasized the unsettling and often revolutionary impact of religious ideals on the established social order. In spite of many churches’ early support for slavery in the United States, church leaders later played a key role in fighting to abolish the institution. Religious beliefs have prompted social movements seeking to overthrow unjust systems of authority; for instance, religious sentiments played a prominent part in the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

These divisive influences of religion, so prominent in history, find little mention in Durkheim’s work. Durkheim emphasized the role of religion in promoting social cohesion. Yet it is not difficult to redirect his ideas toward explaining religious division, conflict, and change as well as solidarity. After all, much of the strength of feeling that may be generated against other religious groups derives from the commitment to religious values generated within each community of believers. Among the most valuable points of Durkheim’s writings is his stress on ritual and ceremony. All religions comprise regular assemblies of believers, at which ritual prescriptions are observed. As Durkheim rightly points out, ritual activities also mark the major life stages—birth, the transition

to adulthood (rituals associated with puberty are found in many cultures), marriage, and death (van Gennep 1977).

Finally, the theories of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber on religion were based on their studies of societies in which a single religion predominated. As a consequence, it seemed reasonable for them to examine the relationship between a predominant religion and the society as a whole. However, in the past fifty years this classical view has been challenged by some U.S. sociologists. Because of their own experience in a society that is highly tolerant of religious diversity, these theorists have focused on religious pluralism rather than on religious domination. Not surprisingly, their conclusions differ substantially from the views of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, each of whom regarded religion as closely bound up with the larger society. Religion was believed to reflect and reinforce society's values, or at least the values of those who were most powerful; to provide an important source of solidarity and social stability; and to drive social change. According to this view, religion is threatened by the rise of **secular thinking**, particularly as seen in the rise of science, technology, and rational thought in general.

The classical theorists argued that the key problem facing religions in the modern world is **secularization**, or the process by which religious belief and involvement decline and thus result in a weakening of the social and political power of religious organizations. Peter Berger (1967) has described religion in premodern societies as a "sacred canopy" that covers all aspects of life and is therefore seldom questioned. In modern society, however, the sacred canopy is more like a quilt, a patchwork of different religious and secular belief systems. When multiple belief systems coexist, it becomes increasingly difficult to sustain the idea that there is any single true faith. According to this view, secularization is the likely result.

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES: "RELIGIOUS ECONOMY"

One of the most influential contemporary approaches to the sociology of religion is tailored to societies such as the United States that offer many different faiths from which to pick and choose. Sociologists who favor the **religious economy** approach argue that religions can be thought of as organizations in competition with one another for followers (Finke and Stark 1988, 1992; Hammond 1992; Moore 1994; Roof and McKinney 1990; Stark and Bainbridge 1987; Warner 1993).

Like contemporary economists who study businesses, these sociologists argue that competition is preferable to monopoly when it comes to ensuring religious vitality. This position is exactly opposite to that of the classical theorists. Marx, Durkheim, and Weber assumed that religion weakens when challenged by different religious or secular viewpoints, whereas the religious economists argue that competition increases the overall level of

religious economy

A theoretical framework within the sociology of religion that argues that religions can be fruitfully understood as organizations in competition with one another for followers.



CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What are the three main components of religion as a social institution?

How do sociologists differ from other scholars in their approach to studying religion?

3. Why did Karl Marx call religion the "opium of the people"?

4. What are the differences between classical and contemporary approaches to understanding religion?

religious involvement in modern society. Religious economists believe this is true for two reasons. First, competition makes each religious group try harder to win followers. Second, the presence of numerous religions means that there is likely to be something for just about everyone. In a culturally diverse society such as the United States, a single religion will probably appeal to only a limited range of followers, whereas the presence of Indian gurus and fundamentalist preachers, in addition to mainline churches, is likely to encourage a high level of religious participation.

A criticism of the religious economy approach is that it overestimates the extent to which people rationally pick and choose among different religions, as if they were shopping for a new car or a pair of shoes. Among deeply committed believers, particularly in societies that lack religious pluralism, it is not obvious that religion is a matter of rational choice. Even when people are allowed to choose among different religions, most are likely to practice their childhood religion without ever questioning whether there are more appealing alternatives. Moreover, the spiritual aspects of religion may be overlooked if sociologists simply assume that religious buyers are always on spiritual shopping sprees. Wade Clark Roof's study (1993) of 1,400 baby boomers found that a third had remained loyal to their childhood faith, while another third had continued to profess their childhood beliefs although they no longer belonged to a religious organization. Only a third were actively searching for a new religion, making the sorts of choices presumed by the religious economy approach (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life 2008).

How Does Religion Affect Life throughout the World?

Understand the various ways religious communities are organized and how they have become institutionalized. Recognize how the globalization of religion is reflected in religious activism in poor countries and the rise of religious nationalist movements.

Religion is one of the most truly global of all social institutions, affecting almost all aspects of social life. In this section, we describe the way religion shapes life throughout the globe. We will begin, however, by briefly describing the different ways that world religions are organized.

Types of Religious Organizations

Early theorists such as Max Weber (1963, orig. 1921), Ernst Troeltsch (1931), and Richard Niebuhr (1929) described religious organizations as falling along a continuum based on the degree to which they are well established and conventional: Churches lie at one end (they are conventional and well established), cults lie at the other (they are neither), and sects fall somewhere in the middle. These distinctions were based on the study of those religions that account for the majority of persons in Europe and the United States. There is much debate over how well they apply to the non-Christian world.

Today, sociologists are aware that the terms *sect* and *cult* have negative connotations, something they wish to avoid. For this reason, contemporary sociologists of religion sometimes use the phrase *new religious movements* to characterize novel religious organizations that have not yet achieved the respectability that comes with being well established for a long period of time (Hadden 1997b; Hexham and Poewe 1997).

CHURCHES AND SECTS

Churches are large, established religious bodies; one example is the Roman Catholic Church. They normally have a formal, bureaucratic structure, with a hierarchy of religious officials. Churches often represent a traditional face of religion, since they are integrated within the existing institutional order. Most of their adherents are born into and grow up within the church.

A **sect** is typically described as a religious subgroup that breaks away from the larger organization and consequently follows its own unique set of rules and principles. Sects are smaller, less highly organized groups of committed believers, usually set up in protest against an established church. Sects aim to discover or follow the “true way” and either try to change the surrounding society or withdraw from it into communities of their own, a process known as *revival*. Many sects have few or no officials, and all members are regarded as equal participants. For the most part, people are not born into sects but actively join them in order to further commitments in which they believe.

DENOMINATIONS AND CULTS

A **denomination** is a sect that has cooled down and become an institutionalized body rather than an activist protest group. Sects that survive over any period of time inevitably become denominations. Denominations are recognized as legitimate by churches and exist alongside them, often cooperating harmoniously with them.

Cults, by contrast, are the most loosely knit and transient of all religious organizations. They are composed of individuals who reject what they see as the values of the outside society, unlike sects, which try to revive an established church. They are a form of religious innovation, rather than revival. Their focus is on individual experience, bringing like-minded people together. Like sects, cults often form around the influence of an inspirational leader.

Similar to sects, cults flourish when there is a breakdown in well-established and widespread societal belief systems. This is

churches

Large, established religious bodies, normally having a formal, bureaucratic structure and a hierarchy of religious officials. The term is also used to refer to the place in which religious ceremonies are carried out.

sect

A religious movement that breaks away from orthodoxy and follows its own unique set of rules and principles.



Members of the Unification Church, also known as “Moonies,” named for its founder Reverend Sun Myung Moon, participate in a mass wedding. The Holy Marriage Blessing Ceremony strengthens participants’ dedication to the church.

denomination

A religious sect that has lost its revivalist dynamism and become an institutionalized body, commanding the adherence of significant numbers of people.

cults

Fragmentary religious groupings to which individuals are loosely affiliated but that lack any permanent structure.

happening throughout the world today, in places as diverse as Japan, India, and the United States. When such a breakdown occurs, cults may originate within a society, or they may be “imported” from outside. In the United States, examples of homegrown, or indigenous, cults include New Age religions based on such things as spiritualism, astrology, and religious practices adapted from Asian or Native American cultures. One of the largest imported cults is the late Reverend Sun Myung Moon’s Unification Church (“Moonies”), which originated in South Korea and is now led by the Reverend’s wife.

Globalization and Religion

More than half of the world’s population follow one of two faiths: Christianity (31 percent) or Islam (23 percent), religions that have long been unconstrained by national borders (see Figure 12.1) (Pew Research Center 2015g). The current globalization of religion is reflected in political activism among religious groups in poor countries and in the rise of religious nationalist movements in opposition to the modern secular state.

THE GLOBAL RISE OF RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM

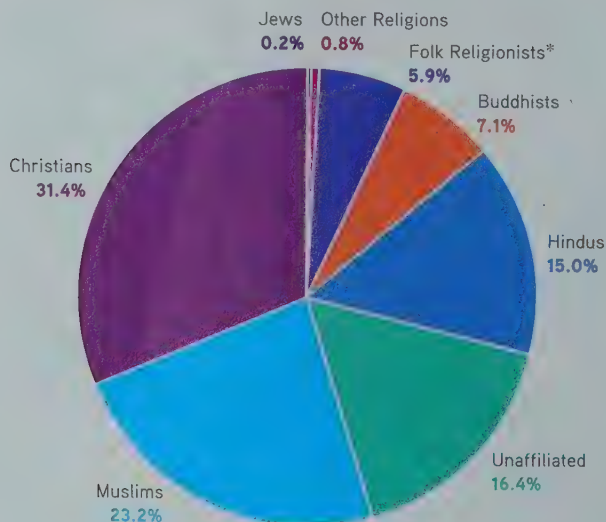
One of the most important trends in global religion today is the rise of **religious nationalism**, the linking of strongly held religious convictions with beliefs about a people’s social and political destiny. In countries around the world, religious nationalist movements reject the notion that religion, government, and politics should be separate and call instead for a revival of traditional religious beliefs that are directly embodied in

the nation and its leadership (Beyer 1994). These nationalist movements represent a strong reaction against the impact of technological and economic modernization on local religious beliefs. In particular, religious nationalists oppose what they see as the destructive aspects of “Western” influence on local culture and religion, ranging from American television to the missionary efforts of foreign evangelicals.

Religious nationalist movements accept many aspects of modern life, including modern technology, politics, and economics. For example, Islamic fundamentalists use video and television to reach millions of Muslims worldwide. However, they also emphasize a strict interpretation of religious values and completely reject the notion of secularization (Juergensmeyer 1994, 2001). Nationalist movements do not simply revive ancient religious beliefs. Rather, nationalist movements partly “invent” the past, selectively drawing on different traditions and reinterpreting past events to serve their current beliefs and

FIGURE 12.1

Global Religious Diversity



*Includes followers of African traditional religions, Chinese folk religions, Native American religions, and Australian aboriginal religions.

Source: Pew Research Center 2015g

interests. Violent conflicts between religious groups sometimes result from their competing interpretations of the same historical event (Anderson 1991; Juergensmeyer 1994, 2001; van der Veer 1994).

Religious nationalism is on the rise throughout the world—perhaps because in times of rapid social change, unshakable ideas have strong appeal. For example, in the early twenty-first century, the aim of the Islamic republic in Iran was to organize government and society so that Islamic teachings would dominate all spheres of life. The Guardian Council of religious leaders determines whether laws, policies, and candidates for Parliament conform to Islamic beliefs, even though Iran has a U.S.-style constitution providing for elected officials and the separation of powers.

Although recent years have seen some hopeful signs that Iran is liberalizing, such hopes have proved to be short lived in the past. A reform-minded president, Mohammad Khatami, captured control of Parliament in the 2000 elections, but Iran's Guardian Council reversed that victory in elections four years later by disqualifying 2,400 liberal candidates (nearly a third of all candidates). Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a conservative candidate close to Iran's religious leaders, won the presidency in that year, and Iran's relations with Europe and the United States rapidly deteriorated. The pro-democracy Green Movement mobilized millions of people in peaceful protests against the Ahmadinejad government during the 2009 presidential elections but was brutally repressed as a consequence. The most recent elections (2013) saw a swing in the liberal direction, with the election of Hassan Rouhani as president, who has sought to improve relations with the West.

ACTIVIST RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

Religion has played a critical role in effecting positive social change over the past fifty-plus years. In Vietnam in the 1960s, Buddhist priests burned themselves alive to protest the policies of the South Vietnamese government. Their willingness to sacrifice their lives for their beliefs, seen on television sets around the world, contributed to growing U.S. opposition to the war. Buddhist monks in Thailand are currently protesting deforestation.

An activist form of Catholicism, termed **liberation theology**, combines Catholic beliefs with a passion for social justice for the poor, particularly in Central and South America and in Africa. Catholic priests and nuns organize farming cooperatives, build health clinics and schools, and challenge government policies that impoverish the peasantry. A similar role is played by Islamic socialists in Pakistan and Buddhist socialists in Sri Lanka (Berryman 1987; Juergensmeyer 1994; Sigmund 1990). In some Central and Eastern European countries once dominated by the former Soviet Union, long-suppressed religious organizations provided an important basis for the overturning of socialist regimes during the early 1990s. In Poland, the Catholic Church was closely allied with the Solidarity movement, which toppled the socialist government in 1989. Many religious leaders have paid with their lives for their activism, which government and military leaders often regard as subversive.

religious nationalism

The linking of strongly held religious convictions with beliefs about a people's social and political destiny.

liberation theology

An activist Catholic religious movement that combines Catholic beliefs with a passion for social justice for the poor.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 Describe four types of religious organizations.
- 2 What is religious nationalism? Why can it be viewed as a reaction to economic modernization of local religious beliefs and Westernization?

How Does Religion Affect Your Life in the United States?

>
Learn about the sociological dimensions of religion in the United States.

Trends in Religious Affiliation

In comparison with the citizens of other industrial nations, Americans are highly religious; nearly 90 percent of all U.S. adults believe in God and 50 percent attend services at least monthly (Pew Research Center 2015c). However, levels of religious participation have declined since the mid-twentieth century. Indicators such as belief in God, religious membership, and attendance at religious services found that religiosity reached its highest levels in the 1950s and has been declining ever since—in part because post-World War II baby boomers have been less religious than their predecessors (Roof 1999). In one national survey, overwhelming majorities of Catholics, liberal Protestants, and conservative Protestants reported attending church on a weekly basis while they were children, but their attendance had dropped sharply by the time they reached their early twenties. Levels of participation, however, remain high among members of conservative Protestant groups.

Another survey of nearly 114,000 adults in 1990 and more than 50,000 adults in 2008 found that religious identification had declined sharply during the eighteen-year period. In 1990, 90 percent of all adults identified with some religious group; in 2008, the figure was less than 80 percent. The principal decline was among self-identified Christians (from 86 percent to 76 percent). By 2014, the Christian share of the U.S. population had dropped even further—to 71 percent. This decline has been driven in large part by the growing number of adults who report no religious affiliation, referred to as the “rise of the nones.” This rapid growth in religious “nones”—people who identify as atheists or agnostics or who say their religion is “nothing in particular”—was reflected in a 2014 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, which found that about 23 percent of the U.S. adult population is religiously unaffiliated, up from 16 percent in 2007. Much of this growth can be tied to generational replacement: 35 percent of Millennials are religiously unaffiliated (Lipka 2015).

Despite this rise of the nones, a significant majority—77 percent—of Americans identify with a religion. One reason so many Americans are religiously affiliated is that religious organizations are an important source of social ties and friendship networks. Churches, synagogues, and mosques are communities of people who share the same beliefs and values, and who support one another during times of need. Religious communities thus often play a family-like role, offering help in times of emergency as well as more routine assistance such as child care.

There are an enormous number of religious organizations one can belong to. The United States is the most religiously diverse country in the world, with more than 1,500 distinct religions (Melton 1989). Yet the vast majority of people belong to a relatively small number of religious denominations (see Figure 12.2). More than 70 percent of Americans identify as Christian (Pew Research Center 2015c).

From Pulpits to iPads?

The United States is one of the most religious countries in the world. Yet there are still millions of Americans for whom religion is not an important part of their everyday lives. For example, more than one in five Americans report that they have no religious affiliation; this proportion grows to more than one-third among Americans ages eighteen to twenty-nine (Pew Research Center 2015c). And while roughly 40 percent of Americans report that they “usually” attend religious services once a week, recent research based on daily diary data shows that the proportion of Americans who regularly attend services is as low as 24 percent, with rates even lower among young adults (Brenner 2011).

In the past decade, young adults and other Americans have found new ways to incorporate religion and spirituality into their lives, beyond the pews of their local churches and synagogues. The Internet and smartphones have allowed Americans to participate in religious activities on their own grounds and on their own schedules. For example, a spate of new smartphone apps allow users to download full texts of scriptures like the Bible, Book of Mormon, Koran, or Torah. Muslims can use apps to ascertain the time of day for their five daily prayers and to learn what direction to face when praying toward Mecca. Jews and Seventh-Day Adventists can use programs like the Sabbath App to calculate sunset times for Friday evening and Saturday evening each week, so they’ll know exactly when the Sabbath begins and ends in their hometowns. Hindus can use their phones to present virtual offerings of incense and coconut to the god Ganesh.

Other apps allow users to type in prayers and send them off to God, the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, or simply into cyberspace (Wagner 2011). For those who believe that scriptures can be used to substantiate their political views, there are apps that help users quickly locate a Biblical passage to support arguments for (or against) everything from abortion to same-sex marriage (Vitello 2011). Even those without religious views can use such apps to support their politics; new apps (like BibleThumper) “allow the atheist to keep the most funny and irrational Bible verses right in their pocket” (Vitello 2011).

Technology also keeps us connected to religious communities. Hundreds if not thousands of religious organizations allow people to “attend” religious services virtually. For example, many synagogues throughout the United States live-stream their services over the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Advocates say that technology helps bring worship to people who don’t have another way to participate in services and sermons, such as members of the military, the homebound, or Jews who live in areas without a local congregation (Mandel 2010). Similarly, websites like CyberChurch.com give users access to Christian services throughout the world.

Do you believe that technology will help people become more engaged in religion by enabling them to practice their faith where, when, and how they are comfortable? Or do you believe that these apps undermine some of the core aspects of religion, including interacting with a community of like-minded others, or rituals like praying together? Do you think apps will ever replace in-person participation in religious services or activities? Why or why not?

Smartphone apps now allow users to participate virtually in religious services, make offerings to their gods, and read scriptures. Are these apps a reasonable substitute for traditional forms of worship?

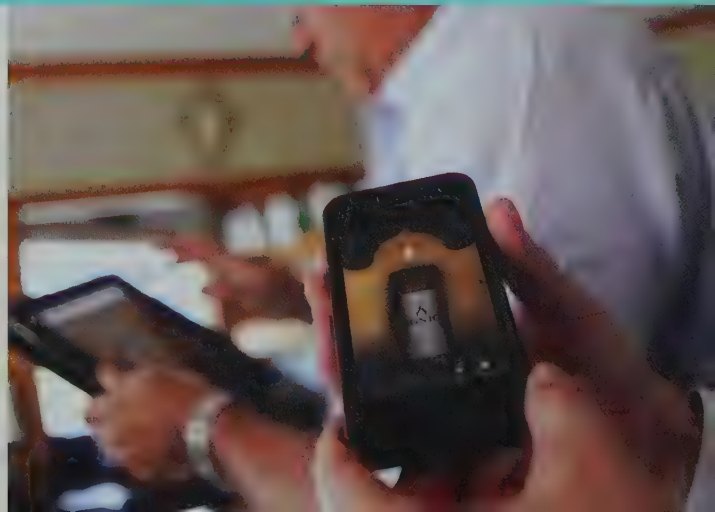
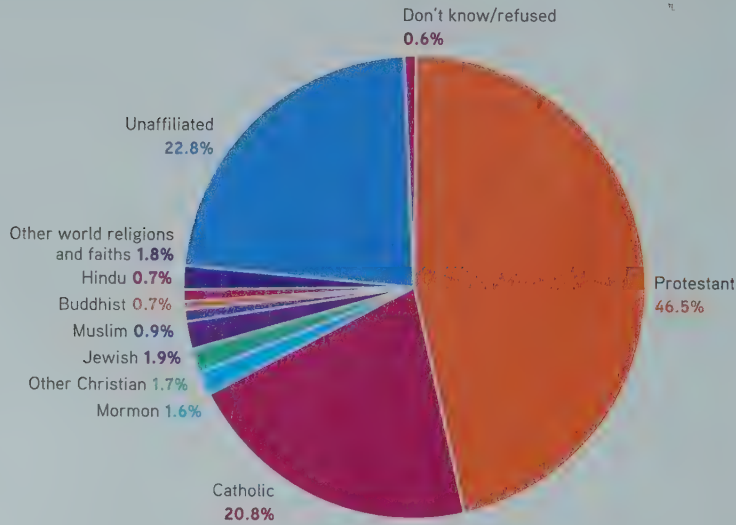


FIGURE 12.2

Religious Affiliation in the U.S.



Source: Pew Research Center 201c

PROTESTANTS: THE GROWING STRENGTH OF CONSERVATIVE DENOMINATIONS

A more detailed picture of recent trends in American religion can be obtained if we break down the large Protestant category into major subgroups. According to the Pew Research Center's 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study, the largest number of households were Baptist, accounting for 33 percent of all Protestants—over three times the size of the second-largest group, Methodists (10 percent). There were far fewer Lutherans (8 percent), Presbyterians (5 percent), and Episcopalians (3 percent) (Pew Research Center 2015c).

These figures are important because they reveal the growing strength of conservative Protestants in the United States. Conservative Protestants, which include denominations such as Baptists and Pentecostals, emphasize a literal

interpretation of the Bible, morality in daily life, and conversion through evangelizing. More than half (55 percent) of all U.S. Protestants today—and one in four U.S. adults—identify as evangelical. Conservative Protestants can be contrasted with the more historically established mainline and liberal Protestants such as Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Methodists, who tend to adopt a more flexible, humanistic approach to religious practice. Unlike conservative Protestant churches, which have seen their numbers grow, membership in mainline Protestant churches has declined dramatically in recent years; about a third of U.S. Protestants today and 15 percent of all U.S. adults identify with mainline Protestant denominations (Pew Research Center 2015n).

CATHOLICISM

Catholics make up about a fifth (21 percent) of the U.S. population. Currently, a third of Catholics in the United States are Hispanic, and this proportion is likely to grow in the coming decades. While the Catholic share of the U.S. population has been relatively stable over the long-term, the number of Catholics appears to be declining. Part of this decline is due to the fact that more people are leaving Catholicism for another faith than are joining the Church: of the nearly one-third of Americans who were born Catholic, 41 percent no longer identify with the Catholic Church.

Church attendance declined sharply in the 1960s and 1970s, leveling off in the mid-1970s. While the reasons for this decline are unclear, one reason likely has to do with the papal encyclical of 1968 that reaffirmed the ban on the use of contraceptives by Catholics. The encyclical offered no leeway for people whose conscience allowed for the use of contraceptives. They were faced with disobeying the Church, and many Catholics

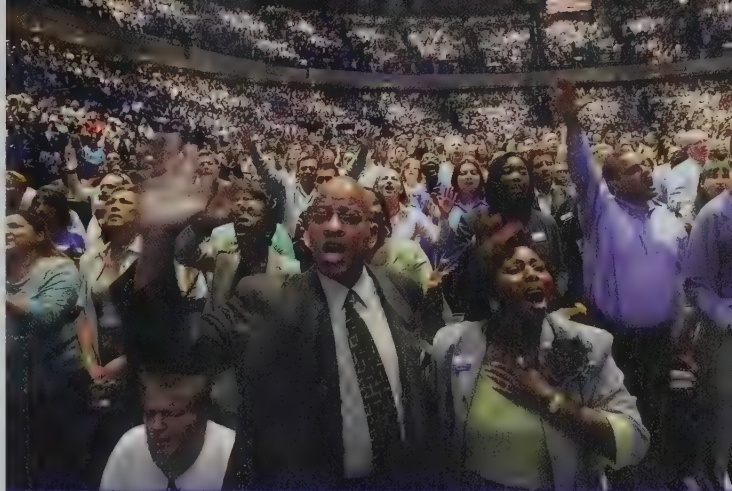
did just that. According to a 2015 Pew survey, three-quarters (76 percent) of U.S. Catholics say the Church should allow the use of birth control. Church attendance has continued to decline in recent decades: In 1975, 47 percent of Catholics reported attending Mass at least once a week. By 2015, that figure had dropped to about one in four (39 percent) (Pew Research Center 2015n).

OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Judaism in the United States has historically been divided into three major movements: Orthodox Judaism, which believes in the divine origins of the Jewish Bible (called by Christians the Old Testament), and follows highly traditional religious practices; Conservative Judaism, which is a blend of traditional and more contemporary beliefs and practices; and Reform Judaism, which rejects most traditional practices and is progressive in its ritual practices (services, for example, are more likely to be conducted in English than in Hebrew). Both Conservative and Reform Judaism reflect efforts by Jewish immigrants (or their descendants) to develop beliefs and rituals that turned away from “Old World” ones, developing forms more consistent with their new homeland.

Despite (or partly because of) these efforts to modernize Judaism, the number of Jews in the United States has declined as a result of low birth rates, intermarriage, and assimilation. Nearly 60 percent of Jews who have gotten married since 2000 have a non-Jewish spouse (Pew Research Center 2013b). Estimates of the number of Jewish Americans in the United States today vary, which may reflect precisely how Jews are identified and counted. Some Americans identify as Jewish if they have a Jewish mother—even if they have never practiced their religion. Yet other people may self-identify as Jewish only if they participate actively in the religion, whereas others may identify as “culturally Jewish,” meaning they celebrate their heritage and culture but do not actively practice religion. Survey data from the Pew Research Center reports that in 2014, just 1.9 percent of the U.S. population was Jewish (Pew Research Center 2015c).

Among Muslims, growing emigration from Asia and Africa may change the U.S. religious profile. According to the Pew Research Center, Muslims in the United States will outnumber Jews by 2050 (Pew Research Center 2015g). In 2014, 0.9 percent of the U.S. population identified as Muslim, reflecting large gains since even just 2007 (Pew Research Center 2015c). This may be an underestimate, as many Muslims are reluctant to disclose their religious affiliation in the post-9/11 political climate—only 30 percent of Americans held a favorable view of Islam in 2010 (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2010). The vast majority of Muslims in the United States are immigrants (63 percent), with many Muslims coming from the Asia-Pacific region, the Middle East, North Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa (Lipka 2016).



Evangelical Christians account for a majority of Protestants in the United States today. Many attend mega-churches, which attract as many as 30,000 congregants on any given Sunday.



TABLE 12.1

Changes in Religious Affiliation in the United States

RELIGIOUS SELF-IDENTIFICATION	2007	2014
Evangelical Protestant	26.3%	25.4%
Mainline Protestant	18.1%	14.7%
Catholic	23.9%	20.8%
Jewish	1.7%	1.9%
Muslim	0.4%	0.9%
Buddhist	0.7%	0.7%
Hindu	0.4%	0.7%
Unaffiliated	16.1%	22.8%

Source: Pew Research Center 2015c

Religious Affiliation and Socioeconomic Status

The principal religious groupings in the United States vary substantially by region and socioeconomic status. Liberal Protestants tend to be well educated and have jobs and incomes that would classify them as middle or upper class. They are concentrated in the northeastern states, and, to a small extent, in the West as well. Moderate Protestants fall at a somewhat lower level than liberal Protestants in terms of education and income. In fact, they are typical of the national average on these measures. They tend to live in the Midwest and, to some extent, in the West. Black Protestants are, on average, the least educated and poorest of any of the religious groups. Conservative Protestants have a similar profile, although they fall at a marginally higher level on all these measures (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2011b). Catholics strongly resemble moderate Protestants (which is to say, average Americans) in terms of their socioeconomic profile. They are largely concentrated in the Northeast, although many live in the West and the Southwest as well.

Jews historically have had the most successful socioeconomic profile. Jews tend to be college graduates in middle- or upper-income categories. In 2014, 44 percent of Jews earned

more than \$100,000 a year, compared to 17 percent of Christians. Hindus—who also report high levels of educational attainment—have a similarly high socioeconomic profile, with 36 percent earning more than \$100,000 in 2014 (Pew Research Center 2015c). Whereas the large majority of Jews once lived in the northeastern states, today less than half do, as many have relocated throughout the United States. One recent study suggests that this high degree of geographical mobility is associated with lowered involvement in Jewish institutions. Jews who move across the country are less likely to belong to synagogues, have Jewish friends, or be married to Jewish spouses (Goldstein and Goldstein 1996).

There are political differences across religious groups as well. Jews tend to be the most heavily Democratic of any major religious groups, while fundamentalist and evangelical Christians are the most Republican. The more moderate Protestant denominations are somewhere in between (Kosmin, Mayer, and Keysar 2001). As such, religious groups also differ widely regarding their views on major social issues in the United States, including abortion. On average, Jews and persons with no affiliation tend to hold the most liberal political views, meaning that they are likely to say that they believe women should have legal access to abortion. Fundamentalist and evangelical Christians are least likely to support these stances, while liberal Protestants, moderate Protestants, and Catholics sit toward the middle of the political continuum (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2013).

Religion has a subtle yet powerful influence on daily life in the United States and throughout the world. In analyzing religious practices and traditions, we must be

sensitive to ideals that inspire profound conviction in believers, yet we must also take a balanced view of them. We must confront ideas that seek the eternal while recognizing that religious groups also promote mundane goals, such as earning money or attracting followers. We need to recognize not only the diversity of religious beliefs and models of conduct but also the nature of a global phenomenon.

We have also seen that education and religion are two social institutions that are powerful socializing agents. Religion and education teach young people the skills and beliefs that are an essential part of one's culture. However, the two institutions differ in a critical way: Education is intended to be universalistic and to expose all children to similar messages, whereas religious institutions vary widely in the values, beliefs, and practices that they impart. As we saw in our chapter opener, these institutions may occasionally collide; Malala's attempt to obtain an education was at odds with the fundamentalist religious beliefs that reigned in her village. However, both educational systems and religious institutions are dynamic and may evolve as social contexts and policies change. The efforts of pioneering young women like Malala may be instrumental in helping to create a context where educational and religious institutions meet the needs of all citizens, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, or social background.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1. What are the reasons so many Americans belong to religious organizations?
- 2. Describe the main differences between conservative and liberal Protestants.
- 3. Contrast the political views and socioeconomic statuses of major religious groups in the United States.

The Big Picture

Education and Religion

Thinking Sociologically

1. From your reading of this chapter, describe what might be the principal advantages and disadvantages of having children go to private versus public schools in the United States at this time. Assess whether privatization of our public schools would help to improve them.
2. Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber had different viewpoints on the nature of religion and its social significance. Briefly explain the viewpoints of each. Which theorist's views have the most to offer in explaining the rise of national and international fundamentalism today? Why?

Learning Objectives

Why Are Education and Literacy So Important?

p. 355

Know how and why systems of mass education emerged in the United States. Know some basic facts about the education system and literacy rates of developing countries.

What Is the Linkage between Education and Inequality?

p. 360

Become familiar with the most important research on whether education reduces or perpetuates inequality. Learn the social and cultural influences on educational achievement.

How Do Sociologists Think about Religion?

p. 368

Learn the elements that make up religion. Know the sociological approaches to religion developed by Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, as well as the religious economy approach.

How Does Religion Affect Life throughout the World?

p. 374

Understand the various ways religious communities are organized and how they have become institutionalized. Recognize how the globalization of religion is reflected in religious activism in poor countries and the rise of religious nationalist movements.

How Does Religion Affect Your Life in the United States?

p. 378

Learn about the sociological dimensions of religion in the United States.

Terms to Know

Concept Checks

• home schooling • literacy

1. Why did schooling become widespread only after the Industrial Revolution?
2. What are some of the functions of formal schooling?
3. What are the three main motivations for home schooling?
4. What are some of the reasons there are many illiterate people in the developing world?

• tracking • hidden curriculum • intelligence • (intelligence quotient) • functional literacy • standardized testing

1. According to Kozol, has education become an equalizer in American society? Why or why not?
2. How do Coleman's findings differ from the results of Kozol's research? Whose theory, in your opinion, can better explain the racial gap in educational achievement?
3. What effect does tracking have on academic achievement?
4. How do schools perpetuate existing inequalities across generations?
5. Explain the relationship between race and intelligence. Do you find the evidence compelling?
6. Describe the components and critiques of the No Child Left Behind Act and Race to the Top.

• religion • theism • alienation • sacred • profane • secular thinking • secularization • religious economy

1. What are the three main components of religion as a social institution?
2. How do sociologists differ from other scholars in their approach to studying religion?
3. Why did Karl Marx call religion the "opium of the people"?
4. What are the differences between classical and contemporary approaches to understanding religion?

• churches • sect • denomination • cults • religious nationalism • liberation theology

1. Describe four types of religious organizations.
2. What is religious nationalism? Why can it be viewed as a reaction to economic modernization of local religious beliefs and Westernization?

1. What are the reasons so many Americans belong to religious groups?
2. Describe the main differences between conservative and liberal Protestants.
3. Contrast the political views and socioeconomic statuses of major religious groups in the United States.

13

Politics and Economic Life



Unemployment Rates

p. 419

Workers gather at the Capitol in April 2015 to protest for a higher minimum wage. The current minimum—\$7.25 per hour—hasn't changed since 2009.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

How did the state develop?

Learn the basic concepts underlying modern nation-states.

How do democracies function?

Learn about different types of democracy, how this form of government has spread around the world, key theories about power in a democracy, and some of the problems associated with modern-day democracy.

What is terrorism?

Learn how social scientists define terrorism, and understand why terrorism is on the rise today.

What is the social significance of work?

Assess the sociological ramifications of paid and unpaid work. Understand that modern economies are based on the division of labor and economic interdependence. Familiarize yourself with modern systems of economic production.

What are key elements of the modern economy?

See the importance of the rise of large corporations; consider particularly the global impact of transnational corporations.

How does work affect everyday life today?

Learn about the impact of global economic competition on employment. Consider how work will change over the coming years.

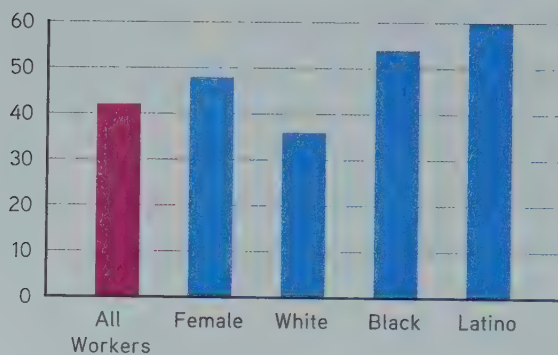


On April 15, 2015—the day income taxes are typically due—fast-food workers, home-care and day-care workers, adjunct faculty at colleges and universities, airport workers, and labor union members in 236 U.S. cities went on strike to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. Seattle and the District of Columbia had already done so; many other cities soon followed suit. By the end of 2015, fourteen other cities, counties, and states had called for immediate or phased-in minimum hourly wages of \$15. The minimum wage became a national issue when Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders made it a central part of his campaign platform. It is an issue that strongly divides the Democratic and Republican parties as well. The Democratic Party adopted the \$15 minimum as a nonbinding part of its 2016 presidential election National Platform; the Republican Party, while not addressing the issue directly in its National Platform, regards any increases in the minimum wage as interfering with businesses and generally detrimental for economic growth.

When the U.S. government established a national minimum wage in 1938, it argued that wages should be sufficient to provide “the minimum standard of living necessary for health, efficiency, and general well-being” (U.S. FLSA 2011). The current U.S. minimum wage, which hasn’t changed since 2009, is \$7.25 an hour. That works out to a yearly income of \$15,131 for a

FIGURE 13.1

Who Earns Less than \$15 an Hour?



Source: Tung, Lathrop, and Sonn 2015

full-time worker, which is below the official poverty level for a two-person household (roughly \$16,000). This amount clearly fails to provide a “minimum standard of living.” Raising the minimum hourly wage to \$15—\$31,305 in yearly income for full-time workers—would make a big difference in their lives, enabling them to cover basic living costs.

How many Americans actually earn less than \$15 an hour (Figure 13.1)? Opponents to raising the minimum wage claim that it is mainly high school students or young adults who are working part time in fast-food restaurants or as sales clerks, often living with their parents, who will eventually move on to higher-paid jobs. But one recent study found that more than two out of every five workers in the United States currently earn less than \$15 an hour—a figure that rises to half of all African American workers, and three out of every five Latino workers. Nor are low-wage jobs restricted to the very young: The study found that more than a quarter of all workers between the ages of thirty-five and forty-nine make less than

\$15 an hour. There are, in fact, a wide variety of jobs in which more than half of all workers earn less than \$15 an hour: retail sales clerks, cashiers, cooks, waiters and waitresses, fast-food workers, office clerks, home health aides, janitors, maids and housecleaners, nursing assistants, child-care workers, construction workers, and even many workers in automobile parts and assembly manufacturing. Many of these occupations are expected to add the largest number of jobs in coming years (Tung, Lathrop, and Sonn 2015).

Some businesses have responded by increasing the minimum wage for their own workers. Walmart, McDonald’s, and T.J. Maxx announced in early 2015 that they would raise their base-level wages to somewhere in the \$9–\$10 range. Costco, on the other hand, offers a starting wage of \$11.50; its average wage is \$21, an extremely high level for an industry in which four out of five workers earn less than \$15 an hour. Costco also enjoys low worker turnover, high worker satisfaction, and sales per employee that far exceed its principal competitors. Facebook, Google, and Ben & Jerry’s are among a small number of firms that adopted a \$15 minimum wage in 2015, as have some universities (Tung, Lathrop, and Sonn 2015).

Will raising the minimum wage to \$15 cause businesses to fail and their workers to lose their jobs, as some economists predict? Supporters of an increase point out that, in today’s dollars, the minimum wage grew from roughly \$5.00 an hour in 1940 to a high of \$10.86 in 1968, without adversely affecting a period of rapid economic growth; since that time, it has actually lost ground in terms of actual purchasing power (Kurtz and Yellin 2015). Raising the minimum wage, proponents argue, will put more money into the pockets of workers, whose spending will actually stimulate economic growth. Recent research also finds that raising the minimum wage to \$12 would reduce the cost of public assistance by \$17 billion annually, resulting in savings in government expenditures (Cooper 2016).

Research on whether increases in the minimum wage will help or hurt workers has found mixed results (Neumark 2015). Some economists favor a smaller increase to \$12, fearful that a \$15 minimum would “put us in uncharted waters, and risk undesirable and unintended consequences” such as job loss (Krueger 2015). Perhaps, as former U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich (2015) has concluded, “Maybe some jobs are worth risking if a strong moral case can be

made for a \$15 minimum. That moral case is that no one should be working full time and still remain in poverty.” Reich regards an adequate wage as a human right—a topic to which we will return later, when we consider social rights as one of the rights of citizenship in modern states. Some observers have argued that the only way to ensure a reasonable standard of living for low-wage workers is for them to unionize (Eidelson 2013a).

As the growing movement for a \$15 minimum wage reveals, the government, economics, and politics are closely intertwined. **Government** refers to the regular enactment of policies, decisions, and matters of state on the part of the officials within a political apparatus. A government often enacts policies, such as the federal minimum wage, that have sweeping economic consequences, whether for nations, states, cities, or even the individual lives of workers. **Politics** concerns the means by which power is used to affect the scope and content of governmental activities. But the sphere of the political is not limited only to those who work in government; it also involves the actions of others.

There are many ways in which people outside the political apparatus seek influence. The workers who went on strike across the country on April 15 attempted to exert power both on their employers and on public policies by protesting and walking off their jobs. A few major businesses responded by providing modest wage hikes for their workers; some state and local governments have raised their minimum wage, or plan to do so; and the \$15 minimum became a national issue during the 2016 presidential campaign. These actions show how politics are frequently intertwined with economics. The **economy** consists of institutions that provide for the production and distribution of goods and services, including jobs.

In this chapter, we study the main factors affecting political and economic life today. We begin with a discussion of politics and then turn to work and the economy. The sphere of government is the sphere of political power. All political life is about power: the people who hold it, how they achieve it, and what they do with it. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the study of power is of fundamental importance for sociology. **Power** is the ability of individuals or groups to make their own interests or concerns count, even when others resist. It sometimes involves the direct use of physical force, such as when the United States and its allies use military force to counter the growth of extremist groups such as ISIS in the Middle East. At other times, it involves the use of threats, whether a threat to vote out of office a leader who does not meet the needs of the electorate, or a threat to walk off the job, as we saw in the case of the April 15 protests. Power is an element in almost all social relationships, such as that between employer and employee. This chapter focuses on a narrower aspect of power: governmental power. In this form, it is almost always accompanied by *ideologies*, belief systems that are used to justify the actions of the powerful. For example, Democratic congresspersons who support the minimum wage hike tend to embrace an ideology that emphasizes social justice and workers’ rights, whereas their Republican colleagues tend to subscribe to an ideology that emphasizes fiscal conservatism and free enterprise.

Authority is a government’s legitimate (that is, lawful) use of power: Those who are subject to a government’s legitimate authority consent to it. Power is thus different from authority: A government may rule by the use of power but lack legitimate authority in the eyes of its citizens. Contrary to what many believe, democracy—a system of government in which, as we discuss later, the citizens ultimately exert authority through their representatives—is not the only type of government people consider legitimate. Dictatorships, in which a single individual or group exercises virtually total authority, can have legitimacy as well, as can states governed by religious leaders. But as we shall see later, democracy is currently the most widespread form of government considered legitimate.

government

The enacting of policies, decisions, and matters of state on the part of officials within a political apparatus. In most modern societies governments are run by officials who do not inherit their positions of power but are elected or appointed on the basis of qualifications.

politics

The means by which power is used to affect the nature and content of governmental activities.

economy

The system of production and exchange that provides for the material needs of individuals living in a given society. Economic institutions are of key importance in all social orders.

power

The ability of individuals or the members of a group to achieve aims or further the interests they hold. Power is a pervasive element in all human relationships.

authority

A government’s legitimate use of power.

How Did the State Develop?

Learn the basic concepts underlying modern nation-states.

state

A political apparatus ruling over a given territorial order whose authority is backed by law and the ability to use force.

nation-state

A particular type of state, characteristic of the modern world, in which a government has sovereign power within a defined territorial area, and the population are citizens who believe themselves to be part of a single nation or people.

sovereignty

The undisputed political rule of a state over a given territorial area.

citizens

Members of a political community, having both rights and duties associated with that membership.

nationalism

A set of symbols and beliefs expressing identification with a national community.

A **state** exists where there is a political apparatus of government (institutions like a parliament or congress, plus civil service officials) ruling over a given territory whose authority is backed by a legal system and by the capacity to use force to implement its policies. All modern states lay claim to specific territories, possess formalized codes of law, and are backed by the control of military force. **Nation-states** have come into existence at various times in different parts of the world (for example, the United States in 1776 and the Czech Republic in 1993). Their main characteristics, however, contrast rather sharply with those of states in traditional civilizations.

Characteristics of the State

SOVEREIGNTY

The territories ruled by traditional states were always poorly defined, the level of control wielded by the central government being quite weak. The notion of **sovereignty**—that a government possesses authority over an area with clear-cut borders, within which it is the supreme power—had little relevance. All modern nation-states, by contrast, are sovereign states.

CITIZENSHIP

In traditional states, most of the population ruled by a king or emperor showed little awareness of, or interest in, those who governed them. Nor did they have any political rights or influence. Normally only the dominant classes or more affluent groups felt a sense of belonging to an overall political community. In modern societies, by contrast, most people living within the borders of the political system are **citizens**, having common rights and duties and knowing themselves to be members of a national political community (Brubaker 1992). Although some people, such as political refugees, are “stateless,” almost everyone in the world today sees themselves as members of a definite national political community.

NATIONALISM

Nation-states are associated with the rise of **nationalism**, which can be defined as a set of symbols and beliefs providing the sense of being part of a single national political community. Thus, individuals feel a sense of pride and belonging in being American, Indian, or Chinese. Probably people have always felt some kind of identity with social groups of one form or another—their family, village, or religious community. Nationalism, however, made its appearance only with the development of the modern state. It is the main expression of feelings of identity with a distinct national political community.

Nationalistic loyalties do not always fit the physical borders marking the territories of states in the world today. Virtually all nation-states were built from communities of diverse backgrounds. As a result, **local nationalisms** have frequently arisen in opposition to those fostered by the states. Thus, in Canada, for instance, nationalist feelings

among the French-speaking population in Quebec may present a challenge to the feeling of “Canadianness,” while such feelings among the Basque population of Spain may challenge the feeling of being a Spaniard. Yet, while the relation between the nation-state and nationalism is a complicated one, the two have come into being as part of the same process. (We will return to nationalism later in the chapter as we look at its impact on international politics in the modern world.)

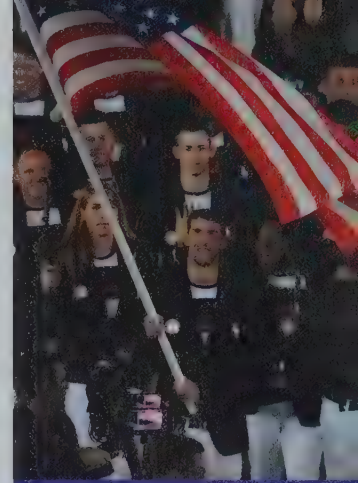
We can now offer a comprehensive definition of the nation-state: It is possessed of a government apparatus that is recognized to have sovereign rights within the borders of a territorial area, it is able to back its claims to sovereignty by the control of military power, and many of its citizens have positive feelings of commitment to its national identity.

CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

Some modern nation-states first became centralized, effective political systems through the activities of monarchs, such as kings or queens, who successfully concentrated more and more power in their own hands. Citizenship did not originally carry rights of political participation in these states. Such rights were achieved largely through struggles that limited the power of monarchs, as in Britain, or actively overthrew them—sometimes by a process of revolution, as in the cases of the United States and France, followed by a period of negotiation between the new ruling elites and their subjects (Tilly 1996).

Three types of rights are associated with the growth of citizenship (Marshall 1973). **Civil rights** refer to the rights of the individual by law. These include privileges many of us take for granted today but that took a long time to achieve (and are by no means fully recognized in all countries). Examples are the freedom of individuals to live where they choose, freedom of speech and religion, the right to own property, the right to legally marry, and the right to equal justice before the law. These rights were not fully established in most European countries until the early nineteenth century. Although in 1789 the U.S. Constitution granted such rights to Americans well before most European states had them, African Americans were excluded. Even after the Civil War, when blacks were formally given these rights by the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, they were not able to exercise them. Women also were denied many civil rights; for example, at the turn of the nineteenth century in the United States, women had few rights independent of their husbands. They could not own property, write wills, collect an inheritance, or even earn a salary. Throughout the nineteenth century, states slowly and gradually began affording such rights to women regardless of their marital status (Speth 2011).

The second type of citizenship rights consists of **political rights**, especially the right to participate in elections and to run for public office. Again, these were not won easily or quickly. Except in the United States, the achievement of full voting rights even for all men is relatively recent and was gained only after a struggle in the face of governments reluctant to admit the principle of the universal vote. In most European countries, the vote was at first limited to male citizens owning a certain amount of property, which effectively limited voting rights to an affluent minority. Universal **franchise** for men was won in most Western nations by the early years of the twentieth century. Women had to wait longer; in most Western countries, the vote for women was achieved partly as a result of the efforts of women’s movements and partly as a consequence of the mobilization



Feelings of nationalism are on full display at international events like the Olympic Games.



local nationalisms

The belief that communities that share a cultural identity should have political autonomy, even within smaller units of a nation-state.

civil rights

Legal rights held by all citizens in a given national community.

political rights

Rights of political participation, such as the right to vote in elections and to run for office, held by citizens of a national community.

franchise

The right to vote.

A U.S. Border Patrol agent drives along the wall that separates Nogales, Arizona, from Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, on the U.S.-Mexico border. What strategies has the United States used to achieve social closure?



social rights

Rights of social and welfare provision held by all citizens in a national community.

welfare state

A political system that provides a wide range of welfare benefits for its citizens.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- Describe three main characteristics of the state.
- What is a welfare state? Can the United States be classified as a welfare state? Why?

of women into the formal economy during World War I. In the United States, women did not get the right to vote until the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified in 1920.

The third type is **social rights**, the right of every individual to enjoy a certain minimum standard of economic welfare and security. Social rights include such entitlements as sickness benefits, benefits in case of unemployment, and, as we have seen, the guarantee of minimum levels of wages. Although in some countries welfare benefits were introduced before legal and political rights were fully established (for example, in nineteenth-century Germany), in most societies social rights have been the last to develop. This is because the establishment of

civil and particularly political rights has usually been the basis of the fight for social rights. Social rights have been won largely as a result of the political strength that poorer groups have been able to develop after obtaining the vote.

The broadening of social rights is closely connected with the **welfare state**, which has been firmly established in Western societies only since World War II. A welfare state exists where government organizations provide material benefits for those who are unable to support themselves adequately through paid employment—the unemployed, the sick, the disabled, and the elderly. All Western countries today provide extensive welfare benefits. In many poorer countries, these benefits are virtually nonexistent.

Although an extensive welfare state was seen as the culmination of the development of citizenship rights, in recent years welfare states have come under pressure from increasing global economic competition and the movement of people from poorer, often war-torn countries to richer ones. As a result, the United States and some European countries have sought to reduce benefits to noncitizens and to prevent new immigrants from entering the country. For example, for many years the U.S. government has patrolled its border with Mexico and constructed walls of concrete and barbed wire in an attempt to keep illegal immigrants out of the country—an issue that resurfaced during the 2016 presidential campaign. In 2015 more than a million refugees from civil war and religious violence in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries fled their homelands and sought asylum in Europe, straining resources and provoking an anti-immigrant backlash among some segments of the European population. Citizenship, and the bundle of rights and privileges accompanying it, serve as a powerful instrument of social closure (Brubaker 1992), whereby prosperous nation-states have attempted to exclude the migrant poor from the status and the benefits that citizenship confers.

Having learned some of the important characteristics of modern states, we now consider the nature of democracy in modern societies.

How Do Democracies Function?

The word *democracy* has its roots in the Greek term *demokratia*—*demos* (“people”) and *kratos* (“rule”). Its basic meaning is therefore a political system in which the people, not monarchs or dictators, rule. What does it mean to be ruled by the people? The answer to that question has taken contrasting forms, at varying periods and in different societies. For example, “the people” have been variously understood as owners of property, white men, educated men, men, and adult men and women. In some societies, the officially accepted version of **democracy** is limited to the political sphere, whereas in others, it is extended to other areas of social life.

Participatory Democracy

In **participatory democracy** decisions are made communally by those affected by them. This was the original type of democracy practiced in ancient Athens. Those who were citizens, a small minority of Athenian society, regularly assembled to consider policies and make major decisions. Participatory democracy is of limited importance in modern societies, where the vast majority of the population has political rights, rendering it impossible for everyone to participate actively in the making of all the decisions that affect them. In modern societies, direct democracy is a much more realistic approach to engaging citizens in decisions. A **direct democracy** is a form of participatory democracy in which citizens vote directly on laws and policies; however, they do not need to convene in one setting to do so. For example, Americans can visit voting booths in their hometowns to vote directly on legislation that affects their lives.

Yet some facets of participatory democracy do play a part in modern societies. The holding of a referendum, for example, whereby the majority express their views on a particular issue, is one form of participatory democracy. Direct consultation of large numbers of people is made possible by simplifying the issue to one or two questions to be answered. Referenda are employed frequently on a state level in the United States to decide controversial issues such as the legalization of marijuana.

Monarchies and Liberal Democracies

Some modern states, including Britain and Belgium, still have monarchs, but these are few and far between. Where traditional rulers of this sort are still found, their real power is usually limited or nonexistent. In a tiny number of countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan, monarchs continue to hold some degree of control over government, but in most cases they are symbols of national identity rather than personages having any direct power in political life. The queen of England, the king of Sweden, and even the emperor of Japan are all **constitutional monarchs**: Their real power is severely restricted by the constitution, which vests authority in the elected representatives of the people. The vast majority of modern states are *republican*—there is no king or queen. Almost every modern state, including constitutional monarchies, professes adherence to democracy.



Learn about different types of democracy, how this form of government has spread around the world, key theories about power in a democracy, and some of the problems associated with modern-day democracy.

democracy

A political system that allows the citizens to participate in political decision making or to elect representatives to government bodies.

participatory democracy

A system of democracy in which all members of a group or community participate collectively in making major decisions.

direct democracy

A form of participatory democracy that allows citizens to vote directly on laws and policies.

constitutional monarchs

Kings or queens who are largely figureheads. Real power rests in the hands of other political leaders.

liberal democracies

Representative democracies in which elected representatives hold power.

communism

A set of political ideas associated with Marx, as developed particularly by Lenin and institutionalized in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and some developing countries.

Countries in which voters can choose between two or more political parties and in which the majority of the adult population has the right to vote are usually called **liberal democracies**. The United States, the Western European countries, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand all fall into this category. Some developing countries, such as India, also have liberal democratic systems.

The Spread of Liberal Democracy

For much of the twentieth century, the political systems of the world were divided primarily between liberal democracy and communism, as found in the former Soviet Union (and which still exists in some form in China, Vietnam, Cuba, and North Korea). As we learned in Chapter 1, the philosophical roots of **communism** can be found in the writings of Karl Marx, who predicted that in the future, capitalism would be replaced by a society in which there were no classes—no divisions between rich and poor—and the economic system would come under communal ownership. Under these circumstances, Marx believed, a more equal society would be established. Marx's work had a far-reaching effect in the twentieth century. Through most of the century, until the fall of Soviet communism in the early 1990s, more than a third of the world population lived in societies whose governments claimed to derive their inspiration from Marx's ideas. In practice, however, communism often exists as a system of one-party rule. Voters are typically given a choice not between different parties but between different candidates of the same party—the Communist Party; sometimes only one candidate runs. The party controls the economy as well as the political system.

Since 1989, when the hold of the Soviet Union over Eastern Europe was broken, processes of democratization have swept across the world in a sort of chain reaction. The number of democratic nations almost doubled between 1989 and 2015, from 66 to 125 (Freedom House 2005, 2016). Freedom House classifies a nation as democratic if it maintains a competitive multiparty political system, all adults have a right to vote, election procedures are transparent, and major political parties have access to the general public via media and campaigning (Freedom House 2016). Yet the trend toward democracy is hardly irreversible. Over the past decade, there has been a decline in political rights and civil liberties in China, Russia, and much of the Middle East and North Africa (Freedom House 2016).

Yet despite some setbacks, democracy remains the favored form of government in most countries throughout the world. The reasons have to do with the social and economic changes discussed throughout this book. First, democracy tends to be associated with competitive capitalism in the economic system, which holds the promise of raising people's standard of living, something people everywhere seem to favor. Second, with the influence of mass communications, particularly television and the Internet, governments find it increasingly difficult to maintain control over what their citizens see.

THE INTERNET AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The Internet can be a powerful democratizing force. It transcends national and cultural borders, facilitates the spread of ideas around the globe, and allows like-minded people to find one another in the realm of cyberspace. More and more people in countries around the world access the Internet regularly and consider it to be important to their lives. One prominent example of the political role of the Internet is provided by MoveOn.org, a

liberal organization that was originally created in 1998 by twenty-two-year-old activist Eli Pariser and software entrepreneurs Wes Boyd and Joan Blades to electronically mobilize opposition to the impeachment of President Bill Clinton. The organization now boasts 8 million members; it enables activists to start and circulate petitions, advocate for liberal causes, and reach millions of people.

Since MoveOn.org was founded, the Internet has flourished as a means of diffusing political information (and rhetoric), especially among young persons. All ends of the political spectrum, from MoveOn.org to the Tea Party, have used the Internet to recruit volunteers, share information on candidate views, and organize rallies and protests (Pilkington 2009). As we will see in Chapter 16, the Internet played an essential role in mobilizing protesters during the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, and Ukrainian Maidan movements. In the United States, the Internet is replacing television and newspapers as the principal source for news for a growing number of people. Four out of five Americans have access to the Internet, and nearly half of them now report getting news about government and politics from Facebook (48 percent)—roughly the same number as from local TV (49 percent), and more than from CNN (44 percent), Fox News (39 percent), or NBC News (37 percent) (Pew Research Center 2015m). Does this easy access to the world's information result in greater open-mindedness—an ability to find information that challenges one's pet beliefs, thereby contributing to the free exchange of ideas ideally associated with democracy? This answer is far from clear-cut. While the Internet may democratize access to wide-ranging sources, most people get their news and information from Internet sources that reinforce their beliefs. On Facebook, for example, politically related postings are likely to come from like-minded friends (Pew Research Center 2015m).

As we shall also see, political indifference and voter apathy are extremely high in the United States, and winning federal elections requires large sums of money. How “Internet democracy” plays itself out in the national political arena will depend not only on technology but also on the ability of grassroots efforts to make a real difference in political outcomes.

Democracy in the United States

POLITICAL PARTIES

A political party is an organization of individuals with broadly similar political aims, oriented toward achieving legitimate control of government through an electoral process. Two parties tend to dominate the political system where elections are based on the principle of **winner take all**, as in the United States. Where elections are based on different principles, as in **proportional representation**, five or six different parties, or even more, may be represented in the assembly. An advantage to the system of proportional representation is that minority political parties have a say. For example, in the United States, the Green Party has almost no presence at the national level. Yet in Germany, which abides by the proportional representation system, new and smaller political parties that are supported by even a small part of the electorate have a chance of being represented in Parliament; these parties are far-ranging and include the Green Party as well as the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union, Social Democratic Party, and Free Democratic Party (Krennerich 2014). When they lack an overall majority, some of the parties have to form a coalition—an

winner take all

An electoral system in which the seats in a representative assembly go to the candidate who receives the most votes in his or her electoral district (in the U.S. House of Representatives, for example, a candidate who gets 50 percent + 1 vote represents an entire Congressional district, even if another candidate got 50 percent – 1 vote).

proportional representation

An electoral system in which seats in a representative assembly, often called a Parliament, are allocated according to the proportions of the vote received; the head of state (called a prime minister) is the head of the party that has the largest number of seats.

alliance to form a government—and government by coalition can lead to indecision and stalemate if compromises can't be worked out.

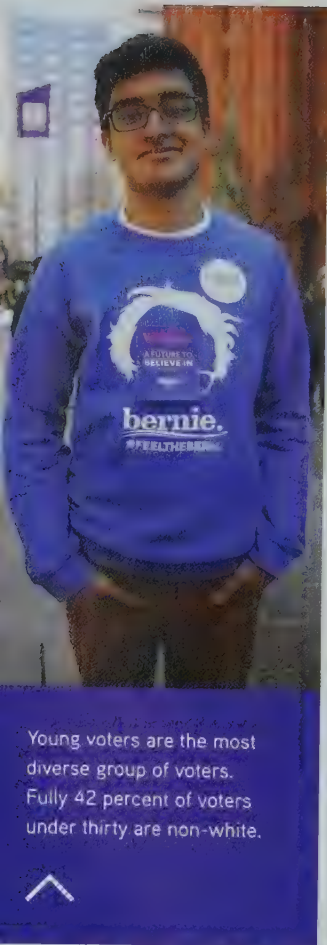
In the United States, the system has become effectively a two-party system between the Republicans and Democrats, although no formal restriction is placed on the number of political parties. The nation's founders made no mention of parties in the Constitution because they thought that party conflict might threaten the unity of the new republic. The two-party system has sometimes resulted in both parties attempting to appeal to the “moderate majority,” resulting in more centrist politics than would likely occur in parliamentary systems, where voting for a Conservative, Green, or Socialist candidate might alter the political composition of the parliament, giving voice to alternate beliefs. On the other hand, as the 2016 U.S. presidential primary campaign season showed, U.S. electoral politics can also become extremely polarized, with Tea Party conservatives exerting influence on the Republican Party and a self-proclaimed socialist garnering considerable support among Democrats.

POLITICS AND VOTING

Building mass support for a party in the United States is difficult because the country is so large and includes so many different regional, cultural, and ethnic groups. The parties have each tried to develop their electoral strength by forging broad regional bases of support and by campaigning for very general political ideals. In recent years, the proportion of American voters who identify as Independents has grown, while the proportion identifying as Republican has declined. In 2002, roughly equal proportions of voters identified as Democrat (31 percent), Republican (30 percent), and Independent (30 percent). By 2014, the proportion identifying as Democrat had remained largely unchanged (32 percent), the proportion identifying as Republican had declined (23 percent), and those who identified as Independents had grown (39 percent). If one takes a longer view, however, in 1964 the majority of voters (51 percent) identified as Democrat, compared with 25 percent as Republican and 23 percent as Independent. The U.S. electorate is increasingly divided, with growing numbers refusing to identify with either party (Pew Research Center 2015f).

Moreover, Democrats and Republicans have become increasingly polarized in the past few years. For example, Republicans are much more likely to be pro-business and believe in limited government, whereas Democrats are more likely to be critical of business while favoring stronger government support for the middle class and poor (Pew Research Center 2014a). As we saw earlier in this chapter, Democrats tend to be more supportive of raising the minimum wage to help low-wage workers secure an adequate standard of living, while their Republican counterparts worry that raising the minimum wage will be hurtful to business owners, especially small independent business owners.

Starting in the early 1960s the proportion of the population that turns out to vote in the United States steadily decreased, to the point where only slightly more than three out of every five eligible voters, on average, cast a ballot for president during the present century. The turnout for congressional elections in this century is lower still—consistently 15 to 25 points lower than turnout in presidential years. The presidential election of 2008 bucked this declining trend with voter turnout levels of 62 percent of eligible voters, the highest since the Kennedy and Johnson elections in 1960 (64 percent) and 1964 (63 percent). The rate dipped slightly to 59 percent by 2012.



Young voters are the most diverse group of voters. Fully 42 percent of voters under thirty are non-white.

The recent spike in the number of voters is attributed to campaigns by both parties to mobilize their core constituencies. Inspired by the candidacy of Barack Obama, youthful voters and African Americans also turned out in unprecedented numbers. The 2008 election, in particular, was an anomaly. Political scientists have documented that voter turnout is highest historically among whites and lowest among Hispanics, with blacks and Asian Americans in between. Highly educated persons and those with greater income also are more likely to vote than persons with fewer means. Generally, turnout increases directly with age: Only a little more than a third of all voters in the eighteen-to-twenty-nine age group bothered to vote for president in 2000, compared with two-thirds of voters in their sixties. However, in the 2008 presidential election, the number of young voters swelled due to a highly organized voter mobilization campaign. Nearly 52 percent of voters under thirty voted in the 2008 election (United States Election Project 2014).

Voter turnout in the United States is among the world's lowest. Sweden's International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2009) tracked voter turnout in all countries that held national elections at any time during the period from 2000 to 2009 by comparing the number of voters with the total voting-age population. According to their study, voter turnout in the United States averaged only 58 percent overall, earning it 112th place (of 192 countries). By way of comparison, voter turnout in Europe over the same period averaged 61 percent; Asia, 64 percent; South America, 65 percent; Central America and the Caribbean, 62 percent; and Africa, 65 percent.

Why is voter turnout so low in the United States? Many studies have found that countries with high rates of literacy, high average incomes, and well-established political freedoms and civil liberties are likely to have high voter turnout. The United States ranks high on all these measures but still fails to motivate people to vote. Compulsory registration is common throughout Europe, and registration is often made easy. In the United States, where voters are required to register well in advance of elections, many fail to do so and are thus disqualified from voting. In addition to compulsory registration, thirty-three countries have compulsory voting. Even though enforcement is often weak or nonexistent, voter turnout tends to be higher where voting is mandated by law (Pintor and Gratschew 2002).

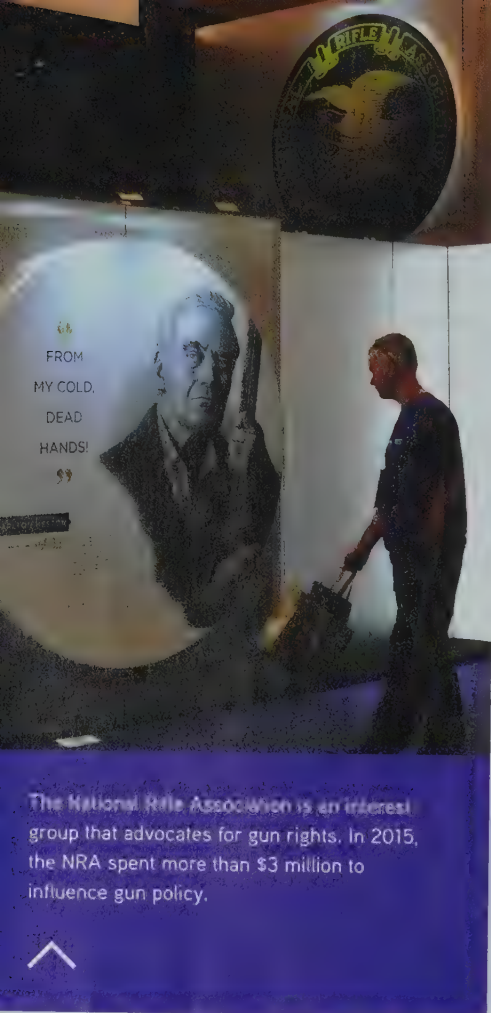
Another possible reason is that since winner-take-all elections discourage the formation of third parties, voters may sometimes feel that they lack effective choices when it comes time to vote. A staunch environmentalist may decide there is no point in voting if the Green Party candidate has no real chance of winning a seat in Congress. Finally, the range of elections is much more extensive in the United States than in other Western societies. In no other country are such a variety of offices at all levels—including sheriffs, judges, city treasurers, and many other posts—open to election. Americans are entitled to do about three or four times as much electing as citizens elsewhere. Low rates of voter turnout thus have to be balanced against the wider set of opportunities that Americans have to elect candidates for every level of office, from the most local to the highest office.

INTEREST GROUPS

Interest groups and lobbying play a distinctive part in American politics. An **interest group** is any organization that attempts to influence elected officials to consider its aims when deciding on legislation. The American Medical Association, the National Organization for

interest group

A group organized to pursue specific interests in the political arena, operating primarily by lobbying the members of legislative bodies.



Women, and the National Rifle Association are three examples. Interest groups vary in size; some are national, others statewide. Some are permanently organized; others are short-lived.

Lobbying is the act of contacting influential officials to present arguments to convince them to vote in favor of a cause or otherwise lend support to the aims of an interest group. The word *lobby* originated in the British parliamentary system: In days past, members of parliament did not have offices, so their business was conducted in the lobbies of the parliament buildings. In the United States, lobbyists for various interest groups spend billions of dollars each year to influence policy. Does their spending pay off? One statistical analysis of nearly 1,800 policy issues between 1981 and 1992 concluded that “when a majority of citizens disagrees with economic elites or with organized interests, they generally lose.” Yet the same study also found that when economic elites support a policy, it still has only a 45 percent chance of being enacted; when they oppose a policy, its chances of success drop to 18 percent. In other words, money can often—but not always—make a difference (Gilens and Page 2014).

To run as a candidate is enormously expensive, and interest groups provide much of the funding at all levels of political office. In the 2012 presidential election, the Obama-Biden campaign spent more than \$683 million to win re-election (Center for Responsive Politics 2013a). The Romney-Ryan ticket spent roughly \$504 million. Even to run for the House or Senate costs a small fortune. The most expensive congressional race in history, when Thom Tillis (Republican) defeated incumbent Kay Hagan (Democrat) in the battle to become a senator from North Carolina in 2014, saw total spending of \$116 million (Vanderwalker 2015).

Incumbents, or those already in office, have an enormous advantage in soliciting money. Incumbents are favored as fund-raisers partly because they can curry favor with special interests and other contributors, since

they are in a position to ensure favorable votes on issues of importance to their funders, as well as obtain spending on pet projects and other “pork” for their districts. Incumbency also provides familiarity—a formidable (and costly) obstacle for most challengers to overcome. However, during periods of economic downturn and anxiety, voters often seek a “change” and vote out incumbents. For example, in the 2010 interim elections, fifty-three members of the U.S. House of Representatives were voted out of office. Although this amounts to just 13 percent of incumbents losing their jobs, this proportion was the highest since 1970 (Bowman and Amico 2010). In 2014, 95 percent of incumbent House members were re-elected (Center for Responsive Politics 2016).

About a third of the funding in congressional elections comes from political action committees (PACs), which are set up by interest groups to raise and distribute campaign funds. Paid lobbyists play a significant role in influencing the outcome of votes in Congress and decisions by the president. The Center for Responsive Politics (2011) reported that businesses, unions, and other advocacy groups spent some \$3.5 billion in 2009—a third of which (\$1.2 billion) went to influence health care reform. The Affordable Care Act, signed into law by President Obama in 2010, overhauled the U.S. health care system. Among other provisions, it extended insurance coverage to an additional 30 million Americans and

prohibited insurance companies from denying care for preexisting conditions. When the debate over health care reform began, the White House was seriously considering a “public option,” an approach Obama had promoted during his campaign for president. Under this approach, the government would offer its own competing health care insurance program, in hopes of forcing private insurance companies to lower their premiums. Once he was in the White House, however, it proved impossible to get a public option endorsed by Congress—even though the Democrats held solid majorities in both the House and Senate and public opinion polls showed that a majority of Americans favored this approach (Pew Research Center 2010). Lobbyists for pharmaceutical companies, hospitals, and insurance companies spent millions of dollars in an effort to shape the final outcome in ways they favored (Eggen 2009). A study by the Center for Public Integrity found that nearly 1,800 firms and other organizations hired more than 4,500 lobbyists to influence the outcome of the health care debate—effectively eight lobbyists for each member of Congress (Eaton and Pell 2010).

The Political Participation of Women

Voting has a special meaning for women, given their long struggle to obtain universal **suffrage**, or the legal right to vote. The members of the early women's movements saw the vote both as the symbol of political freedom and as the means of achieving greater economic and social equality. After what was often a long, hard fight, women now can vote in nearly all of the world's nations; however, this has not greatly altered the nature of politics. Women's voting patterns, like those of men, are shaped by party preferences, policy options, and the choice of available candidates.

The influence of women on politics cannot be assessed solely through voting patterns, however. Feminist groups have made an impact on political life independently of the franchise, particularly in recent decades. Since the early 1960s, the National Organization for Women (NOW) and other women's groups in the United States have played a significant role in the passing of equal opportunity acts and have pressed for a range of issues directly affecting women to be placed on the political agenda. Such issues include equal rights at work, the availability of abortion, changes in family and divorce laws, and lesbian rights. In 1973 women achieved a legal victory when the Supreme Court ruled in *Roe v. Wade* that women had a legal right to abortion. The 1989 Court ruling in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, which placed restrictions on that right, resulted in a resurgence of involvement in the women's movement.

Although women lag far behind men in the ranks of the political elite, they have made important strides in recent decades. Women such as Supreme Court justices Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Elena Kagan, and Sonia Sotomayor, and Nancy Pelosi, minority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, now play central roles in American politics. Still, women remain underrepresented in government. In 2016, there were only twenty women in the Senate (of one hundred members), and only eighty-four in the House of Representatives (19 percent of total House membership) (Center for American Women and Politics 2016). While these percentages may seem low, from a historical perspective they represent a sea change in women's roles in politics. Just forty years ago, in 1970, there was only a single woman in the Senate, and there were just ten in the House. Despite the gender gap in Congress and other elected offices, both the Democratic and Republican parties today are nominally committed to securing equal opportunities for women and men. Since 1990,

suffrage

A legal right to vote guaranteed by the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution; guaranteed to women by the Nineteenth Amendment.



A leader in the Democratic party, Elizabeth Warren became the first female senator of Massachusetts when she beat Republican Scott Brown in November 2012.



female candidates for political office have been successful *when they have run for office*. The critical factor seems to be that political parties (which are largely run by men) have not recruited as many women to run for office.

We now broaden our scope to look at some basic ideas of political power. First, we take up the issue of who actually holds the reins of power, drawing on comparative materials to help illuminate the discussion. We then consider whether democratic governments around the world are “in crisis.”

Who Rules? Theories of Democracy

DEMOCRATIC ELITISM

One of the most influential views of the nature and limits of modern democracy was set out by Max Weber and, in rather modified form, by the economist Joseph Schumpeter (1983, orig. 1942). The ideas they developed are sometimes referred to as the theory of **democratic elitism**.

Weber began from the assumption that direct democracy is impossible as a means of regular government in large-scale societies. This is not only for the obvious logistical reason that millions of people cannot meet to make political decisions but because running a complex society demands expertise. Participatory democracy, Weber believed, can succeed only in small organizations in which the work to be carried out is fairly simple and straightforward. Where more complicated decisions have to be made, or policies worked out, even in modest-sized groups—such as a small business firm—specialized knowledge and skills are necessary. Experts have to carry out their jobs on a continuous basis; positions that require expertise cannot be subject to the regular election of people who may only have a vague knowledge of the necessary skills and information. While higher officials, responsible for overall policy decisions, are elected, there must be a large substratum of full-time bureaucratic officials who play a large part in running a country (Weber 1979, orig. 1921).

Weber placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of leadership in democracy—which is why his view is referred to as “democratic elitism.” He argued that rule by elites is inevitable; the best we can hope for is that those elites effectively represent our interests and that they do so in an innovative and insightful fashion. Weber valued multiparty democracy more for the quality of leadership it generates than for the mass participation in politics it makes possible.

Joseph Schumpeter fully agreed with Weber about the limits of mass political participation. For Schumpeter, as for Weber, democracy is more important as a method of generating effective and responsible government than as a means of providing significant power for the majority. Democracy, Schumpeter stated, is the rule of the politician, not the people. To achieve voting support, however, politicians must be at least minimally responsive to the demands and interests of the electorate. Only if there is some degree of competition to secure votes can arbitrary rule effectively be avoided.

PLURALIST THEORIES

The ideas of Weber and Schumpeter influenced some of the **pluralist theories of modern democracy**, although the pluralists developed their ideas somewhat differently. According to the pluralist view, government policies in a democracy are influenced by the continual processes of bargaining among numerous groups representing different interests—

democratic elitism

A theory of the limits of democracy, which holds that in large-scale societies democratic participation is necessarily limited to the regular election of political leaders.

pluralist theories of modern democracy

Theories that emphasize the role of diverse and potentially competing interest groups, none of which dominate the political process.

business organizations, trade unions, ethnic groups, environmental organizations, religious groups, and so forth. A democratic political order is one in which there is a balance among competing interests, all having some impact on policy but none dominating the actual mechanisms of government. Elections are also influenced by this situation; to achieve a broad enough base of support to lay claim to government, parties must be responsive to numerous diverse interest groups. The United States, it is held, is the most pluralistic of industrialized societies and, therefore, the most democratic. Competition among diverse interest groups occurs not only at the national level but within the states and in the politics of local communities.

THE POWER ELITE

The view suggested by C. Wright Mills in his celebrated work *The Power Elite* (1956) is quite different from pluralist theories. Mills argues that during the course of the twentieth century a process of institutional centralization occurred in the political order, the economy, and the sphere of the military. Not only did each of these spheres become more centralized, according to Mills, but they became increasingly merged with one another to form a unified system of power. Those who are in the highest positions in all three institutional areas come from similar social backgrounds, have parallel interests, and often know one another on a personal basis. By the mid-twentieth century they had become a single **power elite** that ran, and continues to run, the country—and, given the international position of the United States, also influences a great deal of the rest of the world.

The power elite, in Mills's portrayal, is composed mainly of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs). Many are from wealthy families, have been to the same prestigious universities, belong to the same clubs, and sit on government committees with one another. They have closely connected concerns. Business and political leaders work together, and both have close relationships with the military through weapons contracting and the supply of goods for the armed forces. There is a great deal of movement among top positions in the three spheres. Politicians have business interests; business leaders often run for public office; higher military personnel sit on the boards of the large companies.

Since Mills published his study, numerous other research investigations have analyzed the social background and interconnections of leading figures in the various spheres of American society (Dye 1986). All studies agree on the finding that the social backgrounds of those in leading positions are highly unrepresentative of the population as a whole (Domhoff 1971, 1979, 1983, 1998, 2013).

THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY

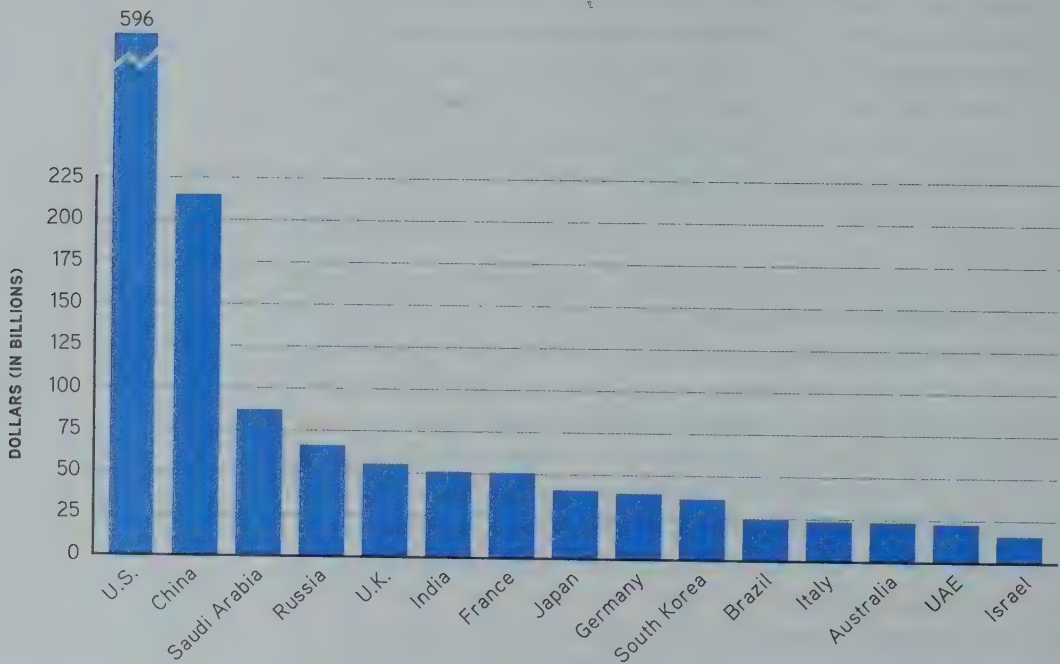
Mills's argument that the military plays a central role in the power elite was buttressed by a well-known warning from a former military hero and U.S. president, Dwight David Eisenhower. In his farewell presidential speech in 1961, Eisenhower—who was the supreme commander of the Allied forces in Europe in World War II—warned of the dangers of what he termed the “military-industrial complex.” As Eisenhower bluntly put it, “The conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist” (Eisenhower Library 1961).

power elite

Small networks of individuals who, according to C. Wright Mills, hold concentrated power in modern societies.

FIGURE 13.2

Countries with the Highest Military Expenditure in 2015



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2016

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States has emerged as the world's unrivaled military superpower, accounting for 36 percent of total world military spending—more than that of the next seven countries combined (Figure 13.2) (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2016). The global “war on terror,” discussed later, has instead triggered yet another cycle of military spending. Eisenhower’s dire warning seems no less apt today than when he uttered it over fifty years ago.

Democracy in Trouble?

Democracy almost everywhere is in some difficulty today. Even in the United States, voter turnout is low, and many people tell pollsters that they don’t trust politicians. In 1964, confidence in government was fairly high: Nearly four of five people answered “most of the time” or “just about always” when asked, “How much of the time do you trust the government in Washington to do the right thing?” Americans’ confidence in government dropped steadily throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, rising somewhat in the 1980s, then dropping to a low of one in five in 1994. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a solid majority (55 percent) of Americans reported that they trust the government “most of the time” or “just about always.” However, as we saw in Chapter 5, confidence in the U.S. government has waned again in the past few years, especially upon the public’s

discovery in June 2013 that the National Security Agency was collecting and monitoring private citizens' telephone records and Internet use. By the end of 2015, just 19 percent of Americans said they could trust the government in Washington always or most of the time (Pew Research Center 2015d).

Of those expressing continuing trust in government, most vote in presidential elections; of those who lack trust, most do not vote. As we have seen, younger people have traditionally had less interest in electoral politics than older generations have, although the young have a greater interest than their elders in issues like the environment. In the 2008 presidential election, Obama's call for "change we can believe in" apparently resonated with young voters: Turnout in the eighteen-to-twenty-four age group reached 49 percent, a 2 percent increase over the previous presidential election, with two-thirds voting for Obama. The level of turnout for young voters was still lower than that of other age groups (Pew Research Center 2008; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009b). Bernie Sanders's primary campaign in 2016, with its focus on ending inequality (and free higher education), similarly attracted large numbers of young voters.

The last few decades have also been a period in which, in several Western countries, the welfare state has come under attack. Rights and benefits, fought for over long periods, have been contested and cut back. One reason for this governmental retrenchment is the decline in revenues available to governments as a result of the general world recession that began in the early 1970s, the financial collapse of 2008, and the effects of globalization, which have shifted much economic growth (and therefore a growth in tax revenues) from Europe, North America, and Japan to emerging economies such as China. Yet an increasing skepticism also seems to have developed, shared not only by some governments but by many of their citizens, about the effectiveness of relying on the state for the provision of many essential goods and services. This skepticism is based on the belief that the welfare state is bureaucratic, alienating, and inefficient and that welfare benefits are all too often ineffective. In response to a 2011 survey asking, "What is more important—that everyone be free to pursue their life's goals without government interference, or that the state play an active role in guaranteeing that nobody is in need?" 58 percent of American respondents favored the former, with only 25 percent favoring the latter. These percentages were reversed in many European countries, with roughly three out of every five respondents in Britain, France, and Germany believing that government has a role to play in helping the less fortunate (Stokes 2013).

Why are so many people in the United States dissatisfied with the very political system that provides a safety net for its citizens? The answers, curiously, are bound up with the factors that have helped spread democracy—the impact of capitalism and the globalization of social life. While capitalist economies generate more wealth than any other type of economic system, that wealth is unevenly distributed, as we learned in Chapter 7. And economic inequalities influence who votes, joins parties, and gets elected. Wealthy individuals and corporations back interest groups that lobby for elected officials to support their aims when deciding on legislation. Not being subject to election, interest groups are not accountable to the majority of the electorate.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1. Why is it problematic for contemporary states to have participatory democracy?
- 2. Contrast the concepts of democracy and communism.
- 3. Describe the role interest groups play in American politics.
- 4. Compare and contrast pluralist theories of modern democracy and the power elite model.



What Is Terrorism?

Learn how social scientists define terrorism, and understand why terrorism is on the rise today.

terrorism

A public act of violence meant to be intimidating.

Terrorism has seized national headlines in recent decades, yet defining *terrorism* can be a complex and nuanced process (Turk 2004). Terrorism broadly refers to “any action [by a nonstate organization] . . . that is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or noncombatants, when the purpose of such an act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act” (Panyarachun et al. 2004). In simpler terms, terrorism is “a public act of violence meant to be intimidating” (Juergensmeyer 2015).

Terrorism today is most famously associated with loosely connected extremist groups that claim to embrace a form of Islam they believe to be true to its original teachings. Organizations such as al Qaeda, ISIS (which sees itself creating an Islamic State), and Boko Haram engage in very public acts of extreme violence aimed largely at civilian populations. Beheadings, suicide bombings in markets and other public places, and public executions are widely circulated through social media, in hopes of intimidating opponents and attracting recruits. Although they frame their acts in terms of Islam, they no more reflect Islamic beliefs than acts of Christian terrorists reflect the beliefs of Christianity.

In fact, before September 11, the worst act of terrorism in the United States was the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995 that claimed 168 lives (including 19 children in a day-care center), while injuring more than 800 others. That act was carried out by Timothy McVeigh, a former U.S. serviceman and white supremacist strongly influenced by the Christian Identity movement. There are currently nearly 1,000 active hate groups in the United States, most espousing racist ideologies that draw on a vision of a supposedly pure (and white) Christian culture (Southern Poverty Law Center 2015a). Between April 2009 and February 2015, according to another study, more people were killed in the United States by non-Islamic domestic terrorists than by Islamic jihadists (Southern Poverty Law Center 2015b). In fact, as sociologist Mark Juergensmeyer has shown, when it comes to terrorism, no religion has a monopoly on the use of violence to intimate non-believers: Muslims, Christians, Jews, Sikhs, Hindus, and even Buddhists have all spawned terrorist offshoots in recent years (Juergensmeyer 2003, 2009; Jerryson and Juergensmeyer 2010).

The fact that terrorism today often grows out of religious beliefs would seem to be puzzling: After all, when sociology emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, its founders generally assumed that with the rise of science and secular thinking, religion would decline in importance (see Chapter 12). But in the twenty-first century, as globalization contributed to the spread of Western secular beliefs throughout the world, traditional beliefs that once provided a sense of identity, accountability, and security have been undermined. The loss of personal and spiritual identity provides fertile ground for leaders who promise the absolute certainty that comes with a commitment to unquestioned religious beliefs. In the view of religious fanatics, terrorism is a political weapon to be used in what they see as a “cosmic war” between good and evil: It shows that their beliefs are powerful enough to provoke and frighten even the most powerful countries (Juergensmeyer 2009).

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 How do we define terrorism?
- 2 What are some of the causes of religious terrorism in the world today?

What Is the Social Significance of Work?

Because politics is inextricably linked with economic life, we now turn our attention to the ways that work and the economy have changed. **Work** refers to carrying out tasks that require mental and physical effort, with the objective of the production of goods and services that cater to human needs. An **occupation**, or job, is work that is done in exchange for a regular wage or salary. In all cultures, work is the basis of the economic system.

The study of economic institutions is of major importance in sociology because the economy influences all segments of society and therefore social reproduction in general. Hunting and gathering, pastoralism, agriculture, industrialism—these different ways of gaining a livelihood have a fundamental influence on the lives people lead. The distribution of goods and variations in the economic position of those who produce them also strongly influence social inequalities of all kinds. Wealth and power do not inevitably go together, but in general the privileged in terms of wealth are also among the more powerful groups in a society.

In the remainder of this chapter, we analyze the nature of work in modern societies and look at the major changes affecting economic life today. We investigate the changing nature of industrial production and of work itself. Modern industry differs in a fundamental way from premodern systems of production, which were based above all on agriculture. Most people worked in the fields or cared for livestock. In modern societies, by contrast, only a tiny fraction of the population works in agriculture, and farming itself has become industrialized—it is carried on largely by means of machines rather than by human hands.

Modern industry is itself always changing—technological change is one of its main features. **Technology** involves the use of science and machinery to achieve greater productive efficiency. The nature of industrial production also changes in relation to wider social and economic influences. We focus on both technological and economic change, showing how these are transforming industry today. We will also see that globalization makes a great deal of difference to our working lives; the nature of the work we do is being changed by forces of global economic competition.

The Importance of Paid and Unpaid Work

We often associate the notion of work with drudgery—with a set of tasks that we want to minimize and, if possible, escape from altogether. You may have this very thought in mind as you set out to read this chapter! Is this most people's attitude toward their work, and if so, why?

Work is more than just drudgery, or people would not feel so lost and disoriented when they become unemployed. How would you feel if you thought you would never get a job? In modern societies, having a job is important for maintaining a sense of purpose. Even where work conditions are relatively unpleasant and the tasks involved are dull, work tends to be a structuring element in people's psychological makeup and the cycle of their daily activities.



Assess the sociological ramifications of paid and unpaid work. Understand that modern economies are based on the division of labor and economic interdependence. Familiarize yourself with modern systems of economic production.

work

Carrying out tasks that require mental and physical effort, with the objective of the production of goods and services that cater to human needs. Work should not be thought of exclusively as paid employment. In modern societies, there remain types of work that do not involve direct payment.

occupation

Any form of paid employment in which an individual regularly works.

technology

The application of knowledge of the material world to production; the creation of material instruments (such as machines) used in human interaction with nature.

informal economy

Economic transactions carried on outside the sphere of formal paid employment.

Work need not conform to the standard categories of paid employment. Nonpaid labor (such as repairing one's own car or doing one's own housework) is an important aspect of many people's lives. Much of the work done in the informal economy, for example, is not recorded in official employment statistics. The term **informal economy** refers to transactions outside the sphere of regular employment, sometimes involving the exchange of cash for services provided, but also often involving the direct exchange of goods or services. Your child's babysitter might be paid in cash "off the books," or without any receipt being given or details of the job recorded; the same may be true of the person who cleans your house or does your gardening, if you use such services.

The informal economy includes not only "hidden" cash transactions but many forms of self-provisioning that people carry on inside and outside the home. Do-it-yourself activities with household appliances and tools, for instance, provide goods and services that would otherwise have to be purchased (Gershuny and Miles 1983). Housework, which has traditionally been carried out mostly by women, is usually unpaid. But it is work—often very hard and exhausting work—nevertheless. Volunteer work, for charities or other organizations, has an important social role. Having a paid job is important—but the category of "work" stretches more widely.

The Importance of the Division of Labor

The economic system of modern societies rests on a highly complex **division of labor**. Recall that in Chapter 1 we introduced this concept, which the nineteenth-century scholar Émile Durkheim viewed as the basis for the social cohesion that results when multiple parts of society function as an integrated whole. Under a division of labor, work is divided into an enormous number of different occupations in which people specialize. In traditional societies, nonagricultural work entailed the mastery of a specific skill. A worker typically learned craft skills through a lengthy period of apprenticeship and then carried out all aspects of the production process from beginning to end. For example, a metalworker making a plow would forge the iron, shape it, and assemble the implement itself. With the rise of modern industrial production, most traditional crafts have disappeared altogether, replaced by skills that form part of more large-scale production processes.

The contrast in the division of labor between traditional and modern societies is truly extraordinary. Even in the largest traditional societies, there usually existed no more than twenty or thirty major craft trades, together with such specialized pursuits as merchant, soldier, and priest. In a modern industrial system, there are literally thousands of distinct occupations. The U.S. Census Bureau lists more than 31,000 distinct jobs in the American economy. In traditional communities, most of the population worked on farms and were economically self-sufficient. They produced their own food, clothes, and other necessities of life. One of the main features of modern societies, by contrast, is an enormous expansion of **economic interdependence**. The vast majority of people in modern societies do not produce the food they eat or the material goods they consume. Moreover, the division of labor is now truly global, since the components of virtually all products are sourced from many factories in different countries.

division of labor

The specialization of work tasks, by means of which different occupations are combined within a production system. All societies have at least some rudimentary form of division of labor, especially between the tasks allocated to men and those performed by women.

economic interdependence

The fact that in the division of labor, individuals depend on others to produce many or most of the goods they need to sustain their lives.

Will a Robot Take Your Job?

The microchip has changed the way we live. Communication is easy and borderless. The world's information is at our fingertips. The goods and services we consume are cheaply sourced from around the planet. Cars are smarter (even if their drivers aren't). Are we heading for a utopian future in which "smart machines" do the drudge work, freeing up humans for more satisfying pursuits? Or will jobs disappear, resulting in massive unemployment?

Because the U.S. population is growing, more than a million new jobs must be created each year just to avoid an increase in the unemployment rate (Drum 2016). Yet, over the past decade employment has failed to keep up. Many workers are so discouraged they are no longer looking for work; while 66 percent of the adult population was seeking work in 2006, ten years later the number had dropped to 63 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016i).

These changes are due in part to technology that has led to the offshoring of manufacturing and service sector jobs to countries where wages are lower. Those firms that remain in the United States often employ fewer workers, thanks also to advances in technology (Sherk 2010): automobile plants where robots assemble cars, banks that use ATMs, supermarkets with automatic checkout services. While much has been made of "twenty-first-century onshoring"—the return of some manufacturing jobs to the United States—these jobs often pay low wages, and, thanks to automation, also require fewer workers (Semuels 2015).

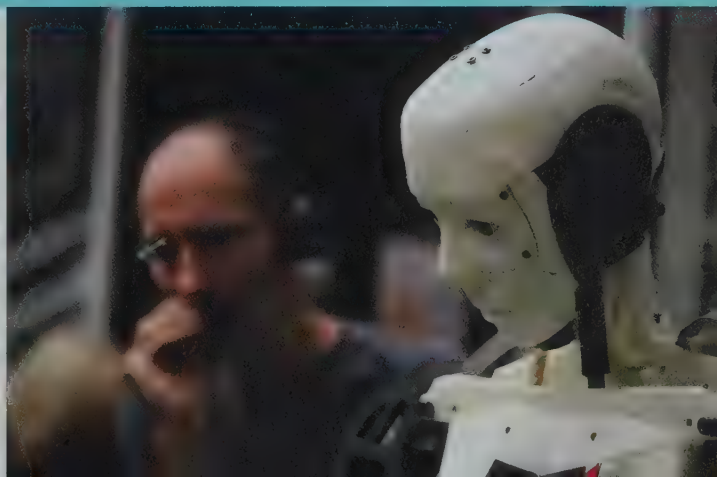
While many lost jobs affect lower-skilled workers, rapid advances in software, in such areas as business-intelligence,

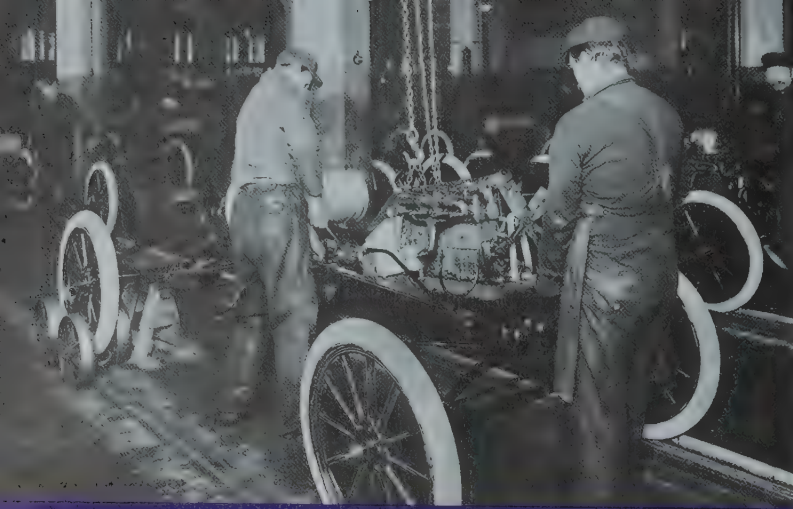
decision-making, and "big data" analysis, hold the promise of automating occupations that currently require college degrees. The services provided by professionals such as lawyers, accountants, radiologists, and many middle managers can increasingly be performed by artificial intelligence software. One estimate is that as many as two-fifths of all jobs in the United States could be replaced by software (Brynjolfsson and McAfee 2014; Ford 2009, 2010). As one technology writer has noted, "The evidence is irrefutable that computerized automation, networks and artificial intelligence (AI)—including machine-learning, language-translation, and speech- and pattern-recognition software—are beginning to render many jobs simply obsolete" (*The Economist* 2011).

One technology that has the ability to radically change the nature of work is additive manufacturing, or 3D printing. This involves the ability, using computerized technology, to add layers of materials that result in physical objects such as fashion accessories, car parts, artificial organs, weapons, and even component parts for the Mars landrover. Because it is software-driven, 3D printing holds the promise of instantly delivering products that meet the exact requirements of individual consumers (Chowdry 2013; Peels 2012). Nike and Adidas, for example, are both developing the ability to scan a customer's foot and print out a custom-designed athletic shoe in the store—or eventually, as 3D printers come down in cost, perhaps even in the customer's home (Matisons 2015). If this indeed comes to pass, what will happen to the hundreds of thousands of jobs, around the globe, currently devoted to footwear manufacturing?

Will a robot take your job? Significantly, at least one robot—Siri—hasn't a clue.

Additive manufacturing, or 3D printing, which was used to create this robot, could radically change the nature of work by reducing the role of workers in creating complex products.





From 1908 to 1927, factory workers at the Ford Motor Company assembled Model T automobiles.

Industrial Work

Writing more than two centuries ago, Adam Smith, one of the founders of modern economics, identified advantages that the division of labor provides in terms of increasing productivity. His most famous work, *The Wealth of Nations*, opens with a description of the division of labor in a pin factory. A person working alone could perhaps make twenty pins per day. By breaking down that worker's task into a number of simple operations, however, ten workers carrying out specialized jobs in collaboration with one another could collectively produce 48,000 pins per day. The rate of production per worker, in other words, is increased from 20 to 4,800 pins, each specialist operator producing 240 times more than when working alone.

More than a century later, these ideas reached their most developed expression in the writings of Frederick Winslow Taylor, an American management consultant. Taylor's approach to what he called "scientific management" involved the detailed study of industrial processes in order to break them down into simple operations that could be precisely timed and organized. Taylor's principles were appropriated by the industrialist Henry Ford. In 1908, Ford designed his first auto plant in Highland Park, Michigan, to manufacture only one product—the Model T Ford—thereby allowing the introduction of specialized tools and machinery designed for speed, precision, and simplicity of operation. One of Ford's most significant innovations was the introduction of the assembly line, said to have been inspired by Chicago slaughterhouses, in which animals were disassembled section by section on a moving conveyor belt. Each worker on Ford's assembly line was assigned a specialized task, such as fitting the left-side door handles as the car bodies moved along the line. By 1929, when production of the Model T ceased, over 15 million cars had been assembled.

Work and Alienation

alienation

The sense that our own abilities as human beings are taken over by others. Karl Marx used the term to refer to the loss of workers' control over the nature and products of their labor.

Karl Marx was one of the first writers to grasp that the development of modern industry would reduce many people's work to dull, uninteresting tasks. According to Marx, the division of labor alienates human beings from their work. **Alienation** refers to feelings of indifference or hostility not only to work but to the overall framework of industrial production within a capitalist setting.

In traditional societies, Marx pointed out, work was often exhausting; peasant farmers sometimes toiled from dawn to dusk. Yet peasants had control over their work, which required much knowledge and skill. Many industrial workers, by contrast, have little control over their jobs, only contribute a fraction to the creation of the overall product, and

have no influence over how or to whom it is eventually sold. Work thus appears as something alien, a task that the worker must carry out in order to earn an income but that is intrinsically unsatisfying.

Industrial Conflict

There have long been conflicts between workers and those with economic and political authority over them. Riots against high taxes and food riots at periods of harvest failure were common in urban areas of Europe in the eighteenth century. These “premodern” forms of labor conflict continued up to the late nineteenth century in some countries. Such traditional forms of confrontation were not just sporadic, irrational outbursts of violence: The threat or use of violence had the effect of lowering the price of grain and other essential foodstuffs (Booth 1977; Rudé 1964; Thompson 1971).

Industrial conflict between workers and employers at first tended to follow these older patterns. In situations of confrontation, workers would quite often leave their places of employment and form crowds in the streets; they would make their grievances known through their unruly behavior or by engaging in acts of violence against the authorities. Workers in some parts of France in the late nineteenth century would threaten disliked employers with hanging (Holton 1978). Use of the strike as a weapon, today commonly associated with organized bargaining between workers and management, developed only slowly and sporadically.

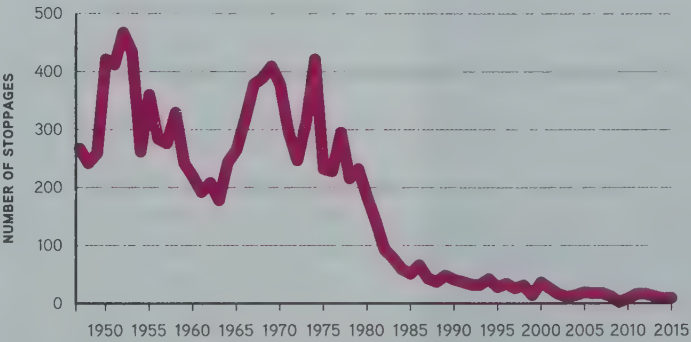
STRIKES

A **strike** is a temporary stoppage of work by a group of employees in order to express a grievance or enforce a demand (Hyman 1984). As we saw earlier in this chapter, workers who were dissatisfied with their low wages and working conditions staged work stoppages throughout American cities in April 1915. Workers go on strike for many specific reasons. They may be seeking to gain higher wages, forestall a proposed reduction in their earnings, protest against technological changes that make their work duller or lead to layoffs, or obtain greater job security. However, in all these circumstances the strike is essentially a mechanism of power: a weapon of people who are relatively powerless in the workplace and whose working lives are affected by managerial decisions over which they have little control. Strikes typically occur when other negotiations have failed, because workers on strike either receive no income or depend on union funds, which might be limited. As Figure 13.3 shows, work stoppages in the United States dropped off considerably in the 1980s. This is due in large part to the fact

strike

A temporary stoppage of work by a group of employees in order to express a grievance or enforce a demand.

FIGURE 13.3
Work Stoppages,* 1947–2015



*Involving 1,000 or more workers.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016l

that union membership decreased markedly at this time. In the next section, we explain the reasons behind this precipitous drop.

Labor Unions

Although their levels of membership and the extent of their power vary widely, union organizations exist in all Western countries, which also all legally recognize the right of workers to strike in pursuit of economic objectives. In the early development of modern industry, workers in most countries had no political rights and little influence over their working conditions. **Unions** developed as a means of redressing the imbalance of power between workers and employers. As we saw earlier in this chapter, one tactic used by unions is **collective bargaining**. This is the process of negotiations between employers and their workers; these negotiations are used to reach agreements about a broad range of working conditions, including pay scales, working hours, training, health and safety, and the right to file a grievance. Whereas workers may have limited power as individuals, through collective organization their influence is considerably increased. An employer can do without the labor of any particular worker but not without that of all or most of the workers in a factory or plant.

After 1980, unions suffered declines across the advanced industrial countries. In the United States, the share of the workforce belonging to unions declined from 23 percent in 1980 to 11 percent in 2015. The decline has been steepest in the private sector: While less than 7 percent of all private sector wage and salary workers were unionized in 2015, more than a third (35 percent) of all government employees belonged to unions, reaching 41 percent for local government (Hirsch and Macpherson 2004; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016m). Americans' perceptions of labor unions also took a hit following widespread protests by state workers in 2011. In Wisconsin and several other states, state and local workers—ranging from firefighters to teachers—protested because they feared the loss of their pensions, a reduction in their health benefits, and a loss of their right to collective bargaining. Many Americans, themselves facing higher health insurance costs and reduced pensions in their public-sector jobs, showed little empathy for the protesting state workers. However, since that time attitudes toward unions have once again increased, with 48 percent having a favorable view, compared with 39 percent unfavorable (Pew Research Center 2015j).

There are several widely accepted explanations for the difficulties confronted by unions since 1980. One major factor is the loss of once-unionized manufacturing jobs to low-wage countries around the world, particularly in East Asia, and most notably China—a country where independent labor unions are illegal. Such job loss, real or threatened, has greatly weakened the bargaining power of unions in the manufacturing sector and as a result has lowered their appeal to workers. Why join a union and pay union dues if the union cannot deliver wage increases or job security? Unionization efforts in the United States have also been hampered in recent years by decisions of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the government agency responsible for protecting the right of workers to form unions and engage in collective bargaining. The NLRB has proven ineffective at protecting efforts to unionize workplaces, failing to take aggressive action when businesses harass or fire union organizers (Clawson and Clawson 1999; Estlund 2006).

unions

Organizations that advance and protect the interests of workers with respect to working conditions, wages, and benefits.

collective bargaining

The rights of employees and workers to negotiate with their employers for basic rights and benefits.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- Why is it important for sociologists to study economic institutions?
- Define and provide an example of an informal economy.
- Using the concept of division of labor, describe the key differences in the nature of work in traditional versus modern societies.
- What is a labor union? Why have unions in the United States suffered from a decline in membership since the 1980s?

What Are Key Elements of the Modern Economy?

Modern societies are, in Marx's term, *capitalistic*. As we learned in Chapter 1, **capitalism** is a way of organizing economic life that is distinguished by the following important features: private ownership of the means of production; profit as incentive; competition for markets to sell goods, acquire cheap materials, and utilize cheap labor; and expansion and investment to accumulate capital. Capitalism, which began to spread with the growth of the Industrial Revolution in the early nineteenth century, is a vastly more dynamic economic system than any other that preceded it in history. Although the system has had many critics, such as Marx, it is now the most widespread form of economic organization in the world.

So far, we have been looking at industry mostly from the perspective of occupations and employees. But we also have to concern ourselves with the nature of the business firms in which the workforce is employed. (It should be recognized that many people today are employees of government organizations, although we will not consider these here.) What is happening to business corporations today, and how are they run?

Corporations and Corporate Power

Since the turn of the twentieth century, modern capitalist economies have been increasingly influenced by the rise of large business **corporations**. The share of total manufacturing assets held by the largest manufacturing firms in the United States (those with assets of over \$1 billion) increased from 49 percent in 1970 to 87 percent in 2010 (U.S. Statistical Abstracts 2012). But the corporations with the largest assets are now banks. The 10 largest financial organizations—banks and investment companies—in 2010 accounted for more than half (54 percent) of all financial activity; twenty years earlier they accounted for only 20 percent (Bauerlein and Jeffery 2010).

Of course, there still exist thousands of smaller firms and enterprises within the American economy. In these companies, the image of the **entrepreneur**—the boss who owns and runs the firm—is by no means obsolete. The large corporations are a different matter. Ever since Adolf Berle and Gardiner Means published their celebrated study *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* more than eighty years ago, it has been accepted that most of the largest firms are not run by those who own them (Berle and Means 1982, orig. 1932). In theory, the large corporations are the property of their shareholders, who have the right to make all important decisions. But Berle and Means argued that since share ownership is so dispersed, actual control has passed into the hands of the managers who run firms on a day-to-day basis.

The power of the major corporations is very extensive. Corporations often cooperate in setting prices rather than freely competing with one another. Thus, the giant oil companies normally follow one another's lead in the price charged for gasoline. When one firm occupies a commanding position in a given industry, it is said to be in a **monopoly** position. More common is a situation of **oligopoly**, in which a small group of giant



See the importance of the rise of large corporations; consider particularly the global impact of transnational corporations.

capitalism

An economic system based on the private ownership of wealth.

corporations

Business firms or companies.

entrepreneur

The owner or founder of a business firm.

monopoly

A situation in which a single firm dominates in a given industry.

oligopoly

The domination by a small number of firms in a given industry.

corporations predominate. In situations of oligopoly, firms are able more or less to dictate the terms on which they buy goods and services from the smaller firms that are their suppliers.

The emergence of the global economy has contributed to a wave of corporate mergers and acquisitions on an unprecedented scale, reaching more than \$4 trillion in 2015, creating oligopolies in industries such as health care and communications and media (Rogers 2016; Várdi 2014). Comcast, Disney, Twenty-First Century Fox, Time Warner, Time Warner Cable, DirecTV, and CBS top the list of the world's biggest media and communication corporations; eight of the largest ten media companies are based in the United States (Le 2015). Chinese firms, though, are rapidly getting into the mergers and acquisitions game.

TYPES OF CORPORATE CAPITALISM

family capitalism

Capitalistic enterprise owned and administered by entrepreneurial families.

managerial capitalism

Capitalistic enterprises administered by managerial executives rather than by owners.

welfare capitalism

Practice in which large corporations protect their employees from the vicissitudes of the market.

institutional capitalism

Capitalistic enterprise organized on the basis of institutional shareholding.

interlocking directorates

Linkages among corporations created by individuals who sit on two or more corporate boards.

There have been several general stages in the development of business corporations, although each overlaps with the others and all continue to coexist today. The first stage, characteristic of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was dominated by **family capitalism**. Large firms were run either by individual entrepreneurs or by members of the same family and then passed on to their descendants. The famous corporate dynasties, such as the Rockefellers and Fords, belong in this category. These individuals and families did not just own a single large corporation but held a diversity of economic interests and stood at the apex of economic empires.

Most of the big firms founded by entrepreneurial families have since become public companies—that is, shares of their stock are traded on the open market—and have passed into managerial control. In the large corporate sector, family capitalism was increasingly succeeded by **managerial capitalism**. As managers came to have more and more influence through the growth of very large firms, the entrepreneurial families were displaced. The result has been described as the replacement of the family in the company by the company itself (Allen 1981). Managerial capitalism has left an indelible imprint on modern society. The large corporation drives not only patterns of consumption but also the experience of employment in contemporary society. It is difficult to imagine how different the work lives of many Americans would be in the absence of large factories or corporate bureaucracies.

Sociologists have identified another area in which the large corporation has left a mark on modern institutions. **Welfare capitalism** refers to a practice that sought to make the corporation—rather than the state or trade unions—the primary shelter from the uncertainties of the market in modern industrial life. Beginning at the end of the nineteenth century, large firms began to provide certain services to their employees, including child care, recreational facilities, profit-sharing plans, paid vacations, and group life and unemployment insurance. By the end of World War II, many corporations, as well as public employers such as governments and educational institutions, also began to offset much of the cost of purchasing private medical insurance for their employees. These programs often had a paternalistic bent, such as that sponsoring “home visits” for the “moral education” of employees. Viewed in less benevolent terms, a major objective of welfare capitalism was coercion, as employers deployed all manners of tactics—including violence—to avoid unionization.

Despite the overwhelming importance of managerial capitalism in shaping the modern economy, many scholars now see the contours of a third, different phase in the

evolution of the corporation emerging. They argue that managerial capitalism has today partly ceded place to **institutional capitalism**. This term refers to the emergence of a consolidated network of business leadership concerned not only with decision making within single firms but also with the development of corporate power beyond them. Institutional capitalism is based on the practice of corporations holding shares in other firms. **Interlocking directorates**—linkages among corporations created by individuals who sit on two or more corporate boards—exercise control over much of the corporate landscape. This reverses the process of increasing managerial control, since the managers' shareholdings are dwarfed by the large blocks of shares owned by other corporations. Rather than investing directly by buying shares in a business, individuals can now invest in money market, trust, insurance, and pension funds that are controlled by large financial organizations, which in turn invest these grouped savings in industrial corporations. However, in coming decades, Americans may be reluctant to put their resources into pension funds because of the recent economic crisis, a time when many people saw their investments decline if not disappear entirely.

Finally, some sociologists argue that we have now entered a new stage in the development of business corporations—a form of institutional capitalism they see as **global capitalism**. According to this view, corporations are increasingly stateless: Giant transnational entities roam freely around the planet in search of lower costs and higher profits, loyal to no country regardless of where they might be headquartered. The major corporations today are global not only in the sense that they operate transnationally but also because their shareholders, directors, and top officers are drawn from many countries (Robinson 2004; Sklair 2000).

TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS

With the intensifying of globalization, most large corporations now operate in an international economic context. When they establish branches in two or more countries, they are referred to as multinational or **transnational corporations**. *Transnational* is the preferred term, indicating that these companies operate across many different national boundaries. Swiss researchers identified more than 43,000 transnational corporations networked together in 2007. The top fifty firms were primarily financial institutions, including Barclays, JPMorgan Chase, and Merrill Lynch, which strongly suggests that the financial services industry has a great deal of power and influence in the global economy (Vitali, Glattfelder, and Battiston 2011). The largest transnationals are gigantic; their wealth outstrips that of many countries. The scope of these companies' operations



With revenue of nearly \$500 billion, Walmart is the largest corporation in the world.

global capitalism

The current transnational phase of capitalism, characterized by global markets, production, finances; a transnational capitalist class whose business concerns are global rather than national; and transnational systems of governance (such as the World Trade Organization) that promote global business interests.

transnational corporations

Business corporations located in two or more countries.

Container ships are cargo ships that carry all of their load in truck-sized containers. As this technique greatly accelerates the speed at which goods can be transported to and from ports, these ships now carry the majority of the world's dry cargo.



is staggering. The combined revenues of the world's 500 largest transnational corporations totaled \$28 trillion in 2015 (Fortune 2016). To give an idea of the magnitude of that number, in 2015, \$76.7 trillion in goods and services were produced by the *entire world* (World Bank 2016h).

The United States is home to the largest number of firms among the top 500 transnational corporations, although the share of American-based companies has fallen sharply in recent years as the number of transnational corporations based in other countries—especially Asian countries such as South Korea and China—has increased. While U.S.- and European-based transnational corporations continue to dominate the global economy by a wide margin, China has begun to have a significant presence, surpassing Japan in terms of number of Global 500 corporations.

The reach of the transnationals over the past thirty years would not have been possible without advances in transportation and communications. Air travel now allows people to move around the world at a speed that would have seemed inconceivable even sixty years ago; container ships the size of small cities move hundreds of thousands of tons of goods across the Pacific Ocean in eleven days. Telecommunications technologies now permit more or less instantaneous communication from one part of the world to another. Satellites have been used for commercial telecommunications since 1965. The first satellite could carry 240 telephone conversations at once; current satellites can carry 12,000 simultaneous conversations! The larger transnationals now have their own satellite-based communications systems.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What are the main features of capitalism?
2. Compare and contrast the five types of corporate capitalism.

How Does Work Affect Everyday Life Today?

The globalizing of economic production, together with the spread of information technology, is altering the nature of the jobs most people do. As discussed earlier, the proportion of people working in blue-collar jobs in industrial countries has progressively fallen. Fewer and fewer people work in factories. New jobs have been created in offices, in service centers such as superstores like Walmart, and in airports. Many of these new jobs are filled by women.

Work and Technology

The relationship between technology and work has long been of interest to sociologists. How is our experience of work affected by the type of technology that is involved? As industrialization has progressed, technology has assumed an ever-greater role at the workplace—from factory automation to the computerization of office work. The current information technology revolution has attracted renewed interest in this question. Technology can lead to greater efficiency and productivity, but how does it affect the way work is experienced by those who carry it out? For sociologists, one of the main questions is how the move to more complex systems influences the nature of work and the institutions in which it is performed.

AUTOMATION AND THE SKILL DEBATE

The concept of **automation**, or programmable machinery, was introduced in the mid-1800s, when Christopher Spencer, an American, invented the Automat, a programmable lathe that made screws, nuts, and gears. Automation has thus far affected relatively few industries, but with advances in the design of industrial robots, its impact is certain to become greater.

The majority of the robots used in industry worldwide are found in automobile manufacture. For example, Ford used robots with lasers for eyes and suction cups for hands to manufacture its 2013 Escape (Nishimoto 2012). While the usefulness of robots is still somewhat limited, this is changing rapidly and, combined with breakthroughs in 3D printing, it is certain that automated production will spread rapidly in coming years. Robots are becoming more sophisticated, while their costs are decreasing.

The spread of automation has provoked a heated debate over the impact of the new technology on workers, their skills, and their level of commitment to their work. Harry Braverman, in his influential book *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974), argued that automation was part of the overall “de-skilling” of the industrial labor force. In both industrial settings and modern offices, new technologies have reduced the need for creative human input. One function of automation, Braverman argued, is to increase control over workers; all that is required in a highly automated factory is an unthinking, unreflective body capable of endlessly carrying out the same unskilled task. Although Braverman was primarily writing about the kind of assembly-line work that occurs in automobile manufacturing facilities, his arguments apply with equal force to the giant electronics plants in China that



Learn about the impact of global economic competition on employment. Consider how work will change over the coming years.

automation

Production processes monitored and controlled by machines with only minimal supervision from people.

The pricey designer jeans sold in U.S. department stores are often made in sweatshops. Young workers, usually women, toil long hours for paltry wages. Xinjiang, in the Guangdong province of China, alleges that it manufactures 60 percent of jeans sold across the globe.



assemble our smartphones and computers, the factories throughout the world that make our clothing, and the fast-food workers at McDonald's and Taco Bell who serve up our orders in a matter of minutes.

The introduction of computerized technology in the workplace has resulted in a two-tiered workforce composed of a small group of highly skilled professionals with a high degree of flexibility and autonomy in their jobs and a larger group of clerical, service, and production workers who lack autonomy in their jobs.

GLOBAL PRODUCTION

For much of the twentieth century, the most important business organizations were large manufacturing firms that controlled both the production and sale of goods. Giant automobile companies such as Ford and General Motors typify this approach, employing tens of thousands of factory workers and making everything from components to the final cars, which are then sold in the manufacturers' showrooms. Such manufacture-dominated production processes are organized as large bureaucracies, often controlled by a handful of large firms.

During the past quarter-century, however, another form of production has become important—one that is controlled by giant retailers. In retailer-dominated production, firms such as Walmart and Kmart sell thousands of different brands of goods; the brands, in turn, arrange to have their products made by independently owned factories around the globe. Almost no major U.S. companies today make their own apparel or footwear, for example; rather, they outsource to independently owned factories that do the work for them. These factories range from tiny sweatshops to giant plants owned by transnational corporations. Most so-called garment manufacturers actually employ no garment workers at all. Instead, they rely on thousands of factories around the world to make

their apparel, which they then sell in department stores and other retail outlets. Clothing manufacturers do not own any of these factories and are therefore free to use them or not, depending on their needs. While this provides the manufacturers with the flexibility previously discussed, it creates great uncertainty both for the factories, which must compete with one another for orders, and for the workers in those factories, who may lose their jobs if their factory loses business. Critics of this system argue that such competition has resulted in a global “race to the bottom,” in which retailers and manufacturers will go anywhere on earth where they can pay the lowest wages possible (Bonacich and Appelbaum 2000). As we saw in Chapter 8, one result of globalization is that much of the clothing we buy today is made in sweatshops by young workers—most likely teenage girls—who get paid pennies for making clothing or pricey athletic shoes (Bonacich and Appelbaum 2000).

Trends in the Occupational Structure

The occupational structure in all industrialized countries has changed dramatically since the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1900, about three-quarters of the employed population was in manual work, either farming or blue-collar work such as manufacturing. White-collar professional and service jobs were much fewer in number. By 1960, however, more people worked in white-collar professional and service jobs than in manual labor. By 1993, the occupational system had nearly reversed its structure from 1900. Almost three-quarters of the employed population worked in white-collar professional and service jobs, while the rest worked in blue-collar and farming jobs. These trends have continued; in 2014 the manufacturing workforce was only 8 percent, while white-collar professional and service employment accounted for 80 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015b).

There are several reasons for the transformation of the occupational structure. One is the introduction of labor-saving machinery, culminating in the spread of information technology and computerization in industry in recent decades. Another is the rise of the manufacturing industry in other parts of the world, primarily Asia. The older industries in Western societies have experienced major job cutbacks because of their inability to compete with Asian producers, whose labor costs are lower. As we have seen, this global economic transformation has forced American companies to adopt new forms of production, which in turn has impelled employees to learn new skills and new occupations as manufacturing-related jobs move to other countries. A final important trend is the decline of full-time paid employment with the same employer over a long period of time. Not only has the transformation of the global economy affected the nature of day-to-day work, it has also changed the career patterns of many workers.

THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

Taking these trends into account, some observers suggest that what is occurring today is a transition to a new type of society no longer based primarily on industrialism. We are entering, they claim, a phase of development beyond the industrial era altogether. A variety of terms have been coined to describe this new social order, such as the *postindustrial society*, the *information age*, and the “*new*” *economy*. The term that has come into most common use, however, is the **knowledge economy**.

knowledge economy

A society no longer based primarily on the production of material goods but based instead on the production of knowledge. Its emergence has been linked to the development of a broad base of consumers who are technologically literate and have made new advances in computing, entertainment, and telecommunications part of their lives.

A precise definition of the knowledge economy is difficult to formulate, but in general terms, it refers to an economy in which ideas, information, and forms of knowledge underpin innovation and economic growth. Knowledge-based industries include high technology, education and training, research and development, and the financial and investment sector. Much of the workforce is involved not in the physical production or distribution of material goods but in their design, development, technology, marketing, sale, and servicing. These employees can be termed *knowledge workers*. The knowledge economy is dominated by the constant flow of information and opinions and by the powerful potentials of science and technology.

The World Bank (2012a) recently developed the Knowledge Economy Index (KEI), which rates countries based on their overall preparedness to compete in the knowledge economy. The factors contributing to this index include technological adoption and innovation, education, and the information and communications infrastructure. Scandinavian nations including Sweden, Finland, and Denmark topped the list. Sweden ranked number one because of its high levels of education and high levels of Internet penetration as well as a high number of patents for inventions. Poor developing nations rounded out the bottom of the list, with Angola, Sierra Leone, Myanmar, and Haiti receiving very low scores—due primarily to the fact that poverty is a major obstacle to technological innovation and widespread high-quality education.

THE CONTINGENT WORKFORCE

Another important employment trend of the past decade has been the replacement of full-time workers by part-time workers and contingency workers, or workers who are hired on a contract or “freelance” basis, often for a short-term task. Most temporary or contingent workers are hired for the least-skilled, lowest-paying jobs. More generally, part-time jobs do not provide the benefits associated with full-time work, such as medical insurance, paid vacation time, or retirement benefits. Because employers can save on the costs of wages and benefits, the use of part-time and contingent workers has become increasingly common. During economic recessions, in particular, cash-strapped employers may need to rely on this low-cost strategy.

Scholars have debated the psychological effects of part-time work on the workforce. Many temporary workers fulfill their assignments in a prompt and satisfactory manner, but others rebel against their tenuous positions by shirking their responsibilities or sabotaging their results. Some temporary workers have been observed trying to “look busy” or to work longer than necessary on rather simple tasks. However, some recent surveys of work indicate that part-time workers register higher levels of job satisfaction than those in full-time employment. This may be because most part-time workers are women, who find that part-time work is preferable to full-time employment when trying to juggle work and family demands. Yet men, too, may find that they are able to balance paid part-time work with other activities and enjoy a more varied life. Some people might choose to give full commitment to paid work from their youth to their middle years, then perhaps change to a second part-time career, which would open up new interests. However, workers who desire full-time employment but are able to secure only part-time work are often dissatisfied and anxious about their precarious financial status.

Unemployment Rates

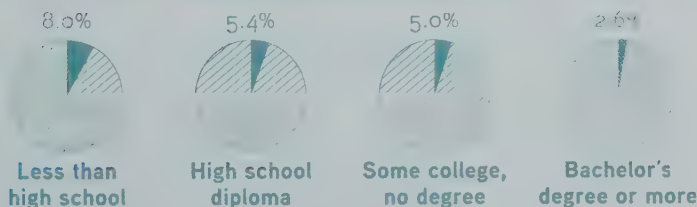
More than 197 million people—or 5.8 percent of the global workforce—are unemployed worldwide. Another 1.5 billion people are in vulnerable employment, including more than 70 percent of workers in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The highest unemployment rates are seen in Northern Africa and the Arab States.



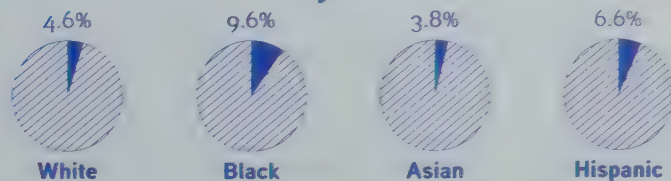
Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2012; International Labor Organization 2012.

Unemployment in the United States

By educational attainment



By race



By gender



Unemployment

The experience of unemployment—being unable to find a job when one wants it—is a perennially important social problem. Yet some contemporary scholars argue that we should think about the relation between being “in work” and “out of work” in a completely different way from the way we did in the recent past.

Unemployment rates fluctuated considerably over the course of the twentieth century. In Western countries, unemployment reached a peak in the Depression years of the early 1930s, when some 20 percent of the workforce were out of work in the United States. The economist John Maynard Keynes, who strongly influenced public policy in Europe and the United States during the post–World War II period, believed that unemployment results from consumers lacking sufficient resources to buy goods. Governments can intervene to increase the level of demand in an economy, leading to the creation of new jobs; the newly employed then have the income with which to buy more goods, thus creating yet more jobs for people who produce them. State management of economic life, most people came to believe, meant that high rates of unemployment belonged to the past. Commitment to full employment became part of government policy in virtually all Western societies. Until the 1970s, these policies seemed successful, and economic growth was more or less continuous.

During the 1970s and 1980s, however, Keynesianism was largely abandoned. In the face of economic globalization, governments lost the ability to control economic life as they once had. One consequence was that unemployment rates shot up in many countries. Several factors explain the increase in unemployment levels in Western countries at that time. First is the rise of international competition in industries on which Western prosperity used to be founded. In 1947, 60 percent of steel production in the world was carried out in the United States. Today, the figure is only about 5 percent. China was the largest producer of steel in 2015 at 50 percent, followed by the European Union (10 percent), Japan (7 percent), India (6 percent), and Russia (4 percent) (World Steel Association 2016). Second is the economic recession that began in 2008. The U.S. unemployment rate was 5 percent in 2007; two years later, it had doubled to 10 percent. Although the economic recovery took many years, by 2015 unemployment was once again down to 5 percent. This recovery, however, was partly due to the fact that between 2006 and 2015, nearly four million workers gave up looking for work and so were no longer included among the unemployed (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016j). Third, the increasing use of microelectronics in industry has reduced the need for labor power. Finally, beginning in the 1970s, more women sought paid employment, meaning that more people were chasing a limited number of available jobs.

The Future of Work

Over the past twenty years, in all the industrialized countries except the United States, the average length of the working week has become shorter. Workers still undertake long stretches of overtime, but some governments are beginning to introduce new limits on permissible working hours. In France, for example, annual overtime is restricted to a maximum of 130 hours a year. In most countries, there is a general tendency toward shortening the average working career. More people would probably quit the labor force at age sixty or earlier if they could afford to do so.

unemployment rate

The proportion of the population sixteen and older that is actively seeking work but is unable to find employment.

If the amount of time devoted to paid employment continues to shrink, and the need to have a job becomes less central, the nature of working careers might be substantially reorganized. Job sharing or flexible working hours, which arose primarily as a result of the increasing numbers of working parents trying to balance the commitments of workplace and family, might become more common. Some work analysts have suggested that sabbaticals of the university type should be extended to workers in other spheres: People would be entitled to take a year off in order to study or pursue some form of self-improvement. Some might opt to work part time throughout their lives, rather than being forced to because of a lack of full-time employment opportunities.

The nature of the work most people do and the role of work in our lives, like so many other aspects of the societies in which we live, are undergoing major changes. As we will see in Chapter 16, the chief reasons are global economic competition, the widespread introduction of information technology and computerization, and the large-scale entry of women into the workforce. How will work change in the future? It appears very likely that people will take a more active look at their lives than in the past, moving in and out of paid work at different points. These are only positive options, however, when they are deliberately chosen. The reality for most is that regular paid work remains the key to day-to-day survival and that unemployment is experienced as a hardship rather than an opportunity.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 Why does automation lead to worker alienation?
- 2 What are some of the changes that occurred in the occupational structure in the twentieth century? How can they be explained?
- 3 How did Keynes explain unemployment? What was his solution to high unemployment rates?
- 4 In your opinion, how will globalization change the nature of work?

The Big Picture

Politics and Economic Life

Thinking Sociologically

1. Discuss the differences between the "pluralistic" and the "power elite" theories of democratic political processes. Which theory do you find most appropriate to describe U.S. politics in recent years?
2. Discuss some of the important ways that the nature of work will change for the contemporary worker as companies apply more automation and larger-scale production processes and as oligopolies become more pervasive. Explain each of these trends and how they affect workers, both now and in the future.
3. What was the main goal of the workers who protested their working conditions in April 2015? What kind of public policies might address their concerns? What does their battle reveal about the sociology of work and the sociology of politics?

Learning Objectives

How Did the State Develop?

p. 390

Learn the basic concepts underlying modern nation-states.

How Do Democracies Function?

p. 393

Learn about different types of democracy, how this form of government has spread around the world, key theories about power in a democracy, and some of the problems associated with modern-day democracy.

What Is Terrorism?

p. 404

Learn how social scientists define terrorism, and understand why terrorism is on the rise today.

What Is the Social Significance of Work?

p. 405

Assess the sociological ramifications of paid and unpaid work. Understand that modern economies are based on the division of labor and economic interdependence. Familiarize yourself with modern systems of economic production.

What Are Key Elements of the Modern Economy?

p. 411

See the importance of the rise of large corporations; consider particularly the global impact of transnational corporations.

Global Economic Competition

Learn about the impact of global economic competition on employment. Consider how work will change over the coming years.

Terms to Know

government • politics •
economy • power • authority

• nation-states • sovereignty • citizens •
nationalism • local nationalisms • civil rights •
political rights • franchise • social rights •
welfare state

democracy • participatory democracy • direct
democracy • constitutional monarchs • liberal
democracies • communism • winner take all •
proportional representation • interest group •
patronage • democratic elitism • pluralist theories
of modern democracy • power elite

terrorism

• occupation • technology • informal
economy • division of labor • economic
dependence • alienation • strike • unions
• collective bargaining

capitalism • corporations • entrepreneur •
monopoly • oligopoly • family capitalism •
managerial capitalism • welfare capitalism •
institutional capitalism • interlocking
corporate • global capitalism • transnational
corporations

automation • knowledge economy

Concept Checks

1. Describe three main characteristics of the state.
2. What is a welfare state? Can the United States be classified as a welfare state? Why?

1. Why is it problematic for contemporary states to have participatory democracy?
2. Contrast the concepts of democracy and communism.
3. Describe the role interest groups play in American politics.
4. Compare and contrast pluralist theories of modern democracy and the power elite model.

1. How do we define terrorism?
2. What are some of the causes of religious terrorism in the world today?

1. Why is it important for sociologists to study economic institutions?
2. Define and provide an example of an informal economy.
3. Using the concept of division of labor, describe the key differences in the nature of work in traditional versus modern societies.
4. What is a labor union? Why have unions in the United States suffered from a decline in membership since the 1980s?

1. What are the main features of capitalism?
2. Compare and contrast the five types of corporate capitalism

1. Why does automation lead to worker alienation?
2. What are some of the changes that occurred in the occupational structure in the twentieth century? How can they be explained?
3. How did Keynes explain unemployment? What was his solution to high unemployment rates?
In your opinion, how will globalization change the nature of work?

14

The Sociology of the Body: Health, Illness, and Sexuality

Obesity Rates

P. 401



Barack Obama signed laws with Congress after the landmark passage of the Affordable Care Act in March 2010. What effect do you think this legislation will have on healthcare inequalities in the United States?

THE BIG QUESTIONS

How does social context affect the human body?

Understand how social and cultural contexts shape attitudes toward “ideal” body forms and give rise to two body-related social problems in the United States: eating disorders and the obesity crisis.

How do sociologists understand health and illness?

Learn about functionalist and symbolic interactionist perspectives on physical and mental health and illness in contemporary society. Understand the relationship between traditional medicine and complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).

How do social factors affect health and illness?

Recognize that health and illness are shaped by cultural and social factors. Learn about the social and cultural differences in the distribution of disease.

What causes infectious diseases in developing nations?

Understand the causes underlying high rates of infectious diseases in developing nations. Learn more about HIV/AIDS as a sociological phenomenon.

How does social context shape human sexual behavior?

Learn about the debate over the importance of biological versus social and cultural influences on human sexual behavior. Explore the cultural differences in sexual behavior and patterns of sexual behavior today.





Health insurance and access to affordable care may not be issues that you think about every day. Perhaps you think access to medical care is an issue just for older adults or for the very poor. But think for a moment about what you might do if you had no health insurance and got sick or had an accident. Could you afford the hefty costs of X-rays and medications? Without health insurance, even taken-for-granted aspects of health care such as glasses, contact lenses, teeth cleanings, and birth control pills can be prohibitively expensive. For example, in 2013, a single visit to the emergency room averaged more than \$2,000 (Kliff 2013), while even a simple inhaler for asthmatics could cost nearly \$200 (Rosenthal 2013). Given these high costs, many Americans' health problems go undetected and untreated.

Seeking to address these deep flaws in the nation's health care system, President Barack Obama signed into law the controversial Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), a

comprehensive reform plan designed to help reduce vast inequities in access to health care in the United States.

The ACA is a highly complex program; the original document outlining all components of the policy was more than 12,000 pages long! Two of the most controversial aspects of the act are the “individual mandate,” which requires uninsured people to purchase health insurance or else pay a tax penalty, and “low-income subsidies,” which are assistance programs to help ensure that all Americans can afford to purchase health insurance. People who don’t have access to health insurance through their employers, for instance, and who buy health insurance on their own, are eligible for tax credits that go toward covering their health insurance premiums. These subsidies are based on income level, and assistance is available to people with family income between 100 and 400 percent of the federal poverty level (Kaiser Family Foundation 2013).

These subsidies for low-income individuals are designed to help put affordable health care within the reach of all Americans. In 2012, 15 percent of Americans had no health insurance, and these proportions were considerably higher for blacks and Latinos: One in five blacks and one in three Hispanics were uninsured (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2013k). Young adults also were likely to lack insurance; fully 27 percent of young adults ages nineteen to twenty-five had no health insurance in 2012 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2013k).

These figures stand in stark contrast to those for other wealthy nations, including Canada, most European nations, Japan, Israel, New Zealand, Taiwan, and a growing number of nations in Latin America, where each and every individual has some form of health insurance through universal health coverage (World Health Organization 2010). **Universal health coverage** (UHC) is a broad concept whose goal is to ensure that all people can obtain the health services they need without incurring financial hardship. UHC is funded by a variety of sources, which vary across countries. The mix typically includes government funding, taxes, and contributions by employers as well as individuals.

The ACA is about more than just providing access to health care for people after they get sick. Many components of ACA were designed to promote preventive health care and help people maintain healthy lifestyles and detect health problems early on, rather than seeking medical care only after their conditions have advanced to a dangerous stage. For example, under the program, all Americans have access to free services such as depression screening, substance use disorder screening, blood pressure screening, obesity counseling and screening, assistance with quitting smoking, vaccinations, and counseling for domestic abuse victims (Kaiser Family Foundation 2013). These services are particularly important for low-income Americans, who are at a greater risk for every major health condition than their wealthier counterparts. One of the most consistent patterns documented by sociologists of health and illness is the **social class gradient in health**. This gradient refers to the fact that socioeconomic resources are strongly linked to health, where those with higher levels of education, income, and assets are less likely than their disadvantaged counterparts to suffer from heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, early onset of dementia, physical disability, sleep problems, substance use problems, mental illness, and premature death (Centers for Disease Control [CDC] 2011a). These patterns are so pronounced that one of the four main goals of *Healthy People 2020*, the federal government’s health agenda, is to “achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve the health of all groups” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2010).

Judging by the chapter title, you might have expected to read about biology, or about the physical ways that our bodies function. You might have been surprised to read about

universal health coverage

Public health care programs motivated by the goal of providing affordable health services to all members of a population.

social class gradient in health

The strong inverse association between socioeconomic resources and risk of illness or death.

something as seemingly far removed from our everyday lives as federal health care policy. Yet public policies and macro social factors are powerful influences on our health. The field known as **sociology of the body** investigates how and why our bodies are affected by our social experiences and the norms and values of the groups to which we belong. Using this framework, we begin our chapter by analyzing why obesity and an equally problematic phenomenon, eating disorders, have become so common in the Western world. We then describe the ways that sociologists theorize about health and medicine; discuss social dimensions of health and illness, with an emphasis on the ways that social class, race, and gender affect our health; and provide an overview of health issues that affect the lives of people in developing nations. We conclude by examining social and cultural influences on our sexual behavior; as we will see, sexual behavior, like health, is a product of biological, cultural, and social forces.

sociology of the body

Field that focuses on how our bodies are affected by our social experiences. Health and illness, for instance, are shaped by social and cultural influences.

How Does Social Context Affect the Human Body?

Social contexts affect our bodies in myriad ways. The types of jobs we hold, the neighborhoods in which we live, how much money we earn, the cultural practices we partake in, and our relationships all shape how long we live, the types of illnesses we suffer from, and even the shape and size of our bodies. Later in this chapter, we will show how key features of our social lives, including race and social class, affect our physical and mental health. In this section, we will focus on one specific aspect of our bodies to show the power of social and cultural contexts: our body weight. Whether we are slender or heavy is not just a product of our personal choices (such as what foods we eat) or our genes. Rather, body weight is shaped by powerful social structures as well as cultural forces.

Let's take the case of eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa or bulimia, and obesity, or excessive body weight. Both are important social problems in the Western world. Although both are conditions of the body, their causes reflect social factors more than physical or biological factors. If both conditions reflected biology alone, we would expect that rates would be fairly constant across history—because human physiology has changed little throughout the millennia. However, both are very recent social problems. Both conditions are also highly stratified by social factors such as gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. Women are far more likely than men to have an eating disorder, while economically disadvantaged persons are far more likely than their wealthier counterparts to struggle with obesity today. Both are also shaped by the cultural context. Fashion magazines regularly show images of models who are severely underweight, yet uphold these women as paragons of beauty. The average fashion model today is 23 percent thinner than the average American woman, yet twenty-five years ago that number was 8 percent (Derenne and Beresin 2006). At the same time, our culture also promotes excessive eating. A Big Mac is less expensive than a healthy salad in most parts of the country, perpetuating the social class gradient in obesity rates. By contrast, both eating disorders and obesity are virtually unknown in impoverished societies where food is scarce and cherished.



Understand how social and cultural contexts shape attitudes toward “ideal” body forms and give rise to two body-related social problems in the United States: eating disorders and the obesity crisis.

Take a look at these three women: The first (from left) is painfully thin as a result of famine and malnutrition, common problems in areas of the world plagued by frequent drought and crop failure. The middle has become painfully thin by her own doing; people with anorexia feel compelled by personal and social pressures to lose weight. The third woman (right) is severely overweight and is preparing for gastric bypass surgery.



Both obesity and eating disorders also illustrate the ways that a “personal trouble” (for example, self-starvation or obesity-related complications such as diabetes) reflects “public issues” (for example, a culture that promotes an unrealistic “thin ideal” for young women), or the ways that poverty makes it difficult for individuals to buy costly healthful foods or to reach public parks and other spaces for regular exercise.

Eating Disorders

Anorexia is related to the idea of dieting, and it reflects changing views of physical attractiveness in modern society. In most premodern societies, the ideal female shape was a fleshy one. Thinness was not desirable, partly because it was associated with hunger and poverty. The notion of slimness as the desirable feminine shape originated among some middle-class groups in the late nineteenth century, but it became generalized as an ideal for most women only recently. A historical examination of the physiques of Miss America winners between 1922 and 1999, for example, shows that for much of the twentieth century, pageant winners had a body weight that would be classified as “normal,” yet in recent years the majority of winners would be classified as “underweight” using medical guidelines (Rubinstein and Caballero 2000).

Anorexia was identified as a disorder in France in 1874, but it remained obscure until the past thirty or forty years (Brown and Jasper 1993). Since then, it has become increasingly common among young women. So has *bulimia*—bingeing on food, followed by self-induced vomiting. Anorexia and bulimia often occur in the same individual. An estimated 0.9 percent of females have suffered from anorexia at some time during their lives, and an estimated 0.5 percent of women have suffered from bulimia (Hudson et al. 2007). Nearly all (95 percent) of those who have eating disorders are between the ages of twelve and twenty-six (National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders 2010). Women account for more than 90 percent of all persons with eating disorders, so it

is difficult for researchers to estimate rates among men. But recent evidence suggests that boys, too, increasingly struggle to maintain a lean and muscular physique (Field et al. 2014).

Once a young woman starts to diet and exercise compulsively, she can become locked into a pattern of refusing food or vomiting up what she has eaten. As the body loses muscle mass, it loses heart muscle, so the heart gets smaller and weaker, which ultimately leads to heart failure. About half of all anorexics also have low white blood cell counts, and about a third are anemic. Both conditions can lower the immune system's resistance to disease, leaving an anorexic vulnerable to infections. Anorexia has the highest mortality rate of any psychological disorder; 20 percent of anorexics will die from it (Eating Disorder Coalition 2003).

Why do eating disorders affect women in particular and young women most acutely? Sociologists note that social norms stress the importance of physical attractiveness more for women than for men and that desirable body images of men differ from those of women. However, men are also less likely to seek treatment for eating disorders because they are considered to be female disorders (National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders 2010).

This unhealthy obsession with slenderness—and the resulting eating disorders—extends beyond the United States and Europe. As Western images of feminine beauty have spread to the rest of the world, so too have associated illnesses. Eating problems have also surfaced among young, primarily affluent women in Hong Kong and Singapore, as well as in urban areas in Taiwan, China, the Philippines, India, and Pakistan (Efron 1997). One famous study showed that in Fiji, a nation where voluptuous bodies were long considered the cultural ideal, rates of eating disorders among young women increased markedly after American television shows like *Beverly Hills 90210* started to air there (Becker 2004).

The rise of eating disorders in Western societies coincides with the globalization of food production. Since the 1950s, supermarket shelves have been abundant with foods from all parts of the world. Most foods are available all the time, not just when they are in season locally. When all foods are available all the time, we must decide what to eat. First, we have to choose what to eat in relation to the new medical information that science bombards us with—for instance, that cholesterol levels contribute to heart disease. Second, we worry about calorie content. The fact that we have much more control over our own bodies than before presents us with positive possibilities as well as new anxieties and problems. All this is part of what sociologists call the **socialization of nature**: Phenomena that used to be “natural,” or given in nature, have now become social—they depend on our own social decisions.

The Obesity Epidemic

Eating disorders are a major social problem that plagues young women in the United States. Yet a very different weight-related health issue, obesity, is considered the top public health problem facing Americans today. **Obesity** is defined as a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or greater (CDC 2008a). Over the past two decades, obesity rates among adults in the United States have risen dramatically. In 2000, 31 percent of adults were obese; by 2014, that proportion had jumped to nearly 38 percent. In 2015, no state had an obesity prevalence under 20 percent; in thirty-nine states the rate was 25 percent or higher, and sixteen of these states had rates equal to or in excess of 30 percent (CDC 2016c).

socialization of nature

The process by which phenomena regarded as “natural” have now become social.

obesity

Excessive body weight indicated by a body mass index (BMI) over 30.



Obesity increases an individual's risk for a wide range of health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, sleep apnea, osteoarthritis, and some forms of cancer (Haslam and James 2005; Wang et al. 2011). Excessive body weight may also take a severe psychological toll. Overweight and obese Americans are more likely than their thinner peers to experience depression; strained family relationships; poorer-quality sex and dating lives; employment discrimination; discrimination by health care providers; and daily experiences of teasing, insults, and shame (Carr and Friedman 2005, 2006; Carr et al. 2007, 2013). Negative attitudes toward overweight and obese persons develop as early as elementary school (Puhl and Latner 2007). Sociologists are fascinated with the persistence of negative attitudes toward overweight and obese persons, especially because these individuals currently make up

the statistical majority of all Americans. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 71 percent of U.S. adults are overweight, including 38 percent who are obese and 8 percent who are extremely obese (Fryar, Carroll, and Ogden 2016). An even more troubling trend is that 17 percent of children and adolescents are overweight (Ogden et al. 2015).

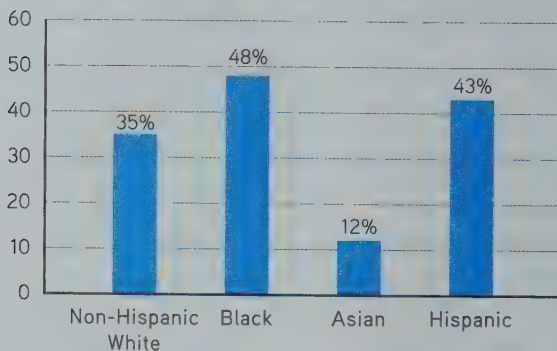
The reasons behind the obesity crisis are widely debated. Some argue that the apparent increase in the overweight and obese population is a statistical artifact. The proportion of the U.S. population who are middle-aged has increased rapidly during the past two decades, with the aging of the large baby boom cohort. Middle-aged persons, due to slowing metabo-

lism, are at greater risk of excessive body weight. Others attribute the pattern—especially the rise in childhood obesity—to shifts in the ethnic makeup of the U.S. population. The proportion of children today who are black or Hispanic is higher than in earlier decades, and these two ethnic groups are at a much greater risk for becoming overweight than their white peers (Figure 14.1). Still others argue that the measures used to count and classify obese persons have shifted, thus leading to an excessively high count. Finally, some social observers believe that public concern over obesity is blown out of proportion and reflects more of a “moral panic” than a “public health crisis” (Campos et al. 2006; Saguy 2012).

Most public health experts believe, however, that obesity is a very real problem caused by what Kelly Brownell calls the “obesogenic

FIGURE 14.1

Obesity Rates by Race/Ethnicity

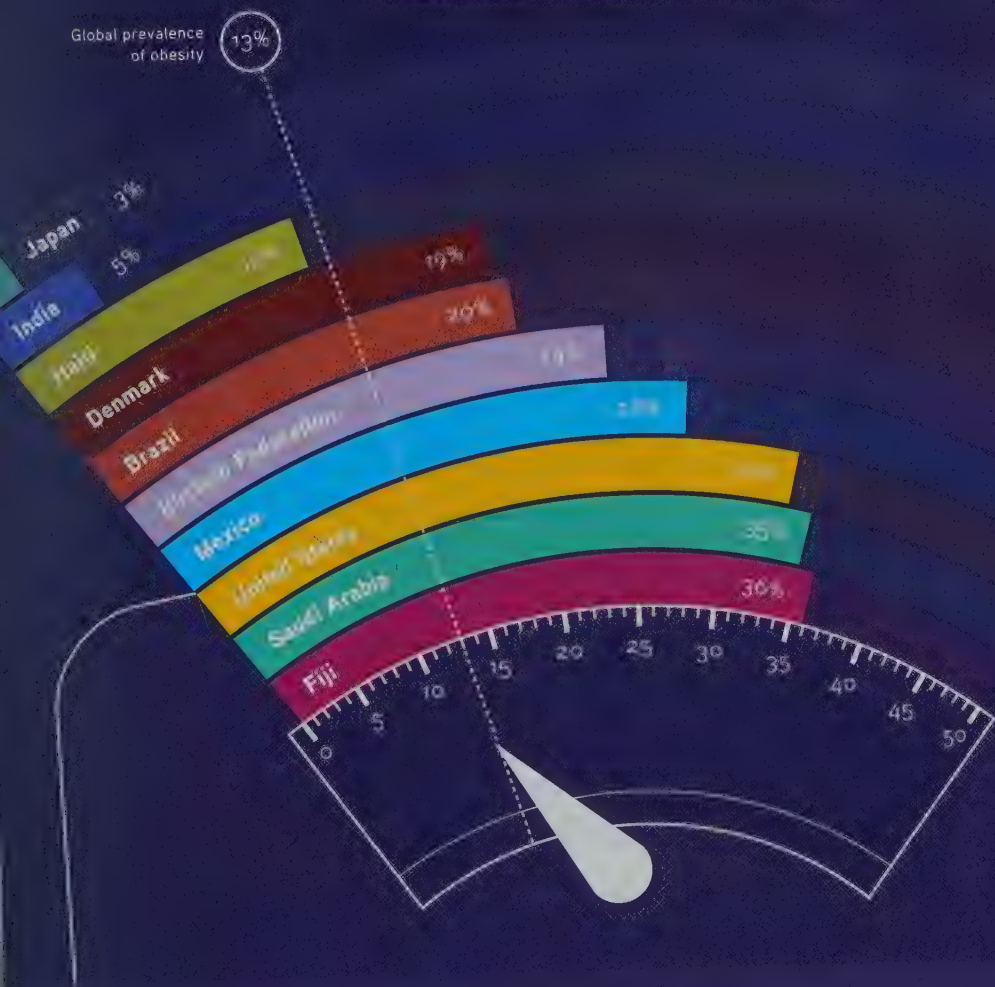


Source: Ogden et al. 2015

Obesity Rates

Obesity rates worldwide have more than doubled since 1980. In 2014, more than 600 million people—13 percent of all adults worldwide—were obese. Once considered a “first world” problem, rates of obesity—defined as a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher—have been rising in low- and middle-income countries.

Proportion of Adults Who Are Obese



Obesity Rates by Income Group



food deserts

Geographic areas in which residents do not have easy access to high-quality affordable food. These regions are concentrated in rural areas and poor urban neighborhoods.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 Why is anorexia more likely to strike young women than other subgroups?
- 2 What explanations are offered for the recent increase in obesity rates?
- 3 What policy solutions have been offered for the obesity crisis?

Learn about functionalist and symbolic interactionist perspectives on health and illness in contemporary society. Understand the relationship between traditional medicine and complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).

environment”—or a social environment that unwittingly contributes to weight gain (Brownell and Horgen 2004). Among adults, sedentary desk jobs have replaced physical jobs, such as farming. Children are more likely to spend their after-school hours sitting in front of a computer or television than playing tag or riding their bikes around the neighborhood. Parents are pressed for time, given their hectic work and family schedules, and turn to unhealthy fast food rather than home-cooked meals. Restaurants, eager to lure bargain-seeking patrons, provide enormous serving sizes at low prices. The social forces that promote high fat and sugar consumption and that restrict the opportunity to exercise are particularly acute for poor persons and ethnic minorities. Small grocery stores in poor neighborhoods rarely sell fresh or low-cost produce. Large grocery stores are scarce in poor inner-city neighborhoods and rural areas as well as in predominantly African American neighborhoods (Morland et al. 2002). Given the scarcity of high-quality healthy foods in poor neighborhoods, scholars have dubbed these areas “**food deserts**” (Walker, Keane, and Burke 2010). Additionally, high crime rates and high levels of traffic in inner-city neighborhoods make exercise in public parks or jogging on city streets potentially dangerous (Brownell and Horgen 2004).

Policymakers and public health professionals have proposed a broad range of solutions to the obesity crisis. Some have (unsuccessfully) proposed practices that place the burden directly on the individual. For example, some schools have considered having a “weight report card,” where children and parents would be told the child’s BMI, in an effort to trigger healthy behaviors at home. Yet most experts endorse solutions that attack the problem at a large-scale level, such as making healthy low-cost produce more widely available; providing safe public places to exercise, free fitness classes, and classes in health and nutrition to poor children and their families; and requiring restaurants and food manufacturers to clearly note the fat and calorie content of their products. Only in attacking the “public issue” of the obesogenic environment will the “private trouble” of excessive weight be resolved (Brownell and Horgen 2004).

How Do Sociologists Understand Health and Illness?

Sociologists of health and illness also are concerned with understanding the experience of illness—how individuals experience being sick, chronically ill, or disabled and how these experiences are shaped by one’s social interactions with others. If you have ever been ill, even for a short period, you know that patterns of daily life are temporarily modified and your interactions with others change. This is because the normal functioning of the body is a vital, but often taken for granted, part of our daily lives. Our sense of self is predicated on the expectation that our bodies will facilitate, not impede, our social interactions and daily activities.

Illness has both personal and public dimensions. When we fall ill, others are affected as well. Our friends, families, and coworkers may extend sympathy, care, support, and

assistance with practical tasks. They may struggle to understand our illness and its cause, or to adjust the patterns of their own lives to accommodate it. Others' reactions to our illness, in turn, shape our own interpretations and can pose challenges to our sense of self. For instance, a longtime smoker who develops lung disease may be made to feel guilty by family members.

Two sociological perspectives on the experience of illness have been particularly influential. The first, associated with the functionalist school, proposes that "being sick" is a social role, just as "worker" or "mother" is a social role. As such, unhealthy persons are expected to comply with a widely agreed-upon set of behavioral expectations. The second view, favored by symbolic interactionists, explores how the meanings of illness are socially constructed and how these meanings influence people's behavior.

The Sick Role

The functionalist thinker Talcott Parsons (1951) developed the notion of the **sick role** to describe patterns of behavior that a sick person adopts to minimize the disruptive impact of illness. Functionalist thought holds that society usually operates in a smooth and consensual manner. Illness is, therefore, seen as a dysfunction that can disrupt the flow of this normal state. A sick individual, for example, might be unable to perform standard responsibilities or be less reliable and efficient than usual. Because sick people cannot carry out their normal roles, the lives of people around them are disrupted: Assignments at work go unfinished and cause stress for coworkers, responsibilities at home are not fulfilled, and so forth.

According to Parsons, people learn the sick role through socialization and enact it—with the cooperation of others—when they fall ill. Sick persons face societal expectations for how to behave, yet at the same time other members of society abide by a generally agreed-upon set of expectations for how they will treat the sick individual. The sick role is distinguished by three sets of normative expectations:

1. The sick person is not held personally responsible for his or her poor health.
2. The sick person is entitled to certain rights and privileges, including a release from normal responsibilities.
3. The sick person is expected to take sensible steps to regain his or her health, such as consulting a medical expert and agreeing to become a patient.

EVALUATION

Although the sick-role model reveals how the ill person is an integral part of a larger social context, a number of criticisms can be levied against it. Some argue that the sick-role formula does not adequately capture the *lived experience* of illness. Others point out that it cannot be applied across all contexts, cultures, and historical periods. For example, it does not account for instances in which doctors and patients disagree about a diagnosis or have opposing interests. It also fails to explain illnesses that do not necessarily lead to a suspension of normal activity, such as alcoholism, certain disabilities, and some chronic diseases. Furthermore, taking on the sick role is not always a straightforward process. Some individuals who suffer for years from chronic pain or from misdiagnosed symptoms are denied the sick role until they get a clear diagnosis. Other sick people, such as young women with autoimmune diseases, often appear physically healthy despite constant physical pain

sick role

A term Talcott Parsons used to describe the patterns of behavior that a sick person adopts in order to minimize the disruptive impact of his or her illness on others.

and exhaustion; because of their “healthy” outward appearance, they may not be readily granted sick-role status. In other cases, social factors such as race, class, and gender can affect whether and how readily the sick role is granted. Single parents or people caring for their ailing relatives may fail to acknowledge or act on their own symptoms because they fear that shirking their social roles will hurt their loved ones. The sick role cannot be divorced from the social, cultural, and economic influences that surround it.

The realities of life and illness are more complex than the sick role suggests. The leading causes of death today are heart disease and cancer, two diseases that are associated with unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, a high-fat diet, and a sedentary lifestyle. Given the emphasis on taking control over one's health and lifestyle in our modern age, individuals bear ever-greater responsibility for their own well-being. This contradicts the first premise of the sick role—that the individual is not to blame for his or her illness. Moreover, in modern societies the shift away from acute infectious disease toward chronic illness has made the sick role less applicable because there is no single formula for chronically ill or disabled people to follow. Moreover, chronically ill persons often find that their symptoms fluctuate so that they feel and appear healthy on some days yet experience disabling symptoms on other days. Living with illness is experienced and interpreted in multiple ways.

Illness as “Lived Experience”

Symbolic interactionists study the ways people interpret the social world and the meanings they ascribe to it. Many sociologists have applied this approach to health and illness and view this perspective as a partial corrective to the limitations of functionalist approaches to health. Symbolic interactionists are not concerned with identifying risk factors for specific illnesses. Rather, they address questions about the personal experience of illness: How do people react and adjust to news about a serious illness? How does illness shape individuals' daily lives? How does living with a chronic illness affect an individual's self-identity?

One theme that sociologists address is how chronically ill individuals cope with the practical and emotional implications of their illness. Certain illnesses require regular treatments or maintenance that can affect daily routines. Undergoing dialysis or insulin injections, or taking large numbers of pills, requires individuals to adjust their schedules. Other illnesses have unpredictable effects, such as sudden loss of bowel or bladder control or violent nausea. People suffering from such conditions often develop strategies for managing their illness in daily life. These include practical considerations—such as noting the location of the restrooms when in an unfamiliar place—as well as skills for managing interpersonal relations, both intimate and commonplace. Although symptoms can be embarrassing and disruptive, people develop coping strategies to live as normally as possible (Kelly 1992).

At the same time, the experience of illness can pose challenges for individuals to manage their illnesses within the overall context of their lives (Jobling 1988; Williams 1993). Corbin and Strauss (1985) identified three types of “work” incorporated in the everyday strategies of the chronically ill. *Illness work* refers to activities involved in managing the condition, such as treating pain, doing diagnostic tests, or undergoing physical therapy. *Everyday work* pertains to the management of daily life—maintaining relationships with others, running household affairs, and pursuing professional or personal interests. *Biographical work* involves the process of incorporating the illness into one's life, making



When people with diabetes give themselves insulin injections, they are engaging in what sociologists call *illness work*.

sense of it, and developing ways of explaining it to others. Such a process can help people with mental and physical illness restore meaning and order to their lives.

Each of these processes of adaptation may be particularly difficult for those who suffer from a stigmatized health condition, such as extreme obesity, alcoholism, schizophrenia, HIV/AIDS, or lung cancer. Sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) developed the concept of **stigma**, which refers to any personal characteristic that is devalued in a particular social context. Stigmatized individuals and groups are often treated with suspicion, hostility, or discrimination. Stigmas are, however, rarely based on valid understandings or scientific data. They spring from stereotypes or perceptions that may be false or only partially correct. Further, the nature of a stigma varies widely across sociocultural context: The extent to which a trait is devalued depends on the values and beliefs of those who do the stigmatizing. For instance, in the United States, obese persons are much more likely to be stigmatized by white upper-middle-class persons than they are to be stigmatized by African Americans or working-class whites (Carr and Friedman 2005). By contrast, other health conditions, including major mental illness and HIV/AIDS (as we will read about later in this chapter), are much more widely stigmatized. One recent study of sixteen countries, including the United States and nations in Europe, Africa, and Asia, found that even in the most liberal, tolerant countries, the majority of the public held stigmatizing attitudes and a willingness to exclude people with schizophrenia from close, personal relationships and positions of authority, seeing them as unpredictable and potentially dangerous (Pescosolido et al. 2013).

stigma

Any physical or social characteristic that is labeled by society as undesirable.

Changing Conceptions of Health and Illness

A key theme in the sociological study of health is that cultures and societies differ in what they consider healthy and normal. All cultures have known concepts of physical health and illness, but most of what we now recognize as medicine is a consequence of developments in Western society over the past three centuries. In premodern cultures, the family was the main institution for coping with sickness or affliction. There have always been individuals who specialized as healers, using a mixture of physical and spiritual remedies, and many such traditional systems survive today in non-Western cultures. For instance, traditional Chinese medicine aims to restore harmony among aspects of the personality and bodily systems, involving the use of herbs and acupuncture for treatment.

Modern medicine sees the origins and treatment of disease as physical and explicable in scientific terms. The application of science to medical diagnosis and cure underlays the development of modern health care systems. Sociologists have argued that in contemporary Western societies, conditions that were previously viewed as having their roots in social, cultural, or religious causes are now “medicalized.” Medicalization, according to sociologist Peter Conrad (2007), is the process by which problems of social life become defined and treated as medical conditions. For example, sociologist Allan Horwitz has argued that in the United States, the emotion of “sadness”—a normal response to stressors like loss, failure, and disappointment—has now been transformed into the medical disorder of “depression,” which is believed to have its roots in biological causes such as brain chemistry or genetics (Horwitz and Wakefield 2007). As such, depressed persons today are much more likely to be treated with medications, such as antidepressants, rather than “talk therapy,” in which a therapist would focus on the social or emotional roots of the sad feelings.

complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)

A diverse set of approaches and therapies for treating illness and promoting well-being that generally fall outside of standard medical practices.

biomedical model of health

The set of principles underpinning Western medical systems and practices, which defines diseases objectively and holds that the healthy body can be restored through scientifically based medical treatment.

Other features of modern medicine are the acceptance of the hospital as the setting within which to treat serious illnesses and the development of the medical profession as a body with codes of ethics and significant social power. The scientific view of disease is linked to the requirement that medical training be systematic and long term; self-taught healers are typically excluded. Although professional medical practice is not limited to hospitals, the hospital provides an environment in which doctors can treat and study large numbers of patients in circumstances permitting the concentration of medical technology.

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

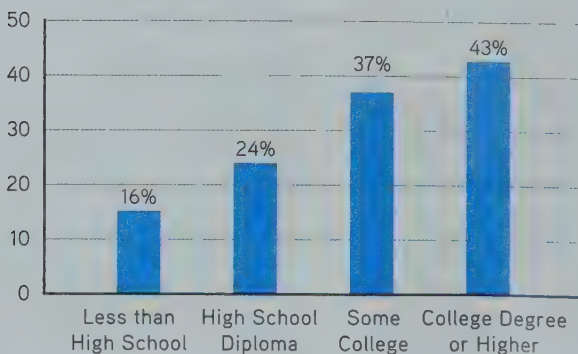
Alternative therapies, such as herbal remedies, acupuncture, and chiropractic treatments, are being explored by a record high number of adults in the United States today and are slowly gaining acceptance by the mainstream medical community. Medical sociologists refer to such unorthodox medical practices as **complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)**. CAM encompasses a diverse set of approaches and therapies for treating illness and promoting well-being that generally fall outside standard medical practices. These approaches are usually not taught in medical schools and not practiced by physicians or other professionals trained in medical programs. However, a number of medical and nursing schools have started offering courses in alternative medicine (Fenton and Morris 2003). Complementary medicine is distinct from alternative medicine in that the latter is meant to be used in place of standard medical procedures, while the former is meant to be used in conjunction with medical procedures to increase their efficacy or reduce side effects (Saks 1992). Some alternative approaches, such as homeopathy, reject the basis of orthodox medicine entirely.

Industrialized countries have some of the best-developed, best-resourced medical facilities in the world. Why, then, are a growing number of people exploring treatments that have not yet proven effective in controlled clinical trials, such as aromatherapy and hypnotherapy? A 2012 survey conducted by the CDC and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) found that 33 percent of American adults had used some form of CAM in the past year (Clarke et al. 2015). CAM use is more frequent among women and individuals with higher levels of educational attainment (Figure 14.2). Furthermore, whites are more likely to use CAM than their black and Asian counterparts.

There are many reasons for seeking the services of an alternative medicine practitioner or pursuing CAM regimens on one's own. Some people perceive orthodox medicine to be deficient or ineffective in relieving chronic pain or symptoms of stress and anxiety. Others are dissatisfied with features of modern health care systems such as long waits, referrals through chains of specialists, and financial restrictions. Connected to this are concerns about the harmful side effects of medication and the intrusiveness of surgery, both staples of modern Western medicine. The asymmetrical power relationship between doctors and patients also drives some people to seek alternative medicine. Those people feel that the role of the passive patient does

FIGURE 14.2

Use of Complementary Medicine



Source: Clarke et al. 2015

not grant them enough input into their own treatment and healing. Finally, some individuals profess religious or philosophical objections to orthodox medicine, which treats the mind and body separately. They believe that orthodox medicine often overlooks the spiritual and psychological dimensions of health and illness. All these concerns are critiques of the **biomedical model of health** (the foundation of the Western medical establishment), which defines disease in objective terms and believes that scientifically based medical treatment can restore the body to health (Beyerstein 1999).

The growth of alternative medicine is a fascinating reflection of the transformations occurring within modern societies. We are living in an age where much more information is available to draw on in making choices. The proliferation of health-related websites such as WebMD and MedicineNet provides instant access to information on health symptoms and treatments, while some fitness trackers allow users to monitor their activity levels as well as their heart rate and sleep patterns (see Digital Life box). Thus, individuals are increasingly becoming health consumers, adopting an active stance toward their own health and well-being. Not only are we choosing the type of practitioners to consult, we are also demanding more involvement in our own care and treatment.

Members of the traditional medical community, once viewed as completely resistant to the notion of alternative medicine, are increasingly taking a more open-minded approach to such treatments. Physicians increasingly believe that such unorthodox therapies may be an important complement to (although not a substitute for) traditional Western medicine, provided they are held up to the same level of scientific scrutiny and rigorous scientific evaluation. Yet, devoted adherents to nontraditional health regimens believe that such practices are effective and that their personal experiences are more meaningful than are the results of controlled trials.

Debates about CAM also shed light on the changing nature of health and illness over the past two centuries. Many conditions and illnesses for which individuals seek alternative medical treatment seem to be products of the modern age itself. Rates of insomnia, anxiety, stress, depression, fatigue, and chronic pain (caused by arthritis, cancer, and other diseases) are increasing in industrialized societies (Kessler and Üstün 2008). Although these conditions have long existed, they are causing greater distress and disruption to people's health than ever before. Ironically, these consequences of modernity are ones that orthodox medicine has difficulty addressing. Alternative medicine is unlikely to overtake mainstream health care altogether, but indications are that its role will continue to grow.



A neuropath uses electroacupuncture to stimulate points on the body by applying a micro-current. The growth of alternative medicine reflects Americans' desire to be more involved in their care.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. How do functionalist theorists and symbolic interactionists differ in their perspectives on health and illness?
2. What is stigma, and how does it pertain to health and illness?
3. What is the biomedical model of health?
4. Compare complementary medicine with alternative medicine.



Recognize that health and illness are shaped by cultural and social factors. Learn the social and cultural differences in the distribution of disease.

How Do Social Factors Affect Health and Illness?

The twentieth century witnessed a significant increase in life expectancy for people living in industrialized countries. Infectious diseases such as polio, scarlet fever, and diphtheria have been all but eradicated. Infant mortality rates have dropped precipitously, leading to an increase in the average life span in the developed world. Compared with other parts of the world, standards of health and well-being are high. Many advances in public health have been attributed to the power of modern medicine. It is commonly assumed that medical research has been—and will continue to be—successful in uncovering the biological causes of disease and in developing effective treatments. At the same time, the proportion reporting mental health conditions, including depression and anxiety disorders, has increased steeply through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, raising new questions about how we define, detect, and diagnose mental health conditions (Greenberg 2010; Horwitz 2013).

Sociologists recognize that whereas, on average, physical health and risk of mortality have improved while mental health has, by some accounts, declined in the past century, these patterns vary widely throughout the population both within the United States and across the globe. As we saw in the chapter opener, certain groups of people enjoy much better health than others. These *health inequalities* appear to reflect larger systems of social stratification, including race, gender, and social class stratification.

Social Class–Based Inequalities in Health

In Chapter 7, we defined social class as a concept that encompasses education, income, occupation, and assets. In U.S. society, people with better educations, higher incomes, and more prestigious occupations have better health. What is fascinating is that each of these dimensions of social class may be related to health and mortality for different reasons.

Income is the most obvious factor. In countries such as the United States, where medical care is expensive and the ACA is still in its infancy, those with more financial resources have better access to physicians and medicine. But inequalities in health also persist in countries like Great Britain that have a long history of national health insurance. Differences in occupational status may lead to inequalities in health and illness even when medical care is fairly evenly distributed. One highly influential study of health inequalities in Great Britain, the *Black Report* (Townsend and Davidson 1982), found that manual workers had substantially higher mortality rates than professional workers, even though Britain's health service had made great strides in equalizing the distribution of health care. Those who work in offices or in domestic settings face less risk of injury and exposure to hazardous materials.

Education is also a powerful predictor of health, where those with higher levels of education have longer life spans than those with fewer years of schooling. In recent years, the least-educated Americans—especially women—have actually experienced a reversal in life expectancy, while all other groups have experienced gains (Cockerham 2014). Numerous studies find a positive correlation between education and a broad array of preventive health behaviors. Better-educated people are significantly more likely to engage in aerobic exercise and to know their blood pressure (Shea et al. 1991) and are less likely to smoke (Kenkel,

Can Wearable Tech Keep You Healthy?

Until fairly recently, when a person felt sick, he or she would call a doctor to make an appointment. During this visit, the doctor would likely diagnose the patient's symptoms and perhaps prescribe medication to help treat the patient. Although many Americans, especially those with health insurance and access to providers, still see a health care professional on a regular basis, more and more Americans are trying to diagnose themselves, often with the assistance of health-related smartphone apps and fitness trackers. For the past decade or two, people have been visiting websites like WebMD to determine whether their headache is due to a head cold or is a sign of something more dire. More recently, smartphone owners have relied on apps and fitness trackers to do everything from take their pulse, to chart their ovulation cycles, to identify the best medication for depression.

Health-related apps and fitness trackers range from the very simple to the very complex. Basic fitness trackers keep users informed of steps taken and calories burned, while more expensive trackers keep tabs on users' heart rates and sleep patterns, even detailing how much time a user spends in light sleep versus deep sleep. Accompanying apps allow users to dig even deeper: Jawbone's UP Coffee app monitors caffeine consumption and then syncs with the user's fitness tracker to assess how caffeine is affecting sleep patterns.

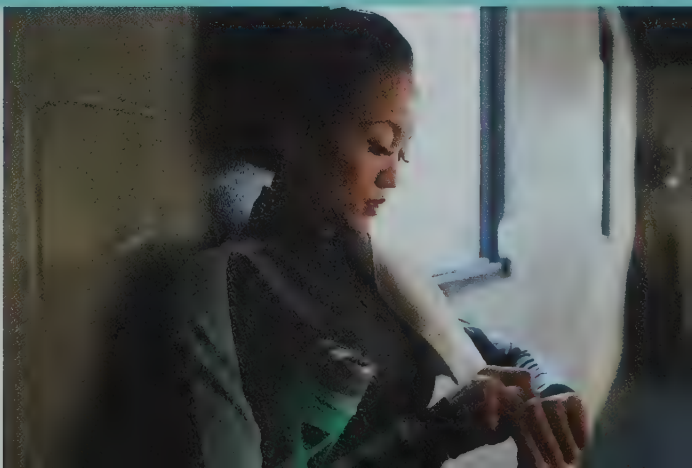
Smartphones are particularly helpful in guiding us to make healthy food choices. For instance, with Fooducate, users swipe the barcodes of food items they're considering buying at the grocery store and are then given detailed information on the product's ingredients and nutritional value (Summers 2013).

Yet activity trackers and smartphones are increasingly being used for more serious health-related issues, like monitoring one's blood pressure, heart rate, and ovulation cycles, and even assessing one's hearing and vision. For example, ECG Check allows patients to analyze their own heart rhythms, while apps like Gluko Logbook and Glucose Buddy help diabetics monitor their blood sugar levels. Fertility Friend helps women who are hoping to conceive by monitoring their menstrual cycles (Edney 2013). PsychDrugs helps people determine which antidepressant or anti-anxiety medication will best treat their symptoms.

It's not just patients who use apps to enhance their health; health care providers also rely on apps to help them deliver care. Apps like Epocrates help doctors review drug-prescribing and safety information, research potentially harmful drug interactions, and perform calculations like body mass index and glomerular filtration rate (GFR), an indication of how well one's kidneys are functioning (Glenn 2013).

Many health care providers and patients are enthusiastic about the role of technology in helping to enhance medical care. Doctors believe that symptom-monitoring apps and fitness trackers encourage patients to be proactive and knowledgeable about their own health (Edney 2013). However, others counter that even the best app or activity tracker is not a substitute for a regular checkup. What do you think? Are health and wellness apps and fitness trackers a cost-effective and efficient way for people to look after one's own health, or do they keep people from receiving potentially valuable professional care?

Fitness trackers and smartphone apps allow users to do everything from monitor their sleep patterns to track their caloric intake.



Lillard, and Mathios 2006) or be overweight (Himes 1999). Highly educated smokers are also much more likely to quit smoking when faced with a new health threat such as a heart attack (Wray et al. 1998). Poorly educated people engage in more cigarette smoking; they also have more problems with cholesterol and body weight (Winkleby et al. 1992).

Mental health is similarly affected by social class–based inequalities. In general, persons with lower levels of education and income fare worse along most mental health outcomes, including risk of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. The stressors related to economic adversity, including unsatisfying jobs, strained marriages, and worries about money and one's personal safety, may overwhelm one's ability to cope. Depressive symptoms (feelings of profound sadness and hopelessness) and anxiety (nervousness about one's daily experiences) are emotional consequences of living under persistently stressful circumstances (Carr 2014).

Race-Based Inequalities in Health

Blacks fare worse than whites in the United States on nearly all health indicators, ranging from body weight to mortality rates to risk of major illnesses like diabetes and cancer. In the United States, life expectancy at birth in 2014 was 84 for Hispanic females and about 81 for white females but 78 for black females. Likewise, life expectancy at birth in 2014 was 79 for Hispanic males and 77 for white males yet 72 for black males (Arias 2016). An even more startling gap emerges when early-life mortality is considered: Black infants have more than twice the mortality rate of white infants.

Racial differences in health reveal the complex interrelations among ethnicity, race, social class, and culture. A powerful example of the multiple ways that race affects health is the Hispanic health paradox: Although Hispanics in the United States have poorer

socioeconomic resources than whites, on average, their health—and especially the health of their infants—is just as good as if not better than that of whites. Blacks, by contrast, face economic disadvantages that are similar to those of Hispanics, yet blacks do not enjoy the same health benefits. Experts attribute Hispanics' relative health advantage to not only cultural factors such as social cohesion but also to methodological factors. Studies of Hispanic health in the United States focus on those who successfully migrated to the United States; as such, they are believed to be in better health, or more robust, than those Latinos who remained in their native countries (Perea 2012).

A close inspection of blacks' health and mortality disadvantage further reveals the multiple ways that race matters for health. One of the main reasons for blacks' health disadvantage is that blacks as a group have less money than whites, as noted in Chapter 7. Yet black-white disparities in health go beyond economic causes and reflect other important aspects of the social and cultural landscape.



Many blacks living in poor inner-city neighborhoods lack access to high-quality grocery stores and instead rely on cheap fast-food options.

Consider racial gaps in mortality. The homicide rate for young black males ages ten to twenty-four is more than fifteen times higher than for their white peers (CDC 2013f; Flaherty and Sethi 2010). This gap has been attributed to the violent crime that has accompanied the rise of widespread crack cocaine addiction, especially in the late 1980s and 1990s, mainly affecting poor African American neighborhoods plagued by high levels of unemployment (Wilson 1996).

Other race-based inequalities in health status, health behaviors, and health care are also stark. There is a higher prevalence of hypertension among blacks than whites, especially among black men (41 percent versus 28 percent in 2014)—a difference that may be partly biological (Yoon, Fryar, and Carroll 2015). The pattern may also reflect blacks' tendency to eat high-fat foods, a pattern encouraged by the fast-food industry's targeting of African Americans as a market (Henderson and Kelly 2005). Black women are also far less likely than white women to exercise regularly, a pattern that most social scientists attribute to their hectic schedules of juggling work and family and to the high costs of fitness programs and gym memberships (August and Sorkin 2010). However, in 2011, then-U.S. surgeon general Regina M. Benjamin drew attention by suggesting that one reason that black women avoid exercise is because it may ruin their hair; black women often spend a lot of time and money on treatments such as hair relaxers (Versey 2014).

Racial differences in mental health are far less well understood than racial differences in physical health. In general, most studies show that blacks report fewer symptoms of depression than whites, yet when socioeconomic factors are controlled for, blacks actually report lower rates of depression than whites (Dunlop et al. 2003). At first blush, this finding is seen as surprising, given that blacks are exposed to more stressful circumstances that may trigger depression, such as workplace discrimination, unsafe living environments, and financial troubles. However, some scholars also note that African Americans have important resources they can draw on that mitigate against symptoms of depression, including social support from their religious community and a strong sense of racial identity and community (Oates and Goode 2012).

COUNTERING RACIAL INEQUALITIES IN HEALTH

Despite the persistence of inequalities in the health of blacks and whites, some progress has been made in eradicating them. According to the CDC, racial differences in cigarette smoking have decreased. In 1965, half of white men and 60 percent of black men ages eighteen and older smoked cigarettes. By 2014, only 19 percent of white men and 22 percent of black men smoked (Ahmed et al. 2015). Hypertension among blacks has also been greatly reduced. In the early 1970s, half of black adults between the ages of twenty and seventy-four suffered from hypertension. By 2014, the proportion of black adults over age eighteen suffering from hypertension had dropped to 41 percent (Yoon, Fryar, and Carroll 2015).

Patterns of physician visitation, hospitalization, and preventive medicine have also improved, yet racial equity still remains elusive. For example, black women historically have been less likely than white women to receive mammograms. This gap has narrowed in recent years, however. In 2014, roughly equal proportions of white and black women over age forty had received mammograms within the past two years (67 percent) (CDC 2016d). However, some studies suggest that black women delay receiving mammograms, and thus those with breast cancer have their condition detected at a later—and more dangerous—stage of the disease's progression (Smith-Bindman et al. 2006).

Gender-Based Inequalities in Health

Women in the United States generally live longer than men, and this gender gap increased steadily throughout the twentieth century. In 1900, there was only a two-year difference in female and male life expectancies. By 1940, this gap had increased to 4.4 years; by 1970, to 7.7 years. Since reaching its peak in the 1970s, however, the gap has been decreasing. In 2014, the gender gap had fallen to 4.8 years (Arias 2016; Cleary 1987).

Despite the female advantage in mortality, most large surveys show that women more often report poorer physical and mental health. Women have higher rates of illness from acute conditions and nonfatal chronic conditions, including arthritis and osteoporosis. They are slightly more likely to report their health as fair or poor and spend about 57 percent more days sick in bed each year. Women also report that their physical activities are either restricted or impossible about 50 percent more than men do. In addition, they make more physician visits each year and undergo twice the number of surgical procedures as men (CDC 2013c; National Center for Health Statistics 2003, 2011). Women are also twice as likely as men to report symptoms of depression and to be diagnosed with a major depressive disorder (Van de Velde, Bracke, and Leveque 2010).

There are two main explanations for the gender gap in health: (1) Greater life expectancy and age bring poorer health, and (2) women make greater use of medical services, including preventive care (CDC 2003). Men may experience as many, or more, health symptoms as women, but they may ignore their symptoms, underestimate the extent of their illness, or utilize preventive services less often (Waldron 1986). Further, men who are socialized to believe that men should be “traditionally masculine,” strong, and self-sufficient are less likely to seek out annual checkups (Springer and Mouzon 2011). Explanations for the gender gap in depression are less clear, yet scholars typically attribute women’s greater level of depression to measurement issues and differences in stress exposure. First, standard instruments used to measure depression typically emphasize symptoms that are more likely to be endorsed by women, leading some scholars to question whether depression in men goes underdetected. Second, given the strains that women increasingly face in juggling work and family roles—compounded by other stressors such as single parenthood that disproportionately strike women—women may be more likely than men to be depleted and depressed by the daunting demands they face (Nolen-Hoeksema 1993).

A major question for sociologists is whether the gender gap in mortality will continue to decline in coming years. Many researchers believe that it will, yet for an unfortunate reason: Women’s life expectancies may erode and thus become more similar to men’s. As men’s and women’s gender roles have converged over the past several decades, women have increasingly taken on unhealthy “male-typed” behaviors such as smoking and alcohol use, as well as emotional and physical stress in the workplace. These patterns are particularly pronounced for women of low socioeconomic status. One recent study found that American women have lost ground with respect to life expectancy compared with women from other nations. In the early 1980s, the life expectancy of women in the United States ranked fourteenth in the world, yet by 2010, American women had fallen to forty-first place (Karas-Montez and Zajacova 2013). These disheartening findings reveal that gender differences in health and mortality are not a function of biology alone but of the social advantages and adversities experienced by men and women in particular sociohistorical contexts.

CONCEPT CHECKS

How do social class and race affect health?

Name at least two explanations for the gender gap in health.

Identify at least two reasons why the gender gap in life expectancy may narrow in the future.

What Causes Infectious Diseases in Developing Nations?

Colonialism and the Spread of Disease

Thus far we have focused primarily on the United States in the twenty-first century. Yet to understand health and illness, it is also important to take a big-picture view and examine the ways that health and illness have developed over time and throughout the globe. We now provide a brief historical overview of disease and show how some infectious diseases still persist in many parts of the developing world.

Hunting-and-gathering communities of the Americas, before the arrival of the Europeans, were not as susceptible to infectious disease as the European societies of the period. Many infectious organisms thrive only when human populations live above the density level that is characteristic of hunting-and-gathering life. Permanently settled communities, particularly large cities, risk the contamination of water supplies by waste products. Hunters and gatherers were less vulnerable in this respect because they moved continuously across the countryside.

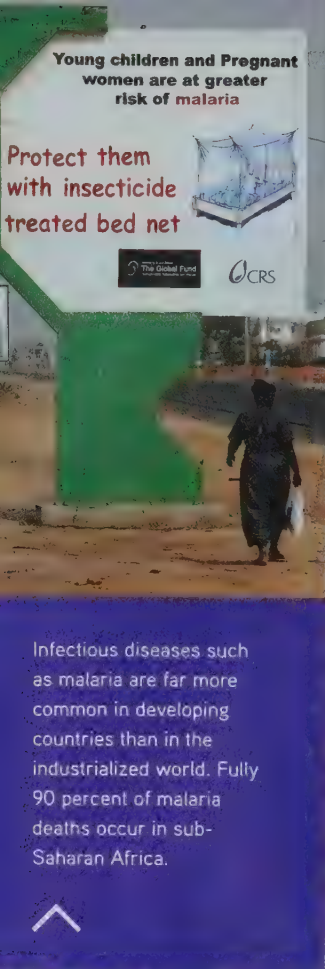
During the colonial era, efforts to bring Western ideals to developing societies also brought certain diseases into other parts of the world. Smallpox, measles, and typhus, among other major maladies, were unknown to the indigenous populations of Central and South America before the Spanish conquest in the early sixteenth century. The English and French colonists brought the same diseases to North America (Dubos 1959). Some of these illnesses produced epidemics that ravaged or completely wiped out native populations, which had little or no resistance to them.

In Africa and subtropical parts of Asia, infectious diseases have been rife for a long time. Tropical and subtropical conditions are especially conducive to diseases such as malaria, carried by mosquitoes, and sleeping sickness, carried by the tsetse fly. Historians believe that risks from infectious diseases were lower in Africa and Asia prior to the time that Europeans tried to colonize these regions—as they often brought with them practices that negatively affected the health of local natives. The threat of epidemics, drought, or natural disaster had always loomed, but colonialism led to major unforeseen changes in the relation between populations and their environments, producing harmful effects on health patterns. The Europeans introduced new farming methods, upsetting the ecology of whole regions. For example, before the Europeans' arrival, Africans successfully maintained large herds of cattle in East Africa. Changes introduced by the intruders allowed for the multiplication and uncontrolled spread of the tsetse fly, which carries illnesses that are fatal to both humans and livestock. Today, large areas of East Africa are completely devoid of cattle (Kjekshus 1977).

The most significant consequence of the colonial system was its effect on nutrition and, therefore, on levels of resistance to illness as a result of the changed economic conditions involved in producing for world markets. In many parts of Africa, the nutritional quality of native diets became substantially depressed as cash-crop production supplanted



Understand the causes underlying high rates of infectious diseases in developing nations. Learn more about HIV/AIDS as a statistical phenomenon.



the production of native foods. This was not a one-way process, however. Indeed, early colonialism also radically changed Western diets, having a paradoxical impact in terms of health. On the one hand, Western diets benefited from the addition of new foods such as bananas, pineapples, and grapefruit. On the other hand, the importation of tobacco and coffee, together with raw sugar (which found uses in all manner of foods), has had harmful consequences.

Infectious Diseases Today in the Developing World

Although major strides have occurred in reducing, and in some cases eliminating, infectious diseases in the developing world, they remain far more common there than in the West. The most important example of a disease that has almost completely disappeared is smallpox, which as recently as the 1960s was a scourge of Europe as well as many other regions. Campaigns against malaria have been much less successful. When the insecticide DDT was first produced, it was hoped that the mosquito, the prime carrier of malaria, could be eradicated. At first, there was considerable progress, but this has slowed because some strains of mosquito have become resistant to DDT. Due to the pesticide's declining benefits as well as increased awareness of its harmful effects on both the environment and humans, the Environmental Protection Agency banned the use of DDT in the United States in 1972. In 2006, however, the World Health Organization declared its support of the use of the pesticide in African countries with high rates of malaria (EPA 2015). In 2015, an estimated 214 million new cases of malaria were reported worldwide and 438,000 people died from the disease; rates are highest in sub-Saharan Africa, and children are at a particularly high risk (World Health Organization 2015b).

HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV) AND ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS)

A devastating exception to the trend of eliminating infectious diseases in the developing world is HIV/AIDS, which has become a global epidemic. More than 36 million people were living with HIV at the end of 2015 (Global Map 14.1). In 2015 alone, 1.1 million people died from AIDS-related illnesses. The majority of people affected in the world today are heterosexuals. As of 2015, about half were women. In sub-Saharan Africa, young women ages fifteen to twenty-four accounted for 25 percent of new infections among adults in 2015 (UNAIDS 2016a).

In high-income countries, the rate of new infections has declined, yet the demographics are striking. In the United States, approximately 50,000 people become infected with HIV each year, and roughly 1.2 million people are living with HIV (CDC 2016f). The incidence of infection, however, is not proportionately represented throughout the United States. In 2014, 52 percent of new AIDS diagnoses were made in the South (CDC 2016g). Despite representing just 13 percent of the U.S. population, African Americans account for 41 percent of people living with HIV; in 2014, 44 percent of new HIV diagnoses were among African Americans. The rate of new HIV infections among African American women was nearly eighteen times greater than that of their white counterparts in 2014, and African American women accounted for 62 percent of all women diagnosed

People Living with HIV around the World

In 2015 there were more than 36 million people worldwide living with HIV. In 2015 alone, more than 2 million people were newly infected with HIV; nearly two-thirds of new HIV infections occurred in sub-Saharan Africa.



Source: UNAIDS 2016a

with HIV that year (CDC 2016e, 2015b). Although there was a steep drop in AIDS-related deaths after the introduction of antiretroviral therapy, African Americans are less likely than whites to benefit from such life-prolonging treatments. African Americans have the highest death rate of people with HIV, nearly eight times higher than that of their white counterparts in 2013 (CDC 2015b).

The stigma that associates HIV-positive status with sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, and IV drug use results in avoidance of HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs. In the United States, one in eight people living with HIV/AIDS does not know he or she is infected (CDC 2016f). Part of the reason is the high level of fear and denial associated with being diagnosed as HIV positive. The stigma of having HIV and the discrimination against people living with these infections are major barriers to the treatment of the epidemic worldwide. A recent study of 1,450 HIV-positive patients seeking care in India found that two-thirds of them reported authoritarian behavior from doctors, and 55 percent felt they were not treated in a dignified manner (Mehta 2013).

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. Why are infectious diseases more common in developing nations than in the United States today?
2. What are three social consequences of the AIDS epidemic in developing nations?

Although the spread of AIDS has slowed in parts of the developing world, the illness is still a source of crisis. More than 2 million people were infected with HIV in 2015; nearly half (46 percent) of new HIV infections occurred in Eastern and Southern Africa (UNAIDS 2016a). Besides the devastation to individuals who suffer from it, the AIDS epidemic is creating severe social consequences, including sharply rising numbers of orphaned children. Frail older adults are increasingly called on to provide physical care to their adult children who suffer from AIDS, or to care for their grandchildren who were orphaned by their parents' death from AIDS (Knodel 2006). The decimated population of working adults combined with the surging population of orphans set the stage for massive social instability; economies break down and governments cannot provide for the social needs of orphans, who become targets for recruitment into gangs and armies.

How Does Social Context Shape Human Sexual Behavior?



Learn about the debate over the importance of biological versus social and cultural influences on human sexual behavior. Explore the cultural differences in sexual behavior and patterns of sexual behavior today.

As with the study of health and illness, scholars disagree as to the importance of biological versus social and cultural influences on human sexual behavior, another important facet of the sociology of the body.

The Diversity of Human Sexuality

Judith Lorber (1994) distinguishes as many as ten different sexual identities: straight (heterosexual) woman, straight man, lesbian woman, gay man, bisexual woman, bisexual man, transvestite woman (a woman who regularly dresses as a man), transvestite man (a man who regularly dresses as a woman), transsexual woman (a man who becomes a woman), and transsexual man (a woman who becomes a man). As we saw in Chapter 9, college students today are more likely than ever before to define themselves in ways that may or may not match the body they were born into, or that blend or even move fluidly between the categories set forth by Lorber (Padawer 2014; Schulman 2013). Sexual practices themselves are even more diverse. Freud argued that human beings are born with a wide range of sexual tastes that are ordinarily curbed through socialization—although some adults may follow these even when, in a given society, they are regarded as immoral or illegal. Freud began his research during the Victorian period, when many people were sexually prudish; yet his patients still revealed an amazing diversity of sexual pursuits.

In most societies, sexual norms encourage some practices and discourage or condemn others. Such norms, however, vary among cultures. Homosexuality is an example. Among the ancient Greeks, for instance, the love of men for boys was idealized as the highest form of sexual love. The most extensive cross-cultural study of sexual practices was carried out

by Clellan Ford and Frank Beach (1951), using anthropological evidence from more than 200 societies. Striking variations were found in what was regarded as “natural” sexual behavior and in norms of sexual attractiveness. For example, in some cultures, extended foreplay is desirable and even necessary before intercourse; in others, foreplay is nonexistent. In some societies, it is believed that overly frequent intercourse leads to physical debilitation or illness.

In most cultures, norms of sexual attractiveness (held by both females and males) focus more on physical looks for women than for men, a situation that may be changing in the West as women become active in spheres outside the home. The traits seen as most important in female beauty, however, differ greatly. In the modern West, a slim, small physique is admired, while in other cultures a more generous shape is attractive. Sometimes the breasts are not considered a source of sexual stimulus, whereas some societies attach erotic significance to them. Some societies value the shape of the face, whereas others emphasize the shape and color of the eyes or the size and form of the nose and lips.

Sexuality in Western Culture

Western attitudes toward sexual behavior were for nearly 2,000 years molded primarily by Christianity, whose dominant view was that all sexual behavior is suspect except that needed for reproduction. During some periods, this view produced an extreme prudishness, but at other times many people ignored the church's teachings and engaged in practices such as adultery. The idea that sexual fulfillment can and should be sought through marriage was rare.

In the nineteenth century, religious presumptions about sexuality were partly replaced by medical ones. Most early writings by doctors about sexual behavior, however, were as stern as the views of the church. Some argued that any type of sexual activity unconnected with reproduction would cause serious physical harm. Masturbation was said to cause blindness, insanity, heart disease, and other ailments, while oral sex was claimed to cause cancer. In Victorian times, sexual hypocrisy abounded. Many Victorian men—who appeared to be sober, well-behaved citizens, devoted to their wives—regularly visited prostitutes or kept mistresses. Such behavior was accepted, whereas “respectable” women who took lovers were regarded as scandalous and were shunned in polite society. The differing attitudes toward the sexual activities of men and women formed a double standard, which persists today.

Currently, traditional attitudes exist alongside much more permissive attitudes, which developed widely in the 1960s. Some people, particularly those influenced by Christian teachings, believe that premarital sex is wrong; they frown on all forms of sexual behavior except heterosexual activity within marriage—although it is now more commonly accepted that sexual pleasure is an important feature of marriage. Sexual attitudes have undoubtedly become more permissive over recent decades in most Western countries, although some behaviors remain consistently more acceptable than others. For example, the proportion of Americans saying that premarital sex is “always wrong” dropped from 34 percent in 1972 to 21 percent in 2012. By contrast, disapproval for extramarital sex has remained consistently high and has even increased: The proportion of Americans saying that extramarital sex is “always wrong” increased from 71 to 81 percent between 1972 and 2012 (Smith and Son 2013).

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR: KINSEY'S STUDY

We can speak more confidently about public values concerning sexuality than we can about private practices, for such practices have gone undocumented for much of history. When Alfred Kinsey began his research in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s, it was the first major investigation of sexual behavior. Kinsey and his co-researchers (1948, 1953) faced condemnation from religious organizations, and his work was denounced as immoral in the newspapers and in Congress. But he persisted, thus making his research the largest rigorous study of sexuality at that time, although his sample was not representative of the overall American population.

Kinsey's results were surprising because they revealed a tremendous discrepancy between prevailing public expectations of sexual behavior and actual sexual conduct. The gap between publicly accepted attitudes and actual behavior was probably especially pronounced just after World War II, the time of Kinsey's study. A phase of sexual liberalization had begun in the 1920s, when many younger people felt freed from the strict moral codes that had governed earlier generations. Sexual behavior probably changed, but issues concerning sexuality were not openly discussed. People participating in sexual activities that were still strongly disapproved of on a public level concealed them, not realizing that others were engaging in similar practices behind closed doors. The more permissive 1960s brought openly declared attitudes more into line with the realities of behavior.

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR SINCE KINSEY

In the 1960s, social movements that challenged the existing order, such as those associated with countercultural lifestyles, also broke with existing sexual norms. These movements preached sexual freedom, and the introduction of the contraceptive pill allowed sexual pleasure to be separated from reproduction. Women's groups also started pressing for greater independence from male sexual values, rejection of the double standard, and the need for women to achieve greater sexual satisfaction in their relationships. Even so, until recently it was unclear to what extent sexual behavior had changed since the time of Kinsey's research.

In the late 1980s, Lillian Rubin (1990) interviewed 1,000 Americans between the ages of thirteen and forty-eight to identify changes in sexual behavior and attitudes over the previous thirty years or so. Her findings indicated significant changes. Sexual activity begins at a younger age; moreover, teenagers' sexual practices are as varied and comprehensive as those of adults. There is still a double standard, but it is not as powerful as before. Contemporary scholarship confirms this. Studies of high school-age students find that sexual permissiveness is much greater today than it was in the 1970s. According to the CDC (2016h), in 2015, 41 percent of all high school students reported having ever had sexual intercourse, and 12 percent reported having had four or more partners. Both figures represent declines from 1991, when more than 54 percent of high school students had had sex and nearly 19 percent had had four or more partners. U.S. rates are far higher than those in Japan and China (Tang and Zuo 2000; Toufexis 1993).

Recent research on the sexual lives of college students shows that a "hookup" culture is alive and well on campus, where both male and female students will have one-night stands, short-lived sexual relationships, or "friends with benefits" relationships in which friends will occasionally have sexual relations without the expectation that their friendship will



Female factory workers pack up boxes of oral contraceptive pills in 1965.

transform into a full-blown romance (Garcia et al. 2012; Hamilton and Armstrong 2009). However, when a team of sociologists delved more closely into the sexual lives of college students, they found that while casual sexual encounters were relatively common, men and women were fairly selective in such encounters. Sociologist Paula England and colleagues interviewed more than 14,000 undergraduate students at nineteen universities and colleges about their romantic and sexual lives. Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of both women and men said that they'd had at least one "hookup" during their senior year. But, for most, hookups were relatively rare. Of those students who said that they had ever hooked up, equal proportions said that they had fewer than three (40 percent) or between four and nine (40 percent) hookups. Just one in five reported ten or more hookups in their lifetimes. Moreover, not all of these hookups involved sexual intercourse. And while TV shows and movies would lead us to believe that all college students are "doing it," England and her collaborators found that fully 20 percent of college seniors had never had sexual intercourse (England, Shafer, and Fogarty 2012).

Studies of the sexual lives of adults beyond college age also reveal that Americans report relatively few sexual partners and less frequent sex than their counterparts in other nations. For example, in 1994 a team of researchers led by Edward Laumann published *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States*, the most comprehensive study of sexual behavior since Kinsey. Their findings reflect an essential sexual conservatism among Americans. For instance, 83 percent of their subjects had had only one partner (or no partner at all) in the preceding year, and among married people the figure was 96 percent. Fidelity to one's spouse was also quite common: Only 10 percent of women and less than 25 percent of men reported having an extramarital affair during their lifetime. Despite the apparent ordinariness of sexual behavior, some distinct historical changes were revealed in this study, the most significant being a progressive increase in the level of premarital sexual experience, particularly among women.

Sexual Orientation

Another important aspect of sexuality concerns **sexual orientation**, the direction of one's sexual or romantic attraction. The term *sexual preference*, which is sometimes incorrectly used instead of sexual orientation, is misleading and is to be avoided because it implies that one's sexual or romantic attraction is entirely a matter of personal choice. As you will see, sexual orientation results from a complex interplay of biological and social factors not yet fully understood.

The most commonly found sexual orientation in all cultures, including the United States, is **heterosexuality**, a sexual or romantic attraction to persons of the opposite sex. While people attracted to members of the opposite sex are also sometimes referred to as "straight" in the United States, it is important to note that although heterosexuality may be the prevailing norm in most cultures, it is not "normal" in the sense of being dictated by some universal moral or religious standard. Like all behavior, heterosexual behavior is socially learned within a particular culture.

Homosexuality involves a sexual or romantic attraction to persons of one's own sex. Today, the term *gay* is used to refer to men who are attracted to men, *lesbian* for women who are attracted to women, and *bi* as shorthand for *bisexuals*, people who experience sexual

sexual orientation

The direction of one's sexual or romantic attraction.

Image: iStockphoto.com/Alamy

heterosexuality

Sexual or romantic attraction to persons of the opposite sex.

Image: iStockphoto.com/Alamy

homosexuality

Sexual or romantic attraction to persons of one's own sex.

or romantic attraction to both men and women. Although it is difficult to know for sure because of the stigma attached to same-sex relationships, which may result in the underreporting of sexuality in demographic surveys, estimates are that from 2 to 5 percent of all women and 3 to 10 percent of all men in the United States are gay or bisexual (Smith 2003; Stephens-Davidowitz 2013).

The term *homosexual* was first used by the medical community in 1869 to characterize what was then regarded as a personality disorder. The American Psychiatric Association did not remove homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses until 1973 or from its influential *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) until 1980. These long-overdue steps were taken only after prolonged lobbying and pressure by gay rights organizations. The medical community was belatedly forced to acknowledge that no scientific research had ever found gays and lesbians as a group to be psychologically unhealthier than heterosexuals (Burr 1993). However, the DSM-5 continues to classify other aspects of sexuality as “disorders,” including disorders of sexual arousal (e.g., lubrication and erectile problems) and orgasmic disorders (American Psychiatric Association 2013).

In a small number of cultures, same-sex relationships are the norm in certain contexts and do not necessarily signify what today is termed *homosexuality*. For example, the anthropologist Gilbert Herdt (1981, 1984, 1986) reported that among more than twenty tribes in Melanesia and New Guinea, ritually prescribed same-sex encounters among young men and boys were considered necessary for subsequent masculine virility (Herdt and Davidson 1988). Ritualized male-male sexual encounters also occurred among the Azande of Africa’s Sudan and Congo (Evans-Pritchard 1970), Japanese samurai warriors in the nineteenth century (Leupp 1995), and highly educated Greek men and boys at the time of Plato (Rousselle 1999). These examples underscore the importance of social and historical contexts in shaping sexuality.

IS SEXUAL ORIENTATION INBORN OR LEARNED?

Most sociologists believe that sexual orientation—whether homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, or asexual—results from a complex interplay between biological factors and social learning. Since heterosexuality is the norm for most people in U.S. culture, considerable research has focused on why some people are gay. Some scholars argue that biological influences predispose certain people to become gay from birth (Bell, Weinberg, and Hammersmith 1981; Green 1987). Biological explanations have included differences in brain characteristics of heterosexual and homosexual men (LeVay 2011) and the effect on fetal development of the mother’s in utero hormone production during pregnancy (Blanchard and Bogaert 1996; Manning, Koukouratis, and Brodie 1997; McFadden and Champlin 2000). Such studies, which are based on small numbers of cases, give highly inconclusive (and highly controversial) results (Healy 2001). It is virtually impossible to separate biological from early social influences in determining a person’s sexual orientation (LeVay 2011).

Studies of twins may shed light on any genetic basis for homosexuality, since identical twins share identical genes. In two related studies, Bailey and Pillard (1991; Bailey 1993) examined 167 pairs of brothers and 143 pairs of sisters, with each pair of siblings raised in the same family, in which at least one sibling defined himself or herself as gay. Some of these pairs were identical twins (who share all genes), some were fraternal

twins (who share some genes), and some were adoptive brothers or sisters (who share no genes).

The results offer some support that homosexuality, like heterosexuality, results from a combination of biological and social factors. Among the men and women studied, when one twin was gay, there was about a 50 percent chance that the other twin was gay. In other words, a woman or man is five times as likely to be gay if his or her identical twin is gay than if his or her sibling is gay but related only through adoption. These results offer some support for the importance of biological factors, since the higher the percentage of shared genes, the greater the percentage of cases in which both siblings were gay. However, because approximately half of the identical twin brothers and sisters of individuals who identified as gay were not themselves gay, social learning must also be involved.

Clearly, even studies of identical twins cannot fully isolate biological from social factors. It is often the case that even in infancy, identical twins are treated more like each other by parents, peers, and teachers than are fraternal twins, who in turn are treated more like each other than are adoptive siblings. Thus, identical twins may have more than genes in common: They may also share a higher proportion of similar socializing experiences. Sociologist Peter Bearman (2002) has shown the intricate ways that genetics and social experience are intertwined. Bearman found that males with a female twin are twice as likely to report same-sex attractions. He theorized that parents of opposite-sex twins are more likely to give them unisex treatment, leading to a less traditionally masculine influence on the males. Having an older brother decreases the rate of homosexuality. Bearman hypothesized that an older brother establishes gender-socializing mechanisms for the younger brother to follow, which allows him to compensate for unisex treatment. Bearman's work is consistent with the statements offered by professional organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (2004), which concludes that "sexual orientation probably is not determined by any one factor but by a combination of genetic, hormonal, and environmental influences."

HOMOPHOBIA

Homophobia, a term coined in the late 1960s, refers to both attitudes and behaviors marked by an aversion to or hatred of gays and lesbians, their lifestyles, and their practices. It is a form of prejudice reflected not only in overt acts of hostility and violence toward lesbians and gays but also in forms of verbal abuse that are widespread in American culture—for example, using terms like *fag* or *homo* to insult heterosexual males or using female-related offensive terms such as *sissy* or *pansy* to insult gay men (Pascoe 2011).

One survey of more than 7,500 high school students found that nearly 44 percent of gay male and 40 percent of lesbian teens said they had been bullied in the previous year, compared with just 26 and 15 percent of heterosexual boys and girls, respectively (Berlan et al. 2010). Another national study from 2013 found that 74 percent of LGBT youth reported that they had been verbally harassed at school, 36 percent had been physically harassed, and 49 percent had been victims of cyberbullying. More than half of LGBT students (56 percent) felt "unsafe" at school (Kosciw et al. 2013). This harassment can have dire consequences: LGBT youth have much higher rates of suicide, suicidal thoughts, depression, and substance use than straight youth, due in large part to the victimization

homophobia

An irrational fear or disdain of homosexuals.

and teasing they suffer at the hands of their classmates and at times, their families and teachers, who fail to protect them (Espelage, Aragon, and Birkett 2008; Russell and Joyner 2001; Ryan et al. 2009).

Homophobia is widespread in U.S. culture, although it is slowly starting to erode. In 2013, a Gallup poll found that 59 percent of Americans viewed same-sex relationships as morally acceptable; this signifies a marked increase from 2001, when just 40 percent of Americans agreed with the sentiment (Gallup 2013a). In May 2011, for the first time in its history, a Gallup poll found that the majority of Americans (53 percent) supported gay marriage (Gallup 2013b). State policies both reflect and shape private attitudes; as we saw in Chapter 11, in June 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized gay marriage in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, guaranteeing same-sex married couples the same rights as opposite-sex married couples.

THE MOVEMENT FOR GAY AND LESBIAN CIVIL RIGHTS

Until recently, most gays and lesbians hid their sexual orientation for fear that “coming out of the closet”—publicly revealing one’s sexual orientation—would cost them their jobs, families, and friends and leave them open to verbal and physical abuse. Yet, since the late 1960s, many gays and lesbians have acknowledged their homosexuality openly, and in some cities the lives of lesbian and gay Americans have become quite normalized (Seidman,

Meeks, and Trachen 1999). New York City, San Francisco, London, and other large metropolitan areas worldwide have thriving gay and lesbian communities. Coming out may be important not only for the person who does so but also for others in the larger society: Previously closeted lesbians and gays discover they are not alone, while heterosexuals recognize that people whom they admire and respect are homosexual. Although famous actors, singers, and performers such as Ellen DeGeneres and Elton John have been “out” publicly for many years, gays and lesbians in other professions have been more reticent about acknowledging their sexual orientation, perhaps out of fear of persecution. NBA basketball player Jason Collins made national news in April 2013 when he told reporters that he was gay. With his announcement, Collins became the first active player in one of the four major American professional team sports to announce that he was gay (ESPN 2013a).

The current global wave of gay and lesbian civil rights movements began partly as an outgrowth of the U.S. social movements of the 1960s, which emphasized pride in racial and ethnic identity. One pivotal event was the Stonewall riots in June 1969, when New York City’s gay community—angered by continual police harassment—fought the New York Police Department for two days (D’Emilio 1983; Weeks 1977). The Stonewall riots became a symbol of gay pride. In May 2005, the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO) was first celebrated, with events held in more than



The Stonewall Inn nightclub raid in 1969 is regarded as the first shot fired in the battle for gay rights in the United States. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the event was commemorated in New York City with a variety of celebrations as well as discussions on the evolution and future of gay rights.

forty countries. While significant strides have been made, discrimination and homophobia remain serious problems for many LGBT Americans.

Social change is occurring, slowly but steadily, even in countries that historically have had cruel and oppressive policies toward gays and lesbians. For example, in 2014, the Constitutional Court in Uganda invalidated a previously passed “anti-gay” bill, which provided jail terms up to life for persons convicted of having gay sex, and stipulating lengthy jail terms for persons convicted of “attempted homosexuality” or the “promotion of homosexuality” (Gettleman 2014). This marked a significant change in a nation where, just three years earlier, the outspoken gay rights activist David Kato was beaten to death with a hammer.

How Does the Social Context of Bodies, Sexuality, and Health Affect Your Life?

As we have seen in this section, our bodies, health, health behaviors, and sexual orientations and practices reflect a complex set of biological, social, cultural, and historical influences. For example, although most American young adults believe they have the freedom to choose whomever they like as their romantic partner (and turn up their noses at the idea of arranged marriage), the gender of whom we choose, what we deem attractive, when and under what circumstances we engage in sexual relationships, and even whether we have the legal right to marry our partner are powerfully shaped by laws, norms, and cultural practices.

Similarly, although most people believe that their body size and shape reflect their own personal efforts, such as going to the gym four times a week and counting calories, or biological factors (e.g., “good genes”), sociologists have documented that social factors such as race, class, gender, and region affect one’s access to health-enhancing resources like healthy food, safe walking and running paths, and high-quality health care. Solutions to sweeping public health crises, like the obesity epidemic, often require strategies that alter both individual-level choices and behaviors and macrosocial structures. Public programs that target both macro and micro levels by encouraging healthier food choices and exercise among individuals and by making larger social changes—such as bringing grocery stores to inner-city neighborhoods and ensuring that major corporations that supply food to public schools abide by healthier food production guidelines—are likely to be more effective. Although it is too soon to tell whether health care reform will be effective in eradicating persistent race and socioeconomic disparities in health, programs such as early screening for high blood pressure, obesity, substance use, and depression may help to ensure that health problems are detected in their earliest stages and that timely treatment is sought. Through the use of these strategies, it is possible that the United States may ultimately reach the goal articulated by the federal government in Healthy People 2020 to “achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve the health of all groups” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2010).

CONCEPT CHECKS

- Describe several changes in sexual practices over the past two centuries.
- What are the most important contributions of Alfred Kinsey’s research on sexuality?
- Name at least three important findings about sexual behavior discovered since Kinsey.
- Contrast the terms *sexual orientation* and *sexual preference*.

The Big Picture

The Sociology of the Body: Health, Illness, and Sexuality

Thinking Sociologically

1. Obesity is a major health concern in the United States, especially among poor Americans, blacks, and Latinos. What types of public programs do you believe will be most effective in fighting the obesity epidemic? Why do you think the programs you've proposed are necessary?
2. Statistical studies of our national health show a gap in life expectancies between the rich and the poor. Review all the major factors that would explain why rich people live longer than poor people.
3. This chapter discusses the biological and sociocultural factors associated with sexual orientation. Why are twin studies the most promising type of research on the genetic basis of sexual orientation? Summarize the analysis of these studies, and show whether it presently appears that sexual orientation results from genetic differences, sociocultural practices and experiences, or both.

Learning Objectives

How Does Social Context Affect the Human Body?

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Understand how social and cultural contexts shape attitudes toward "ideal" body forms and give rise to two body-related social problems in the United States: eating disorders and the obesity crisis.

How Do Sociologists Understand Health and Illness?

p. 432

Learn about functionalist and symbolic interactionist perspectives on physical and mental health and illness in contemporary society. Understand the relationship between traditional medicine and complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).

How Do Social Factors Affect Health and Illness?

p. 438

Recognize that health and illness are shaped by cultural and social factors. Learn about the social and cultural differences in the distribution of disease.

What Causes Infectious Diseases in Developing Nations?

p. 443

Understand the causes underlying high rates of infectious diseases in developing nations. Learn more about HIV/AIDS as a sociological phenomenon.

How Does Social Context Shape Human Sexual Behavior?

Understand the social and cultural influences on human sexual behavior. Explore cultural differences in sexual behavior and patterns of sexual behavior today.

Terms to Know

universal health coverage • social class
gradient in health • sociology of the body

socialization of nature • obesity • food deserts

sick role • stigma • complementary and
alternative medicine (CAM) • biomedical model
of health

sexual orientation • heterosexuality •
homosexuality • homophobia

Concept Checks

1. Why is anorexia more likely to strike young women than other subgroups?
2. What explanations are offered for the recent increase in obesity rates?
3. What policy solutions have been offered for the obesity crisis?

1. How do functionalist theorists and symbolic interactionists differ in their perspectives on health and illness?
2. What is stigma, and how does it pertain to health and illness?
3. What is the biomedical model of health?
4. Compare complementary medicine with alternative medicine.

1. How do social class and race affect health?
2. Name at least two explanations for the gender gap in health.
3. Identify at least two reasons why the gender gap in life expectancy may narrow in the future.

1. Why are infectious diseases more common in developing nations than in the United States today?
2. What are three social consequences of the AIDS epidemic in developing nations?

1. Describe several changes in sexual practices over the past two centuries.
2. What are the most important contributions of Alfred Kinsey's research on sexuality?
3. Name at least three important findings about sexual behavior discovered since Kinsey
4. Contrast the terms *sexual orientation* and *sexual preference*.

15

Urbanization, Population, and the Environment



Urbanization

p. 471



Thirteen of the twenty most polluted cities in the world in 2014 were in India, including New Delhi, pictured here. The World Health Organization has called air pollution, which increases the risk of respiratory illnesses as well as heart disease and stroke, the greatest environmental risk to health.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

How do cities develop and evolve?

Learn how cities have changed as a result of industrialization and urbanization. Learn how theories of urbanism have placed increasing emphasis on the influence of socioeconomic factors on city life.

How do rural, suburban, and urban life differ in the United States?

Learn about key developments affecting American cities, suburbs, and rural communities in the last several decades: suburbanization, urban decay, gentrification, and population loss in rural areas.

How does urbanization affect life across the globe?

See that global economic competition has a profound impact on urbanization and urban life. Recognize the challenges of urbanization in the developing world.

What are the forces behind world population growth?

Learn why the world population has increased dramatically and understand the main consequences of this growth.

How do environmental changes affect your life?

See that the environment is a sociological issue related to economic development and population growth.



With a population of 1.4 billion, China is the most populous country in the world; India is a close second, with 1.3 billion, and is poised to overtake China within the next few years. Together, China and India account for nearly two-fifths of the world's total population. Their population growth has been accompanied by rapid economic growth. The Chinese economy grew at an annual rate of 9–10 percent between 1980 and 2010; India's only a few percent lower. Since that time both have slowed to 7 percent. By way of comparison, the U.S. economy is currently growing at an annual rate of about 2 percent (World Bank 2016c).

In their rush to re-create the Industrial Revolution that made Western nations wealthy, Chinese and Indian manufacturers—spurred on by Western investors—have become the world's smokestack. Their rapid industrialization has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and into the middle class, but at a high environmental cost. Toxic chemical spills have threatened the water supply of millions of people, while the air in major cities has become

so polluted that the ultramodern skyscrapers are often not visible. Thirteen of the twenty most polluted cities in the world in 2014 were in India (Chainey 2015).

For many years, China's booming economy depended exclusively on burning coal. Every week or so a new coal-burning power plant was brought online, most often one using outmoded technology. The sulfur dioxide from these plants contributed to nearly a half-million deaths a year in China, while causing acid rain that poisoned lakes, rivers, and farmlands. Climate-changing smoke and soot from China's power plants have been detected across the Pacific Ocean in California. China has surpassed the United States as the world's leading emitter of greenhouse gases (although when adjusted for population size, the United States remains the world's worst offender). China's environmental threats became so acute that in 2011, the nation's environment minister, Zhou Shengxian, publicly announced that carbon dioxide pollution from coal-burning factories, along with the nation's high demand for resources—both consequences of prior economic growth—may, ironically, threaten future economic growth. Even the state-run newspaper *China Daily*, historically known for keeping the nation's problems under wraps, described the nation's major cities as “barely suitable for living,” given persistent environmental threats (Wagstaff 2013).

During the past several years, public discontent over toxic air quality has spurred China toward a more “green” development path, both by reducing its reliance on export manufacturing and by switching to greener technologies such as solar, wind, and nuclear power. In 2013, the Chinese government acknowledged that it would need to spend more than \$800 billion each year to fight air pollution (Yongqiang 2013). China's coal consumption has declined significantly in recent years (Carrington 2016), contributing to a global drop in greenhouse gas emissions in 2015 (Vaughan 2015). Yet problems persist. On a recent trip to Beijing, the flight of one of the authors of this textbook was forced to divert to Seoul, Korea, to refuel, because the pollution over Beijing and other cities in the region was deemed too dense for planes to land.

In Delhi, India's capital—and currently the world's most polluted city—it is estimated that between 25,000 and 50,000 people die each year because of air pollution; ten times that number die for the same reason throughout the country as a whole. Unlike with China, India's problem does not stem so much from smokestack industries but rather from motor vehicle exhaust and smoke from home cooking. The government of India has responded by shuttering some heavily polluting industries and power plants; requiring buses, rickshaws, and taxis to convert to natural gas; banning the burning of rubbish; and ending government subsidies for diesel-powered motor vehicles (*The Economist* 2016). Unlike in China, where the government exerts strong control over the economy and many aspects of private life, the Indian government is weak and corrupt. It remains to be seen whether governmental efforts will make a major difference in solving India's air quality problems.

The potentially dire future facing China and India reveals in vivid detail the ways that population growth, urbanization, industrialization, and the environment are intertwined. How exactly do these forces mutually influence one another? In the case of China, for example, the rush to develop and meet the demands of its burgeoning population has severely taxed and depleted the nation's natural



A coal miner emerges from a mine after a day's work in Shanxi Province, China.

resources. China has embarked on building a network of highways, much like the United States did during the 1950s and 1960s. In fact, the country's 45,000 miles of high-speed freeways, which will connect all major cities in China, is modeled after the U.S. interstate highway system. As was the case in the United States, the highways will generate much more extensive automobile use, projected to outstrip that of the United States by the middle of the century. For a country where as recently as a generation ago the bicycle and rickshaw were the principal means of transportation, this is an enormous transformation, and one that has already contributed to urban traffic congestion, multi-day traffic jams, and increased levels of energy use and pollution. China is making the transition from rural to urban in record time, and the government is calling for the relocation of some 400 million people—more than the entire U.S. population—to newly built urban centers. China already has more than 100 cities with populations exceeding one million, including six “megacities” with more than ten million people (*The Economist* 2015b).

In terms of industrialization, China's explosive economic growth, as previously noted, was based on enormous resource consumption and the burning of greenhouse-gas-emitting coal and other fossil fuels. Yet China's environmental challenges are not wholly due to internal factors. After all, the growth of manufacturing in China has been the direct result of European and North American firms' decision to relocate their manufacturing to China, where environmental restrictions have historically been weaker (thereby lowering production costs).

In this chapter we examine the ways in which population growth, urbanization, and environmental change go hand in hand, against the backdrop of rapid industrialization that is transforming many parts of the world. We begin by studying the origins of cities and the vast growth in the numbers of city dwellers that has occurred over the past century. From there, we review the most influential theories of urban life. We then move on to consider patterns of urban development in North America compared with cities in the developing world. Cities in the global south are growing at an enormous rate. We consider why this is happening and at the same time look at changes now taking place in world population patterns. We conclude by assessing the connections among urbanization, world population growth, and environmental problems.

How Do Cities Develop and Evolve?

Cities in Traditional Societies

The world's first cities appeared about 3500 BCE, in the river valleys of the Nile in Egypt, the Tigris and Euphrates in what is now Iraq, and the Indus in what is today Pakistan. Cities in traditional societies were very small by modern standards. Babylon, for example, one of the largest ancient Middle Eastern cities, extended over an area of only 3.2 square miles, and at its height, around 2000 BCE, probably numbered no more than 15,000 to 20,000 people. Rome under Emperor Augustus in the first century BCE was easily the largest premodern city outside China, with some 300,000 inhabitants—the population of Anchorage, Cincinnati, or Pittsburgh today.



Learn how cities have changed as a result of industrialization and urbanization. Learn how theories of urbanism have placed increasing emphasis on the influence of socioeconomic factors on city life.

Most cities of the ancient world shared certain features. They were usually surrounded by walls that served as a military defense and emphasized the separation of the urban community from the countryside. The central area of the city was almost always occupied by a religious temple, a royal palace, government and commercial buildings, and a public square. This ceremonial, commercial, and political center was sometimes enclosed within a second inner wall and was usually too small to hold more than a minority of the citizens. The dwellings of the ruling class or elite tended to be concentrated in or near the center. Less-privileged groups lived toward the perimeter of the city or outside the walls, moving inside if the city came under attack. Different ethnic and religious communities were often segregated in separate neighborhoods, where their members lived and worked. Communication among city dwellers was erratic. Lacking any form of printing press, and with very low literacy rates, public officials had to shout at the tops of their voices to deliver pronouncements. A few traditional civilizations boasted sophisticated road systems linking particular cities, but these existed mainly for military purposes, and transportation for the most part was slow and limited. Merchants and soldiers were the only people who regularly traveled over long distances.

Although cities were the main centers for science, the arts, and cosmopolitan culture, their influence in surrounding areas was always weak. No more than a tiny proportion of the population lived in the cities, and the division between cities and countryside was pronounced. By far the majority of people lived in small rural communities and rarely came into contact with more than the occasional state official or merchant from the towns.

Industrialization and Urbanization

The contrast in size between the largest modern cities today and those of premodern civilizations is extraordinary. The most populous cities in the industrialized countries—sometimes termed “megacities”—number over 10 million inhabitants (see “Globalization by the Numbers: Urbanization” on p. 471). A **conurbation**—a cluster of cities and towns forming a continuous network—may include even larger numbers of people. The peak of urban life today is represented by what is called the **megalopolis**, the “city of cities.” The term was originally coined in ancient Greece to refer to a city-state that was planned to be the envy of all civilizations. The current megalopolis, though, bears little relation to that utopia. The term was first applied in modern times to refer to the Northeast Corridor of the United States, an area covering some 450 miles from north of Boston to south of Washington, D.C. In this region, about 52 million people live at an average density of over 800 persons per square mile. Large, dense urban populations can also be found in the lower Great Lakes region surrounding Chicago, and the San Francisco/East Bay/San Jose/Silicon Valley region of California (Scommegna 2011).

Britain was the first society to undergo industrialization, beginning in the mid-eighteenth century. The process of industrialization generated increasing **urbanization**—the movement of the population into towns and cities, away from the land. In 1800, less than 20 percent of the British population lived in towns or cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants. By 1900, this proportion had risen to 74 percent. London held about 1.1 million people in 1800; by the beginning of the twentieth century, it had increased in size to a population of over 7.8 million, at that date the largest city ever seen in the world. It was a vast manufacturing, commercial, and financial center at the heart of the still-expanding British Empire.

conurbation

A cluster of towns or cities forming an unbroken urban environment.

megalopolis

The “city of all cities” in ancient Greece—used in modern times to refer to very large conurbations.

urbanization

The movement of the population into towns and cities and away from the land.

The urbanization of most other European countries and the United States took place somewhat later. In 1800, the United States was more of a rural society than were the leading European countries. Less than 10 percent of Americans lived in communities with populations of more than 2,500 people. Between 1800 and 1900, as industrialization grew in the United States, the population of New York City leaped from 60,000 to 8.1 million. Today, slightly more than 80 percent of Americans reside in metropolitan areas. Urbanization in the twenty-first century is a global process into which the developing world is increasingly being drawn. From 1900 to 1950, world urbanization increased five times faster than world population growth, and the years since have seen an even greater acceleration in urbanization. In 1950, roughly 30 percent of the world's population lived in urban areas. By 2014, the figure had grown to more than half (54 percent), and it is projected to reach two-thirds by 2050 (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015c).

Urbanization goes hand in hand with economic growth (Figure 15.1). In 2014, the least urbanized countries were also low-income countries (where only 31 percent lived in urban areas); next came the more urbanized middle-income countries (with 51 percent urban), while high-income countries were the most urbanized (80 percent). With the exception of some small island nations, such as Gibraltar or Bermuda, and city-states, such as Hong Kong or Singapore, the most urbanized countries in 2014 were Belgium (98 percent), Uruguay (95 percent), and Japan (93 percent). The United States, with 81 percent urban, was comparable to Europe. The least urbanized countries were those in Eastern Africa (25 percent urban), which is also one of the poorest regions in the world (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015c).

China went from 12 percent urbanized in 1950 to 54 percent in 2014, an unprecedented movement of hundreds of millions of people from rural countryside to enormous industrial cities, initially on China's east but more recently to metropolitan areas throughout the country. This urbanization, as noted previously, was in large part by government design, as central state planning called for urban-based industrial production to replace rural agriculture as the driving force in the economy. India, on the other hand, remains largely rural, its urban population increasing from 17 percent in 1950 to only 32 percent in 2014 (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015c).

Theories of Urbanism

THE CHICAGO SCHOOL

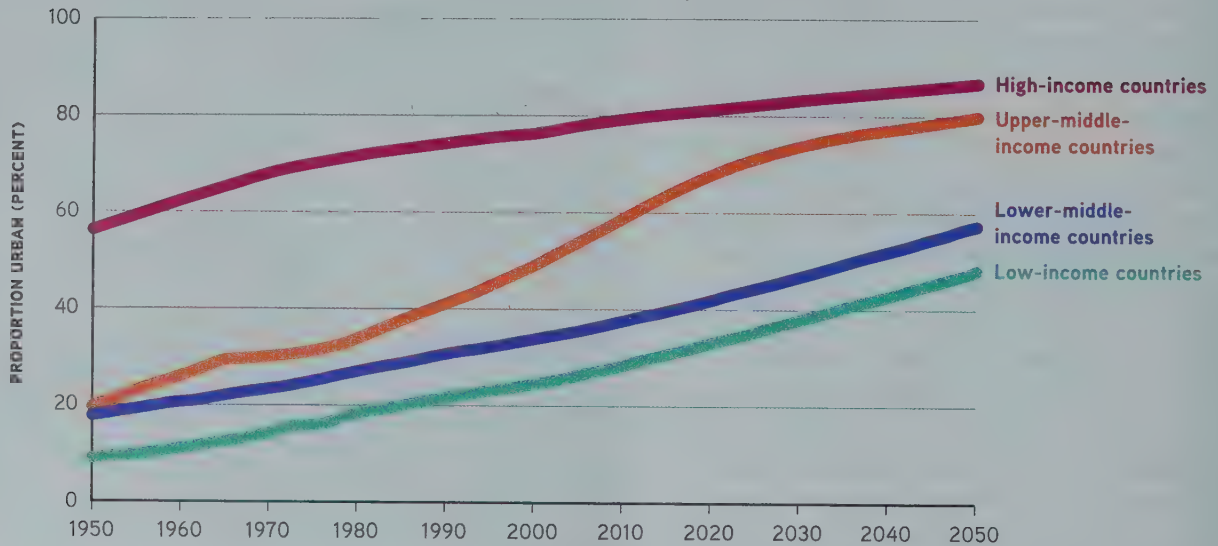
Scholars associated with the University of Chicago from the 1920s to the 1940s—especially Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, and Louis Wirth—developed ideas that were for many years the chief basis of theory and research in urban sociology. Two concepts



Traffic outside of the Bank of England in the financial district of London in 1896. In only a century, the population of London grew from just over 1 million people to over 7 million.

FIGURE 15.1

Proportion Urban by Income Group, 1950–2050



Source: UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs 2015c

ecological approach

A perspective on urban analysis emphasizing the “natural” distribution of city neighborhoods into areas having contrasting characteristics.

inner city

The areas composing the central neighborhoods of a city, as distinct from the suburbs. In many modern urban settings in industrialized nations inner-city areas are subject to dilapidation and decay, the more affluent residents having moved to outlying areas.

developed by the “Chicago School” are worthy of special attention. One is the so-called **ecological approach** to urban analysis; the other, the characterization of urbanism as a *way of life*, developed by Wirth (Park 1952; Wirth 1938). It is important to understand these ideas as they were initially conceived by the Chicago School and to see how they have been revised and even replaced by sociologists in more recent decades.

Urban Ecology *Ecology*—the study of the adaptation of plant and animal organisms to their environment—is a term taken from the physical sciences. In the natural world, organisms tend to be distributed in systematic ways over the terrain, such that a balance or equilibrium among different species is achieved. The Chicago School believed that the locations of major urban settlements and the distribution of different types of neighborhoods within them could be understood in terms of similar principles. Cities do not grow up at random but in response to advantageous features of the environment. For example, large urban areas in modern societies tend to develop along the shores of rivers, in fertile plains, or at the intersection of trading routes or railways.

According to Park, cities become ordered into “natural areas” through processes of competition, invasion, and succession—all of which also occur in biological ecology. Patterns of location, movement, and relocation in cities, according to the ecological view, take a similar form. Different neighborhoods develop through the adjustments made by inhabitants as they struggle to gain their livelihoods. A city can be pictured as a map of areas with distinct and contrasting social characteristics, in concentric rings, broken up into segments. In the center are the **inner-city** areas, a mixture of big-business prosperity and decaying private homes. Beyond these are older established neighborhoods,

housing workers employed in stable manual occupations. Farther out still are the suburbs, in which higher-income groups tend to live. Processes of invasion and succession occur within the segments of the concentric rings. Thus, as property decays in a central or near-central area, ethnic/minority groups might start to move into it. As they do so, more of the preexisting population start to leave, precipitating movement to neighborhoods elsewhere in the city or out to the suburbs. However, as we will see later, these traditional patterns are starting to change: Wealthy persons and the young are flooding into urban areas, seeking amenities such as arts and entertainment, and suburban areas are becoming more desirable (and affordable) to poor and working-class persons.

Another aspect of the **urban ecology** approach emphasizes the *interdependence* of different city areas. Differentiation—the specialization of groups and occupational roles—is the main way human beings adapt to their environment. Groups on which many others depend will have a dominant role, often reflected in their central geographical position. Business groups, for example, such as large banks or insurance companies, provide key services for many in a community and hence are usually to be found in the central areas of settlements (Hawley 1950, 1968).

Urbanism as a Way of Life Wirth's (1938) thesis of **urbanism** outlines the ways that life in cities is different from life elsewhere. In cities, large numbers of people live in close proximity without knowing most others personally—a fundamental contrast to small traditional villages. Most contacts between city dwellers are fleeting and partial. Interactions with sales clerks in stores, baristas at coffee shops, or passengers or ticket collectors on trains are passing encounters, entered into not for their own sake but as means to other aims.

Wirth was among the first to address the “urban interaction problem” (Duneier and Molotch 1999), the necessity for city dwellers to respect social boundaries when so many people are in close physical proximity all the time. Many people walk down the street in cities acting unconcerned about others near them, often talking on cell phones or listening to music that blocks out the sounds of urban life. Through such appearance of apathy they can avoid unwanted transgression of social boundaries.

Wirth's ideas have deservedly enjoyed wide currency. However, in assessing these ideas, we should consider that neighborhoods marked by close kinship and personal ties are often actively created by city life; they are not just remnants of a preexisting way of life that survive for a period within the city. Claude Fischer (1984) has put forward an explanation for why large-scale urbanism helps promote diverse subcultures. Those who live in cities are able to collaborate with others of similar background and interests to develop local connections, and they can join distinctive religious, ethnic, political, and other subcultural groups. A small town or village does not allow for the development of such subcultural diversity. For example, some gay and lesbian young people may find more hospitable communities in cities like San Francisco that have large gay subcultures, compared with the small towns where they may have grown up. A large city is a world of strangers, yet it ultimately supports and creates personal relationships.

JANE JACOBS: “EYES AND EARS UPON THE STREET”

Like most sociologists in the twentieth century, the Chicago School researchers were professors who saw their mission as contributing to a scholarly literature and advancing the

urban ecology

An approach to the study of urban life based on an analogy with the adjustment of plants and organisms to the physical environment. According to ecological theorists, the various neighborhoods and zones within cities are formed as a result of natural processes of adjustment on the part of populations as they compete for resources.

urbanism

A term used by Louis Wirth to denote distinctive characteristics of urban social life, such as its impersonal or alienating nature.



Cities can promote diverse subcultures. The Castro district of San Francisco, for example, has a thriving gay subculture.

created environment

Constructions established by human beings to serve their own needs, including roads, railways, factories, offices, homes, and other buildings.

field of social science. Yet one of the most influential urban scholars of the twentieth century, Jane Jacobs, author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), was an architecture critic with a high school education. Through her own independent reading and research in the 1950s, she transformed herself into one of the most learned figures in the emerging field of urban studies.

Like sociologists such as Wirth of the Chicago School before her, Jacobs noted that “cities are, by definition, full of strangers,” some of whom are dangerous. She argued that cities are most habitable when they feature a diversity of uses, thereby ensuring that many people will be coming and going on the streets at any time. When enough people are out and about, Jacobs wrote, “respectable” eyes and ears dominate the street and are fixed on strangers, who will thus not get out of hand. The more people who are out, or who are looking from their windows at the people who are out, the more their gazes will safeguard the street.

The world has changed a great deal since Jacobs wrote *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Most of the people on the sidewalks Jacobs was writing about were more alike in many respects than they are today; now homeless people, drug users, panhandlers, and others representing economic inequalities, cultural differences, and extremes of behavior can make sidewalk life unpredictable (Duneier 1999). Under these conditions, strangers do not necessarily feel the kind of solidarity and mutual assurance she described. Sociologists today must ask, What happens to urban life when “the eyes and ears upon the street” represent vast inequalities and cultural differences? Do the assumptions Jacobs made still hold up? In many cases the answer is yes, but in other cases the answer is no. Nearly five decades after her book was published, Jacobs’s ideas remain extremely influential.

URBANISM AND THE CREATED ENVIRONMENT

Whereas the earlier Chicago School of sociology emphasized that the distribution of people in cities occurs naturally, more recent theories of the city have stressed that urbanism is not a natural process but rather is shaped by political and economic forces. These theories focus on the **created environment**, or those constructions established by humans to serve their own needs, including roads, railways, factories, offices, private homes, and other buildings. Urbanism is a core aspect of the created environment. Cities and urban areas were “created” by the spread of industrial capitalism.

According to this view, it is not the stranger on the sidewalk who is most threatening to many urban dwellers, especially the poor; instead, it is the stranger far away, working in a bank or real estate development company, who has the power to make decisions that transform whole blocks or neighborhoods (Logan and Molotch 1987). This focus on the political economy of cities, and on different kinds of strangers, represented a new and critical direction for urban sociology. It emphasizes the ways that everyday life in urban areas is shaped by macrosocial forces and institutions, including corporations and public policies.

According to social geographer David Harvey (1973, 1982, 1985), space is continually *restructured* in modern urbanism. The process is determined by where large firms choose to place their factories, research and development centers, and so forth; the controls that governments operate over both land and industrial production; and the activities of private investors, who are buying and selling houses and land. Businesses, for example, are constantly weighing the relative advantages of new locations against existing ones. As production becomes cheaper in one area, or as the firm moves from one product to another, offices

and factories will be closed down in one place and opened up elsewhere. Thus, at one period, when there are considerable profits to be made, there may be a spate of office-block buildings in the center of large cities. Once the offices have been built and the central area redeveloped, investors look for the potential for further speculative building elsewhere. Often what is profitable in one period will not be so in another, when the financial climate changes.

The activities of private home buyers are strongly influenced by how far, and where, business interests buy up land, as well as by rates of loans and taxes fixed by local and central government. After World War II, for instance, there was vast expansion of suburban development outside major cities in the United States. This was partly due to ethnic discrimination and the tendency of whites to move away from inner-city areas. However, it was made possible, Harvey argues, only because of government decisions to provide tax breaks to home buyers and construction firms and the willingness of financial organizations to set up special credit arrangements. These provided the basis for the building and buying of new homes on the peripheries of cities and at the same time promoted demand for industrial products such as the automobile (Harvey 1973, 1982, 1985).

Like Harvey, Manuel Castells (1977, 1983) emphasizes that the spatial form of a society is closely linked to the overall mechanisms of its development. However, the nature of the created environment is not just the result of the activities of wealthy and powerful people. Castells stresses the importance of the struggles of underprivileged groups to alter their living conditions. Urban problems stimulate a range of social movements, concerned with improving housing conditions, protesting against air pollution, defending parks, and combating building development that changes the nature of an area. For example, Castells has studied the gay movement in San Francisco, which succeeded in restructuring neighborhoods around its own cultural values—allowing many gay organizations, clubs, and bars to flourish—and gained a prominent position in local politics.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 What are two characteristics of ancient cities?
- 2 What is urbanization? How is it related to globalization?
- 3 How does urban ecology use physical science analogies to explain life in modern cities?
- 4 What is the urban interaction problem?
- 5 According to Jane Jacobs, the more people there are on the streets, the more likely street life will be orderly. Do you agree with Jacobs's hypothesis and her explanation for this pattern?

How Do Rural, Suburban, and Urban Life Differ in the United States?

What are the main trends that have affected city, suburban, and rural life in the United States over the past several decades? How can we explain patterns such as suburban sprawl, the disappearance of traditional rural life, and population declines in central cities and older suburbs? These are questions we will take up in the following sections. One of the major changes in population distribution in the period since World War II is the movement of large parts of city populations to newly constructed suburbs; this movement outward has been a particularly pronounced feature of American cities and is related directly to central-city decay. At the same time, rural populations have continued to decline as young people seek richer professional and personal opportunities in our nation's large and small cities. We therefore begin with a discussion of rural America and suburbia before moving on to look at the inner city.



Learn about developments affecting American cities, suburbs, and rural communities in the last several decades: suburbanization, urban decay, gentrification, and population loss in rural areas.



Young people often flee rural areas to seek employment and social opportunities in cities. Older adults, like the men pictured here in a diner in Booneville, Kentucky, are often left behind in small towns. In 1940 Booneville had a population of 283; in 2010, it was home to 81 people. Just 15 percent of Americans today reside in rural areas.

The Decline of Rural America?

Rural life has long been the focus of romanticized images among Americans: close-knit communities and families, stretches of picturesque cornfields, and isolation from social problems such as poverty. Yet these stereotypes stand in stark contrast to life in many parts of rural America today. Rural areas of the United States are defined by the Census Bureau as those areas located outside urbanized areas or urban clusters. Rural areas have fewer than 2,500 people, who typically live in open country (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2012g, 2013r). Rural America contains approximately 72 percent of the nation's land area yet holds only about 15 percent of the total U.S. population.

For most of the twentieth century, rural communities experienced significant population losses, despite several modest short-term reversals in the 1970s and the 1990s (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2013). This trend is continuing into the twenty-first

century: Of the 1,346 U.S. counties that shrank in population between 2000 and 2007, 85 percent were located outside metropolitan areas, and 59 percent rely heavily on farming, mining, and manufacturing as their main revenue sources (Mather 2008). Population losses in rural areas are attributed to declines in farming and other rural industries, high poverty rates, scarce economic opportunities or lifestyle amenities for young people, lack of government services, and—in some regions—a dearth of natural amenities such as forests, lakes, or temperate winters. Population losses are compounded by the fact that most people leaving rural areas are young people, meaning that fewer babies are born to replace the aging population (Johnson 2006). Many rural areas have disproportionately high numbers of older adults because young persons seek opportunities elsewhere and leave the older persons behind. This phenomenon, called *aging in place*, explains the relatively old populations in rural areas in the Rust Belt and upper Midwest (McGranahan and Beale 2002).

More troubling than the loss of population in rural areas are concerns about social problems, including high levels of child poverty, high rates of motor vehicle fatalities and other accidental deaths, and low levels of health and educational services (Mather 2008). Child poverty is usually perceived as an urban problem, yet 2013 data from the U.S. Census Bureau reveal that rural America is far more likely to suffer from child poverty. In 2013, 26 percent of American children living in rural counties were poor compared to 21 percent of children living in urban areas (McGranahan 2015). The counties with persistent child poverty tend to cluster in Appalachia, along the Mississippi Delta, in the northern Great Plains, along the Texas-Mexico border, and in the Southwest. Although Appalachia is a largely white area, most rural counties are “majority-minority,” meaning that less than

50 percent of the population is non-Hispanic white (Mattingly, Johnson, and Schaefer 2011). For example, the Mississippi Delta is largely black, and the Texas-Mexico border is primarily Hispanic, whereas poor counties in the Midwest and Southwest have large Native American populations, often dwelling on reservations (O'Hare and Mather 2008).

Despite the challenges facing rural America, many rural sociologists are guardedly optimistic about the future of nonmetropolitan life. Technological innovations in transportation and telecommunications give people the flexibility to work away from their urban office. A number of government programs offer young people financial incentives to serve as teachers or health care professionals in remote areas. However, such programs are likely to be effective only in attracting workers and businesses to rural areas that have at least some natural or recreational amenities (Johnson 2006).

Suburbanization

In the United States, **suburbanization**, the massive development and inhabiting of towns surrounding a city, rapidly increased during the 1950s and 1960s, a time of great economic growth. World War II had absorbed most industrial resources, and any development outside the war effort was restricted. But by the 1950s, war rationing had ended, and the postwar economic boom facilitated moving out of the city. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) provided assistance in obtaining mortgage loans, making it possible in the early postwar period for families to buy housing in the suburbs for less than they would have paid for rent in the cities. The FHA did not offer financial assistance to improve older homes or to build new homes in the central areas of ethnically mixed cities; its large-scale aid went only to the builders and buyers of suburban housing.

Early in the 1950s, lobbies promoting highway construction launched Project Adequate Roads, aimed at convincing the federal government to support the building of highways. In 1956, the Highway Act was passed, authorizing \$32 billion to be used for building such highways. The new highway program—funded in part by gasoline taxes, which grew rapidly as more and more people took to the wheel—led to the establishment of industries and services in suburban areas themselves. Consequently, the movement of businesses

suburbanization

The development of towns surrounding a city.



(Left) Suburban Levittown, New York, in the 1950s.
(Right) A housing development in the exurb of Highland, California.

exurban counties

Low-density suburban counties on the periphery of large metro areas.

from the cities to the suburbs took jobs in the manufacturing and service industries with them. Many suburban towns became essentially separate cities, connected by rapid highways to the other suburbs around them. From the 1960s on, the proportion of people commuting between suburbs increased more steadily than the proportion commuting to cities.

An important change in suburbs today is that more and more members of racial and ethnic minorities are moving there. Blacks accounted for 7 percent of the suburban population in 1990, 9 percent in 2000, and 10 percent in 2010. Comparable increases for Latinos were even steeper, climbing from 8 to 12 to 17 percent during the same time period. Whites as a share of the suburban population declined steeply, from 81 percent in 1990 to just 65 percent in 2010. The steady increase in minority suburban populations was concentrated in so-called *melting-pot metros*, or the metropolitan regions of New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Miami, and other immigrant gateway cities (Frey 2001). Members of minority groups move to the suburbs for reasons similar to those who preceded them: better housing, schools, and amenities. A notable exception to the growing diversity of suburban America is exurbs. **Exurban counties**, or low-density suburban counties on the periphery of large metro areas, grew rapidly in the 2000s and depended overwhelmingly on whites for growth during that decade. Whites accounted for 73 percent of population growth in exurbs between 2000 and 2010.

While the last several decades saw a movement from the cities to the suburbs, they also witnessed a shift in the regional distribution of the U.S. population from north to south and east to west. Between 2000 and 2010, regional growth was much more rapid in the South and West (14 percent) than in the Northeast (3 percent) and Midwest (4 percent) (Mackun and Wilson 2011).

Urban Problems

Inner-city decay is partially a consequence of the social and economic forces involved in the movement of businesses, jobs, and middle-class residents from major cities to the outlying suburbs, a trend that began in the 1950s. The manufacturing industries that provided employment for the urban blue-collar class largely vanished and were replaced by white-collar service industries. Millions of blue-collar jobs disappeared, affecting in particular the poorly educated, drawn mostly from minority groups. Although the overall educational levels of minority groups have improved since the mid-twentieth century, the improvement has not been sufficient to keep up with the demands of an information-based economy (Kasarda 1993). William Julius Wilson (1991, 1996) has argued that the problems of the urban underclass have grown out of this economic transformation (see Chapter 7).

These economic changes also contributed to increased residential segregation of racial and ethnic groups and social classes, as we saw in Chapter 10. Discriminatory practices by home sellers, real estate agents, and mortgage-lending institutions added to this pattern of segregation (Massey and Denton 1993). In the early 2000s, considering all metropolitan areas, African Americans in the United States lived in neighborhoods, both urban and suburban, that were predominantly black (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2005). Residential segregation as measured by the dissimilarity index, ranging from 0 (complete integration) to 1 (complete segregation), indicated that in the early 2000s, on average, African Americans lived in neighborhoods with an index value of 0.64, down



Does gentrification of a rundown inner-city area necessarily result in the dispossession of the existing population, or do renewed interest and an infusion of money in such areas promote a revitalization that works to their advantage? Not long ago, Clinton Street was a graffiti-ridden streetscape (left), but it has evolved into a lively restaurant row on New York's Lower East Side (right).



from 0.73 in 1980. That is, neighborhoods have become more racially integrated over the past few decades. Nevertheless, the country remains heavily segregated by race. Currently, the average white resident lives in a census tract (groupings of neighborhoods of 5,000 to 10,000 persons) that is 79 percent white; the average black resident lives in a tract that is 46 percent black. While Hispanics constitute only 15 percent of the population, 45 percent of their neighbors are also Hispanic (Frey 2011a). The social isolation of minority groups, particularly those in the underclass or “ghetto poor,” can escalate urban problems such as crime, lack of economic opportunities, poor health, and family breakdown (Massey 1996).

Adding to these difficulties is the fact that city governments today operate against a background of almost continual financial crisis. As businesses and middle-class residents moved to the suburbs, cities lost major sources of tax revenue. High rates of crime and unemployment in the city require it to spend more on welfare services, schools, police, and overall upkeep. Yet because of budget constraints, cities are forced to cut back many of these services. A cycle of deterioration develops in which the more suburbia expands, the greater the problems faced by city dwellers become. Problems of urban decline reached a pinnacle when the city of Detroit, Michigan, filed for bankruptcy. Over the course of several decades, both businesses and residents had left the city for neighboring suburbs, depleting the city's tax base. By the late 2000s, when the auto industry was in serious crisis, most of the major auto companies had already fled the city and moved their factories to the suburbs. After years of paying its bills with borrowed money, the city finally succumbed to bankruptcy in 2013 (Bomey, Snavelly, and Priddle 2013).

Urban Renewal and Gentrification

Urban decay is not wholly a one-way process; it can stimulate countertrends, such as **urban renewal**, or **gentrification**. Dilapidated areas or buildings may be renovated as

urban renewal

The process of renovating deteriorating neighborhoods by encouraging the renewal of old buildings and the construction of new ones.

gentrification

A process of urban renewal in which older, deteriorated housing is refurbished by affluent people moving into the area.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. Describe at least two problems facing rural America today.
2. Why did so many Americans move to suburban areas in the 1950s and 1960s?
3. What are two unintended consequences of suburbanization? How do they deepen socioeconomic and racial inequalities?

more affluent groups move back into cities. Such a renewal process is called gentrification because those areas or buildings become upgraded and return to the control of the urban “gentry”—high-income dwellers—rather than remaining in the hands of the poor.

In *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (1990), sociologist Elijah Anderson analyzed the effect of gentrification on cities. Although the renovation of a neighborhood generally increases its value, it rarely improves the living standards of its current low-income residents, who are usually forced to move out. The poor residents who continue to live in the neighborhood receive some benefits in the form of improved schools and police protection, but the resulting increases in taxes and rents often force them to leave for a more affordable neighborhood, most often deeper into the ghetto.

The white newcomers come to the city in search of cheap “antique” housing, closer access to their city-based jobs, and a trendy urban lifestyle. They profess to be “open-minded” about racial and ethnic differences; in reality, however, little fraternizing takes place between the new and old residents unless they are of the same social class. Over time, the neighborhood is gradually transformed into a white middle-class enclave.

How Does Urbanization Affect Life across the Globe?



See that global economic competition has a profound impact on urbanization and urban life. Recognize the challenges of urbanization in the developing world.

In premodern times, cities were self-contained entities that stood apart from the predominantly rural areas in which they were located. Communication between cities was limited. The picture at the start of the twenty-first century could hardly be more different. Globalization has had a profound effect on cities, making them more interdependent and encouraging the proliferation of horizontal links between cities across national borders. Physical and virtual ties between cities now abound, and global networks of cities are emerging.

Global Cities

The role of cities in the new global order has been attracting a great deal of attention from sociologists. Saskia Sassen has been one of the leading contributors to the debate on cities and globalization. She uses the term **global city** to refer to urban centers that are home to the headquarters of large transnational corporations and a superabundance of financial, technological, and consulting services. In *The Global City* (1991), Sassen based her work on the study of three such cities: New York, London, and Tokyo. The contemporary development of the world economy, she argues, has created a novel strategic role for major cities.

global city

A city—such as London, New York, or Tokyo—that has become an organizing center of the new global economy.

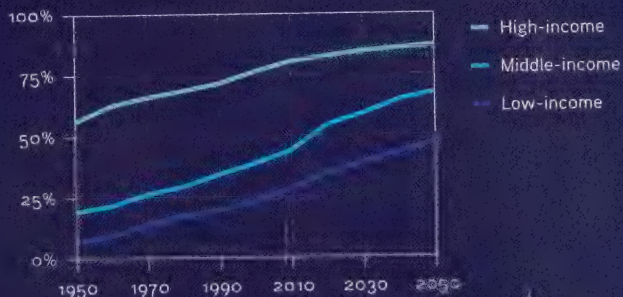
Today more than half the world's population resides in cities. This proportion is expected to rise to 66 percent by 2050, with China, India, and Nigeria alone accounting for nearly 40 percent of the projected growth of the world's urban population.

Population of Megacities

In millions	2014	2030*
Tokyo, Japan	37.8	37.2
Delhi, India	25.0	36.1
Shanghai, China	23.0	30.8
Mumbai, India	20.7	27.8
Beijing, China	19.5	27.7
Dhaka, Bangladesh	17.0	27.3
Karachi, Pakistan	16.1	24.8
Cairo, Egypt	18.4	24.5
Lagos, Nigeria	12.6	24.2
Mexico City, Mexico	20.0	23.9

*Projected.

Percentage of World Population Living in Cities



Most such cities have long been centers of international trade, but they now have four new traits:

1. They have developed into command posts—centers of direction and policy-making—for the global economy.
2. They are the key locations for financial and specialized service firms, which have become more important than manufacturing in influencing economic development.
3. They are the sites of production and innovation in these newly expanded industries.
4. They are markets on which the “products” of financial and service industries are bought, sold, or otherwise disposed of.

Within the highly dispersed world economy of today, cities like these provide for central control of crucial operations. Global cities are much more than simply places of coordination, however; they are also contexts of production. What is important here is not the production of material goods, but the production of the specialized services required by business organizations for administering offices and factories scattered across the world and the production of financial innovations and markets. Services and financial goods are the “things” the global city makes.

Inequality and the Global City

The new global economy is highly problematic in many ways. Sassen argues that global cities have produced a new dynamic of inequality: It is no coincidence that the prosperous central business district adjoins impoverished inner-city areas in many global cities; business and poverty should be seen as interrelated phenomena. The growth sectors of the new economy—financial services, marketing, high technology—are reaping profits far greater than any found within traditional economic sectors. Those who work in finance and global services receive high salaries, and the areas where they live become gentrified. At the same time, manufacturing jobs are lost, and the very process of gentrification creates a vast supply of low-wage jobs—in restaurants, hotels, and boutiques. Affordable housing is scarce in gentrified areas, forcing an expansion of low-income neighborhoods. As the salaries and bonuses of the very affluent continue to climb, the wages of those employed to clean and guard their offices are dropping. Sassen (1998) argues that we are witnessing the “valorization” of work located at the forefront of the new global economy and the “devalorization” of work that occurs behind the scenes.

Within global cities, a geography of “centrality and marginality” is taking shape. Alongside resplendent affluence there is acute poverty. These two worlds exist side by side, yet actual contact between them can be surprisingly minimal. As Mike Davis (1990) noted in his study of Los Angeles, there has been a “conscious ‘hardening’ of the city surface against the poor.” Accessible public spaces have been replaced by walled compounds, neighborhoods guarded by electronic surveillance. Benches at bus stops are short or barrel-shaped to prevent people from sleeping on them, the number of public toilets is fewer than in any other North American city, and sprinkler systems have been installed in many parks to deter the homeless from living in them. Police and city planners have attempted to contain the homeless population within certain regions of the city, but in periodically sweeping through and confiscating makeshift shelters, they have effectively created a population of “urban Bedouins.”

Urbanization in the Global South

As we noted earlier, in 2014 slightly more than half of the world's population lived in urban areas, a figure that is predicted to increase to two-thirds by 2050. Nearly all of this growth will occur in cities of the global south. Africa's urban population is predicted to increase from 40 percent to 56 percent; Asia's, from 48 percent to 64 percent (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015c).

Why will urban growth be limited largely to less industrialized regions in the coming decades? Apart from the obvious fact that the most economically developed nations are already highly urbanized, two factors in particular must be taken into account. First, rates of population growth are higher in the global south than they are in industrialized nations. Urban growth is fueled by high fertility rates among people already living in cities. Second, there is widespread *internal migration* from rural areas to urban ones. People are drawn to cities in the global south either because their traditional systems of rural production have disintegrated or because the urban areas offer superior job opportunities. Rural poverty prompts many people to try their hand at city life. They may intend to migrate to the city for only a short time, aiming to return to their villages once they have earned enough money.

CHALLENGES OF URBANIZATION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Rapid urbanization in the global south has brought with it many economic, environmental, and social challenges.

Economic Challenges As a growing number of unskilled and agricultural workers migrate to urban centers, the formal economy often struggles to absorb the influx into the workforce. In most cities in the global south, it is the **informal economy** that allows those who cannot find formal work to make ends meet. From casual work in manufacturing and construction to small-scale trading activities, the unregulated informal sector offers earning opportunities to poor or unskilled workers. For example, it is estimated that as much as 90 percent of all employment in India is part of the “informal” economy, including shopkeepers, farmers, street vendors, rag pickers, tailors, repairmen, and black marketers (Yardley 2011).

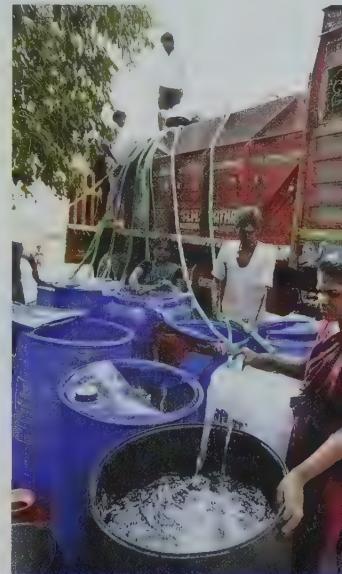
Informal economic opportunities are important in helping thousands of families (and women, especially) to survive in urban conditions, but they are also problematic. The informal economy is untaxed and unregulated. It is also less productive than the formal economy. Countries where economic activity is concentrated in this sector fail to collect much-needed revenue through taxation. The low level of productivity also hurts the general economy—the proportion of the GDP generated by informal economic activity is much lower than the percentage of the population involved in the sector.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) projects that a billion new jobs will be needed by 2025 to sustain the estimated population growth in cities in the global south. It is unlikely that all of these jobs will be created within the formal economy. Some development analysts argue that attention should be paid to formalizing or regulating the large informal economy, where much of the excess workforce is likely to cluster in years to come.

Environmental Challenges The rapidly expanding urban areas in the global south differ dramatically from cities in the industrialized world. Although cities everywhere

informal economy

Economic transactions carried on outside the sphere of formal paid employment.



Villagers in Latur, India, fill up barrels of water after waiting for hours. The rapid urbanization of cities in developing countries has created serious water shortages.



Newspaper salesman Alvarado uses a mask to protect himself from air pollution as he sells papers at a busy crossroad in Mexico City. Behind him a screen indicates the day's pollution levels.

are faced with environmental problems, those in the global south are confronted by particularly severe risks. As we saw earlier in this chapter, China's leaders have called for a lower economic growth rate, with the explicit goal of capping the nation's energy use and reducing environmental degradation. Pollution, housing shortages, inadequate sanitation, and unsafe water supplies are chronic problems for cities in less industrialized countries.

Housing is one of the most acute problems in many urban areas. Cities such as Calcutta and São Paulo are massively congested; the rate of internal migration is much too high for the provision of permanent housing. Since the 1980s the chronic deficit of housing in São Paulo has produced a wave of unofficial occupations of empty buildings. Groups of unhoused families initiate mass squats in abandoned hotels, offices, and government buildings.

Congestion and overdevelopment in city centers lead to serious environmental problems in many

urban areas. Mexico City is a prime example. About 94 percent of Mexico City consists of built-up areas, with only 6 percent of land left as open space. The level of green spaces—parks and open stretches of green land—is far below that found in even the most densely populated U.S. or European cities. Pollution is a major problem, coming mostly from the cars, buses, and trucks that pack the inadequate roads of the city, the rest deriving from industrial pollutants. It has been estimated that living in Mexico City is equivalent to smoking forty cigarettes a day.

Finally, global climate change, in combination with population growth and urbanization, can have deadly consequences. One study predicts that heat-related deaths in India will double by 2080, the direct result of global warming (*Economic Times* 2015); another study drew similar conclusions for New York City (Freedman 2013). In Pakistan, 1,250 people died during a heat wave in June 2015. Pakistan's climate-related problems are exacerbated by a looming water shortage; the country's minister of water and power warned that "under the present situation, in the next six to seven years, Pakistan can be a water-starved country" (Atique 2015). Pakistan's water woes may come much sooner; during spring 2016, Karachi—Pakistan's largest city, with more than 16 million people—began to run out of water, with people queuing up for hours for potable water brought in on trucks (Awaz.TV 2016). Nor is Pakistan alone; a United Nations study noted that 1.2 billion people—a fifth of the world population—"live in areas where water is physically scarce" (UNESCO 2015).

Social Challenges Many urban areas in the global south are overcrowded, and social programs are underresourced. Poverty is widespread, and existing social services cannot meet the demands for health care, family-planning advice, education, and training. The unbalanced age distribution in less industrialized countries adds to their social and economic difficulties. Compared with industrialized countries, a much larger proportion

of the population in the global south is under age fifteen. For example, in many African nations, nearly half of the population is under age fifteen. Niger is the youngest country in the world, with fully half of its national population under fifteen. This figure stands at 48 percent in Uganda; 47 percent in Mali and Malawi; and 46 percent in Zambia. By way of contrast, in Japan and Germany—two of the world's oldest populations—just 13 percent of the national population is under age fifteen (Central Intelligence Agency 2014) (see Table 15.1).

A youthful population needs a good educational system, but many countries in the global south lack the resources to provide universal education. When their families are poor, many children must work full time, and others have to eke out a living on the street, begging for whatever they can. When the street children mature, most are unemployed, homeless, or both. Large numbers of unemployed or underemployed young people, especially young men, is often a prescription for unrest, providing a recruiting ground for organizations that advocate for radical (and sometimes violent) change (Goldstone 2002).

TABLE 15.1

Five Countries with the Oldest and Youngest Populations in 2015

COUNTRIES WITH THE OLDEST POPULATIONS		COUNTRIES WITH THE YOUNGEST POPULATIONS	
Country	Median Age (in years)	Country	Median Age (in years)
Japan	46.5	Niger	14.8
Germany	46.2	Uganda	15.9
Martinique	46.1	Chad	16.0
Italy	45.9	Angola	16.1
Portugal	44.0	Mali	16.2

Source: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015c

The Future of Urbanization in the Developing World

In considering the scope of the challenges facing urban areas in developing countries, it can be difficult to see prospects for change and development. Conditions of life in many of the world's largest cities seem likely to decline even further in the years to come. But the picture is not entirely negative.

First, although birthrates remain high in many countries, they are likely to drop in the years to come, as we will discuss in the next section. Second, globalization is presenting important opportunities for urban areas in the global south. With economic integration, cities around the world are able to enter international markets, to promote themselves as locations for investment and development, and to create economic links across the borders of nation-states. Third, migrants to urban areas are often “positively selected” in terms of traits such as higher levels of educational attainment. Thus, migration may be beneficial to those who find better work opportunities, and for their families, who benefit from *remittances*—the money that the migrant workers send back home.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. Discuss the effects of globalization on cities.
2. What are the four main characteristics of global cities?
3. Urban growth in the developing world is much higher than elsewhere. Discuss several economic, social, and environmental consequences of such rapid expansion of cities in developing nations.

What Are the Forces behind World Population Growth?



Learn why the world population has increased dramatically and understand the main consequences of this growth.

In late October 2011, the United Nations Population Fund announced that the world population had reached 7 billion. This announcement invited a flurry of proclamations about where, exactly, “Baby 7 Billion” was born, with India, the Philippines, and other nations claiming this honor (Rauhala 2011). In the 1960s, Paul Ehrlich (Fremlin 1964, Ehrlich 1968) calculated that if the rate of population growth at that time continued, 900 years from now (not a long period in world history as a whole) there would be 60 quadrillion people on the face of the Earth. That is 100 people for every square yard of the Earth’s surface, including both land and water.

Such a picture, of course, is nothing more than nightmarish fiction designed to drive home how cataclysmic the consequences of continued population growth would be. The real issue is what will happen over the next thirty or forty years, by which time, if current trends are not reversed, the world’s population will already have grown to unsustainable levels. Partly because governments and other agencies heeded the warnings of Ehrlich and others forty years ago by introducing population-control programs, there are grounds for supposing that world population growth is beginning to trail off. Estimates calculated in the 1960s of the likely world population by the year 2000 turned out to be inaccurate. Nevertheless, considering that a century ago there were only 1.5 billion people in the world, this still represents growth of staggering proportions. Moreover, the factors underlying population growth are by no means completely predictable, and all estimates have to be interpreted with caution.

Population Analysis: Demography

The study of population is referred to as **demography**. The term was invented about a century and a half ago, at a time when nations were beginning to keep official statistics on the nature and distribution of their populations. Demography is concerned with measuring the size of populations, explaining their rise or decline, and documenting the distribution of such populations both within and across continents, nations, states, cities, and even neighborhoods. Population patterns are governed by three factors: births, deaths, and migrations. Demography is customarily treated as a branch of sociology because the factors that influence the level of births and deaths in a given group or society, as well as migrations of population, are largely social and cultural.

BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC CONCEPTS

Among the basic concepts used by demographers, the most important are crude birthrates, fertility, fecundity, and crude death rates. **Crude birthrates** are expressed as the number of live births per year per 1,000 persons in the population. They are called “crude” rates

demography

The study of the size, distribution, and composition of populations.

crude birthrate

A statistical measure representing the number of births within a given population per year, normally calculated as the number of births per 1,000 members. Although the crude birthrate is a useful index, it is only a general measure, because it does not specify numbers of births in relation to age distribution.

because of their very general character. Crude birthrates, for example, do not tell us what proportions of a population are male or female, or what the age distribution of a population is (the relative proportions of young and old people in the population). Where statistics are collected that relate birth or death rates to such categories, demographers speak of “specific” rather than “crude” rates. For instance, an age-specific birthrate might specify the number of births per 1,000 women in the twenty-five-to thirty-four-year-old age group.

If we wish to understand population patterns in any detail, the information provided by specific birthrates is normally necessary. Crude birthrates, however, may be useful for making overall comparisons among different groups, societies, and regions. Thus, the crude birthrate for the world as a whole in 2014 was 19 per 1,000. It was far lower in the United States (13 per 1,000), although other industrialized countries have lower rates: 8 per 1,000 in Portugal and Japan and 9 per 1,000 in many other European countries (for example, Greece, Germany, Spain) and some East Asian countries (Korea, Hong Kong). In many other parts of the world, crude birthrates are much higher. In India, for instance, the crude birthrate is 20 per 1,000. In many African nations, it is more than 40 per 1,000. For example, the crude birthrate in Niger is 49 per 1,000 (World Bank 2016a).

Among less industrialized countries, China's crude birthrate is slightly lower than that of the United States (12 per 1,000)—a direct result of government-mandated family planning programs introduced between 1978 and 1980 that enforced (sometimes through sanctions against violators) a one-child policy. The Chinese government instituted incentives (such as better housing and free health care and education) to promote single-child families, whereas families with more than one child face special hardships (wages are cut for those who have a third child). The Chinese government lifted the controversial ban in 2015 and now allows couples to have two children. This policy shift was triggered by several unintended and undesirable consequences of the one-child policy. Many Chinese couples were angry over the restrictive environment they were living in, while the Chinese public worried that generations of only children (nicknamed “little emperors”) were becoming self-absorbed adults. Yet the most serious concern was that there would be insufficient numbers of young people to support China's rapidly aging population (Buckley 2013).

Birthrates are an expression of the fertility of women. **Fertility** refers to how many live-born children the average woman has. A fertility rate is usually calculated as the average number of live births per 1,000 women of childbearing age. Fertility is distinguished from **fecundity**, which refers to the number of children women are biologically capable of bearing. It is physically possible for a normal woman to bear a child every year during the period when she is capable of conception. There are variations in fecundity according to the



Hospital workers in the Philippines congratulate Camile Dalura on delivering the world's 7 billionth baby on October 31, 2011.

fertility

The average number of live-born children produced by women of childbearing age in a particular society.

fecundity

A measure of the number of children that it is biologically possible for a woman to produce.

Passengers travel in an overcrowded train in the eastern Indian city of Patna. The Indian railroad, one of the world's largest rail networks, serves over 13 million people a year and continues to be one of the only forms of affordable transportation available to the majority of Indians.



crude death rate

A statistical measure representing the number of deaths that occur annually in a given population per year, normally calculated as the number of deaths per 1,000 members. Crude death rates give a general indication of the mortality levels of a community or society but are limited in their usefulness because they do not take into account the age distribution.

mortality

The number of deaths in a population.

infant mortality rate

The number of infants who die during the first year of life, per 1,000 live births.

age at which women reach puberty and menopause, both of which vary among countries as well as among individuals. Although there may be families in which a woman bears twenty or more children, fertility rates in practice are always much lower than fecundity rates because social and cultural factors limit the actual number of children a woman gives birth to.

Crude death rates (also called “mortality rates”) are calculated in the same way as birthrates—the number of deaths per 1,000 of population per year. Again, there are major variations among countries, but death rates in many societies in the global south are falling to levels comparable to those of the West. The crude death rate for the world as a whole was 8 per 1,000 in 2014—a rate shared by nearly thirty countries throughout the world, including the United States, Cuba, Sudan, and even Afghanistan. Both India and China had slightly lower crude death rates (7 per 1,000), with sixty-seven countries reporting crude death rates of 6 per 1,000 or lower. At the other extreme, thirty-three countries had crude death rates of 11 per 1,000 or higher, with Bulgaria topping the list at 15 per 1,000. On this measure, the United States ranks roughly in the middle of more than 210 countries and territories (World Bank 2016b). A high crude death rate can result from many factors, with poverty—and the poor health care that often goes along with it—being a major cause. But HIV/AIDS, warfare, and natural disasters also play a role.

Like crude birthrates, crude death rates provide only a very general index of **mortality** (the number of deaths in a population). Specific death rates give more precise information. A particularly important specific death rate is the **infant mortality rate**: the number of babies per 1,000 births in any year who die before reaching age one. One of the key factors underlying the population explosion has been reductions in infant mortality rates. As with crude birth and death rates, there is variation in the rate of infant mortality. For the world as a whole, in 2015 out of every 1,000 births, 32 babies died in infancy. Infant mortality ranged from a low of 2 per 1,000 in countries such as Norway,

Sweden, and Finland, three Scandinavian countries with strong public health care systems, to highs in the 80s and 90s per 1,000 births in war-torn African countries that are also failed states, including Chad, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Central African Republic, and Angola. The infant mortality rate in the United States—6 per 1,000—is at the low end, but it's not as low as Cuba's (4 per 1,000) (World Bank 2016d). Although Cuba is a poor (and undemocratic) country, its government has made preventive medicine, including a strong primary health care system, one of its top priorities (Medical Education Cooperation with Cuba 2016).

Declining rates of infant mortality are the most important influence on increasing **life expectancy**—that is, the number of years the average person can expect to live. In 1900, life expectancy at birth in the United States was about forty years. Today it has increased to nearly seventy-nine years. This does not mean, however, that most people at the turn of the century died when they were around forty. When there is a high infant mortality rate, as there is in many less industrialized nations, the average life expectancy—which is a statistical average—is brought down by deaths that occurred at age 0 or 0.5 years, for example. If we look at the life expectancy of only those people who survive the first year of life, we find that in 1900 the average person could expect to live to age fifty-eight. Illness, poor nutrition, and natural disasters are the other factors that influence life expectancy. Life expectancy has to be distinguished from **life span**, which is the maximum number of years that an individual could live. Although life expectancy has increased in most societies in the world over the past century, life span has remained unaltered.

Dynamics of Population Change

Rates of population growth or decline are measured by subtracting the yearly number of deaths per 1,000 from the number of births per 1,000. As we have just noted, for the world as a whole the birthrate in 2014 was 19 per 1,000, while the crude death rate was only 8 per 1,000. In other words, there were 11 more births than deaths for every 1,000 people in the world—an annual growth rate of 1.1 percent. Although these may not seem like large numbers, when applied to the 2016 world population of 7.3 billion people, it means an increase of 80 million—the equivalent of adding more than the combined populations of California, New York, and Florida in one year! Some European countries have negative growth rates—in other words, their populations are declining. Virtually all the industrialized countries have growth rates of less than 0.5 percent. Rates of population growth were high in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe and the United States but have since leveled off. Many countries in the global south today have rates of between 2 and 3 percent (see Global Map 15.1). These may not seem very different from the rates of the industrialized countries, but in fact, the difference is enormous.

The reason is that growth in population is **exponential** rather than arithmetic. An ancient Persian myth helps illustrate this concept. A courtier asked a ruler to reward him for his services by giving him twice as many grains of rice for each service as he had the time before, starting with a single grain on the first square of a chessboard: that is, one grain on the first square, two on the second, four on the third, and so on. By the twenty-first square, over a million grains were needed, more than a trillion (a million million) on the forty-first square (Meadows et al. 1972). This myth conveys an important mathematical principle: that starting with one item and doubling it, doubling the result,

life expectancy

The number of years the average person can expect to live.

life span

The maximum length of life that is biologically possible for a member of a given species.

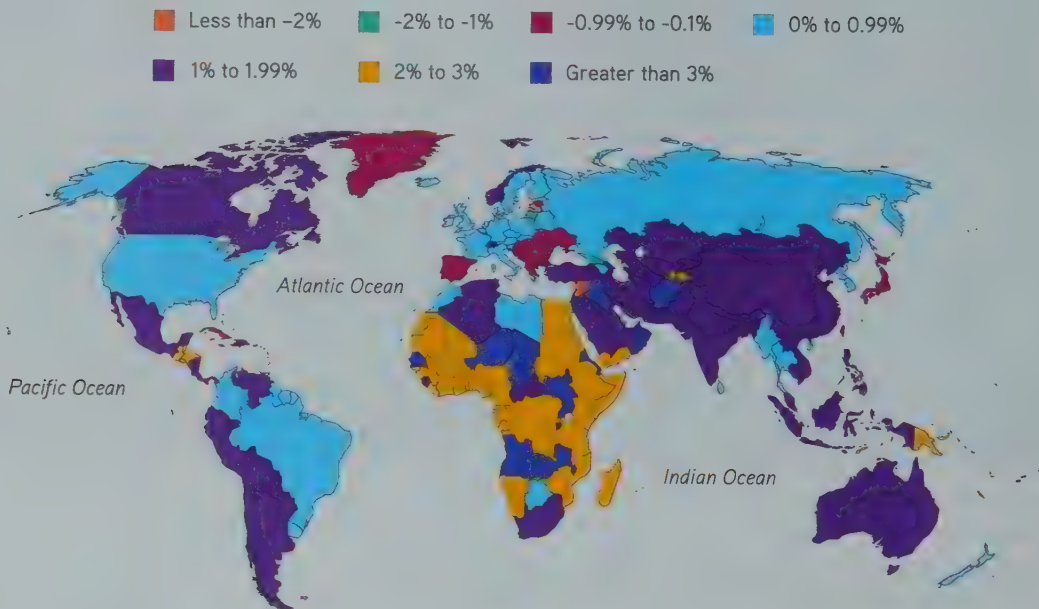
rates of population growth or decline

A measure of population change calculated by subtracting the yearly number of deaths per 1,000 from the number of births per 1,000.

exponential growth

A geometric, rather than linear, rate of increase. Populations tend to grow exponentially.

Population Growth Rate, 2010–2015



Source: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015b

doubling time

The time it takes for a particular level of population to double.

and so on rapidly leads to huge numbers. Exactly the same principle applies to population growth. We can measure this effect by means of the **doubling time**, the period of time it takes for the population to double. The formula used to calculate doubling time is 70 divided by the current growth rate. For example, a population growth of 1 percent will produce a doubling of numbers in seventy years. At 2 percent growth, a population will double in thirty-five years.

Malthusianism

In premodern societies, birthrates were very high by the standards of the industrialized world today. Nonetheless, population growth remained low until the eighteenth century because there was a rough overall balance between births and deaths. Although there were sometimes periods of marked population increase, these were followed by increases in death rates. In medieval Europe, for example, when harvests were bad, marriages tended to be postponed and the number of conceptions fell while deaths increased. These complementary trends reduced the number of mouths to be fed. No preindustrial society was able to escape from this self-regulating rhythm (Wrigley 1968).

During the rise of industrialism, many looked forward to a new age in which food scarcity would be a phenomenon of the past. The development of modern industry, it was widely supposed, would create a new era of abundance. In his celebrated work *Essay on*

the *Principle of Population* (1798), Thomas Malthus criticized these ideas and initiated a debate about the connection between population and food resources that continues to this day. At the time Malthus wrote, the population in Europe was growing rapidly. Malthus pointed out that whereas population increase is exponential, food supply depends on fixed resources that can be expanded only by developing new land for cultivation. Population growth, therefore, tends to outstrip the means of support available. The inevitable outcome is famine, which, combined with the influence of war and plagues, acts as a natural limit to population increase. Malthus predicted that human beings would always live in circumstances of misery and starvation unless they practiced what he called “moral restraint.” His cure for excessive population growth was for people to delay marriage and to strictly limit their frequency of sexual intercourse. (The use of contraception he proclaimed to be a “vice.”)

For a while, **Malthusianism** was ignored. The population development of the Western countries followed a quite different pattern from that which he had anticipated. Rates of population growth trailed off in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the 1930s there were major worries about population decline in many industrialized countries, including the United States. Malthus also failed to anticipate the technological developments fostering increases in food production that would develop in the modern era. However, the upsurge in world population growth in the twentieth century again lent some credence to Malthus's views. Population expansion in the global south seems to be outstripping the resources that those countries can generate to feed their citizenry.

The Demographic Transition

Demographers often refer to the changes in the ratio of births to deaths in the industrialized countries from the nineteenth century onward as the **demographic transition** (Figure 15.2). This theory was first developed by Warren S. Thompson (1929), who described a three-stage process in which one type of population stability would eventually be replaced by another as a society reached an advanced level of economic development.

Stage 1 refers to the conditions characteristic of most traditional societies, in which both birth and death rates are high and the infant mortality rate is especially large. Population grows little if at all, as the high number of births is more or less balanced by the level of deaths. Stage 2, which began in Europe and the United States in the early part of the nineteenth century—with wide regional variations—occurs when death rates fall while fertility remains high. This is, therefore, a phase of marked population growth. It is subsequently replaced by stage 3, in which, with industrial development, birthrates drop to a level such that population is again fairly stable. Some societies in Europe have moved into a fourth stage, which we will discuss in the next section.

Industrial development was accompanied by a range of social changes that contribute to lower birthrates. As the economy transitioned from agricultural to manufacturing, parents no longer required many children to help maintain their farms. With the advent of compulsory schooling, children cost money rather than earned money for their families. Industrial development was also accompanied by technologies that allowed women to control their own fertility, as well as a cultural change regarding people's views toward childbearing. How many children a woman would have was now viewed as under her own

Malthusianism

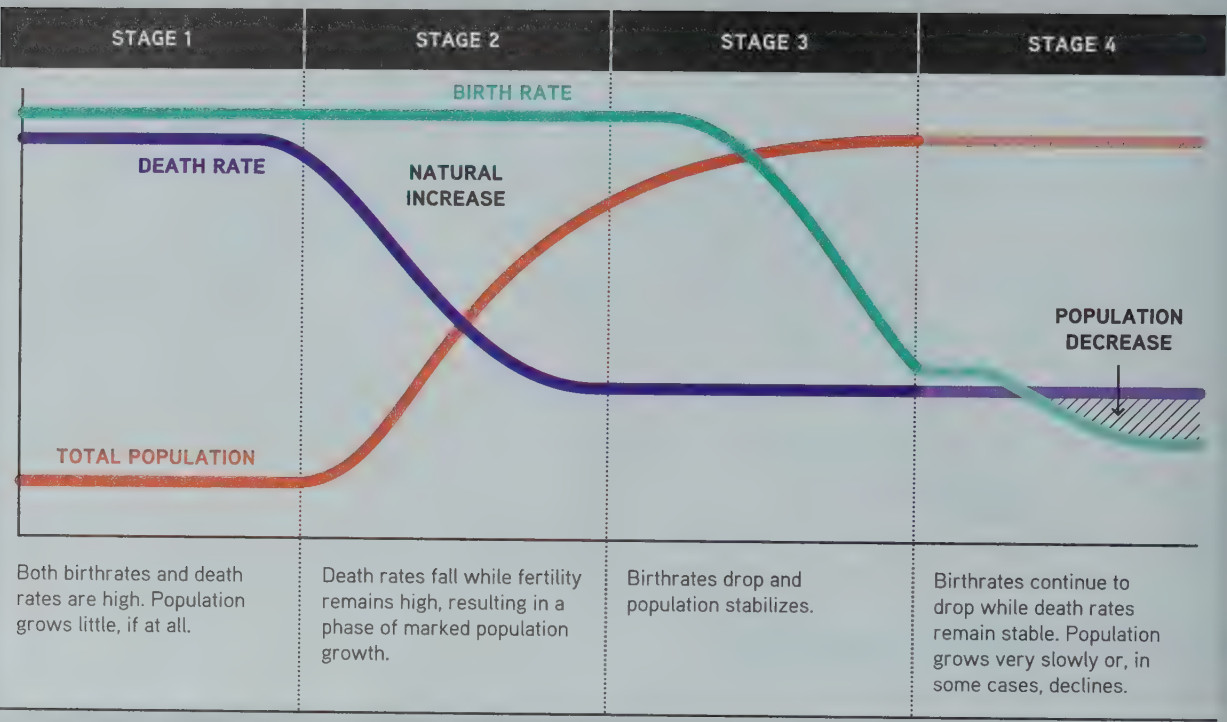
A doctrine about population dynamics developed by Thomas Malthus, according to which population increase comes up against “natural limits,” represented by famine and war.

demographic transition

The changes in the ratio of births to deaths in the industrialized countries from the nineteenth century onward.

FIGURE 15.2

Demographic Transition



control, rather than a “gift from god.” In contemporary society, as women have achieved higher levels of education and higher earnings in the labor market, the incentive to have fewer children has increased. Higher education among both men and women is also linked to delayed marriage and, consequently, delayed (and thus diminished) childbearing (Caldwell et al. 2010).

If we look at the crude birth and death rates for some of the poorest countries in the world, we can get a better sense of how this is playing out in the world today. “Least developed countries” (LDCs) are low-income countries the United Nations has determined suffer from “severe structural impediments to sustainable development,” such as low per capita income, high levels of malnutrition and child mortality, and low levels of adult literacy (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2014). According to the UN, 48 countries—mostly in Africa with a few in Asia and the Middle East—are currently characterized as LDCs (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2016b). In 1960, the average crude birthrate in the LDCs was 48 per 1,000; by 2015, it had dropped to 33 per 1,000, a decline of 15. During the same period, the average crude death rate had dropped from 24 to 9 per 1,000, a decline of 15. The good news (from a population growth

standpoint) is the large drop in the birthrate. While a decline in the death rate is obviously also good news, it also means that the difference between the number of births and deaths (24 in both 1960 and 2015) remained unchanged over the period. This represents a 2.4 percent rate of annual population growth, which—were it to continue—would mean that the population of the poorest countries (more than 950 billion people) would double every thirty years (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015b). It also illustrates an important aspect of the theory of the demographic transition: While death rates may decline thanks to the global availability of such things as modern medicine and public sanitation technologies, high birthrates are likely to be culturally ingrained and change much more slowly.

The theories of demographic transition directly oppose the ideas of Malthus. Whereas for Malthus, increasing prosperity would automatically bring about population increase, the thesis of demographic transition emphasizes that economic development, generated by industrialism, would actually lead to a new equilibrium of population stability. We have already noted another flaw in Malthus's predictions: food production. Thanks to modern agricultural technologies, food production has thus far kept pace with population growth. Whether this will remain the case—or whether climate changes will result in an ecological limit to ever-increasing food production—remains a question of debate. The distribution of food is another issue: Food is abundant among wealthier populations and scarce among those who live in poorer countries.

Prospects for Change

Fertility remains high in the developing world because traditional attitudes to family size have persisted. Having large numbers of children is often still regarded as desirable, providing a source of labor on family-run farms. Some religions either are opposed to birth control or affirm the desirability of having many children. Contraception is opposed by Islamic leaders in several countries and by the Catholic Church, whose influence is especially marked in South and Central America. Yet, a decline in fertility levels has at last occurred in some large countries in the global south.

Some claim that the demographic changes that will continue to occur over the next century will be greater than any before in all of human history. It is difficult to predict with any precision the rate at which the world population will rise, but the United Nations has increased its estimates of future population growth, based on the most recent national population censuses and demographic and health surveys. World population—7.3 billion in 2016—is projected to reach 8.5 billion by 2030, 9.7 billion by 2050, and 11.2 billion by the end of the century. Africa alone is predicted to account for over half of total world population growth by mid-century (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015a). This overall population increase highlights two distinct trends. First, most countries in the global south will undergo the process of demographic transition. This will result in a substantial surge in the population as death rates fall. China is likely to see its population surpass 1.5 billion before growth levels off. Areas in Asia, Africa, and Latin America will similarly experience rapid growth before the population eventually stabilizes.

The second trend concerns the developed countries that have already undergone the first three stages of the demographic transition. These societies have moved into stage 4.

Civil war in Syria, along with conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, fueled a refugee crisis as millions sought asylum in Europe. Turkey, which shares a border with Syria, has set up makeshift camps for refugees.



dependency ratio

The ratio of people of dependent ages (children and the elderly) to people of economically active ages.

In this stage, birthrates continue to drop while death rates remain steady, resulting in very slight population growth or even population declines as birthrates fall below replacement level. This has been the recent experience of many European countries, including Germany, Holland, Belgium, Spain, Italy, and Sweden, as well as Japan and Singapore. A process of aging will occur in which the number of young people will decline in absolute terms and the older segment of the population will increase markedly. This will have widespread economic and social implications for developed countries. First, there will be an increase in the **dependency ratio**, the ratio of the number of economically dependent members of the population to the number of economically productive members. Economically dependent persons are those considered too young or too old to work, typically those under age fifteen and over age sixty-five. As the dependency ratio increases, pressure will mount on health care and social services.

What will be the consequences of these demographic changes? Some observers see the makings of widespread social upheaval—particularly in countries in the global south undergoing demographic transition. The rapid growth of cities will likely lead to environmental damage, new public health risks, overloaded infrastructures, rising crime, and impoverished squatter settlements. Changes in the economy and labor markets may prompt widespread migration as people in rural areas search for work. Warfare and civic violence also cause people to migrate. Civil war in Syria, along with the rise of radical Islamist movements in the Middle East and North Africa, has laid waste to entire cities. Millions of refugees have fled war-torn countries as a result. In 2015 alone, it is estimated that 1.3 million migrants fled to Europe seeking asylum, with Germany the destination of choice (BBC 2016). Many paid large sums of money to risk a hazardous crossing of the Mediterranean in flimsy, greatly overloaded rafts; more than 7,000 paid with their lives by the end of 2015 (Hume 2016). Refugees, like all migrants,

seek out major cities, where the possibility of finding work is the greatest. This enormous movement of people has placed significant strains on the resources of the destination countries. While Germany was initially among the most generous of countries in opening its doors to refugees, by 2016 even Germany began to close its borders. Other countries responded far more harshly: Those bordering on Greece—a destination of choice for many migrants since the water crossing from Turkey to the Greek Island of Samos is only five miles—closed their borders in 2015, stranding many migrants in one of Europe's poorest countries.

Famine and food shortages are another serious concern. About 795 million people in the world suffer from hunger or undernourishment. In some parts of the world, more than a third of the population is undernourished (UN Food and Agriculture Organization 2015). As the population rises, levels of food output will need to rise accordingly to avoid widespread scarcity. Yet many of the world's poorest areas are particularly affected by water shortages, shrinking farmland, and soil degradation—processes that reduce, rather than enhance, agricultural productivity. It is almost certain that food production will not occur at a level to ensure self-sufficiency. Large amounts of food and grain will need to be imported from areas where there are surpluses.

How Do Environmental Changes Affect Your Life?

Today the human onslaught on the environment is so intense that few natural processes are uninfluenced by human activity. Nearly all cultivatable land is under agricultural production. What used to be almost inaccessible wildernesses are now often nature reserves, visited routinely by thousands of tourists. Modern industry, still expanding worldwide, has led to steeply climbing demands for sources of energy and raw materials. Yet the world's supply of such energy sources and raw materials is limited, and some key resources are bound to run out if global consumption is not restricted. Even the world's climate, as we shall see, has probably been affected by the global development of industry.

Global Environmental Threats

Global environmental threats are of several basic sorts. The ones that are most likely to be felt locally, at least in economically developed countries like the United States, are those associated with air and water pollution, the loss of forests and other wildlife habitats, and the creation of waste that cannot be disposed of in the short term or recycled, and the depletion of resources that cannot be replenished. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (2013), the most widely accepted authoritative source, more than 22,000 species are currently threatened with extinction. The loss of biodiversity, in turn, means more to humans than merely the loss of natural habitat. Biodiversity also provides humans with new medicines and sources and varieties of food, and plays a role in regulating atmospheric and oceanic chemistry.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- What is the difference between fertility and fecundity?
- Explain Malthus's position on the relationship between population growth and the food supply.
- Describe the stages of the demographic transition.
- What is life expectancy? How does it differ from life span?



See that the environment is a sociological issue related to economic development and population growth.



A worker at an e-waste recycling company in Bangalore, India, shows shredded pieces of printed circuit boards of obsolete electronic gadgets undergoing the recycling process. E-waste is a growing environmental and public health concern.

The amount of domestic waste—what goes into our garbage cans—produced each day in the industrialized societies is staggering. Food is mostly bought in packages that are thrown away at the end of the day. The disposal of electronic waste—computers, cell phones, and the host of toys and gadgets that contain electronic circuits—is a growing problem. Discarded electronics, which contain toxins that cause cancer and other illnesses, are routinely “recycled” to landfills in poor countries, where there are few if any safeguards against contaminating local watersheds, farmlands, and communities.

Global green movements and political parties (such as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, or Conservation International) have developed in response to these new environmental hazards. Although green philosophies are varied, a common thread concerns taking action to protect the world’s environment, conserve rather than exhaust its resources, and protect the remaining animal species.

Global Warming and Climate Change

Global warming occurs because carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere by the burning of fuels such as oil and coal in cars and power stations and gases released into the air by the use of such things as aerosol cans, material for insulation, and air-conditioning units. This buildup of greenhouse gases in the Earth’s atmosphere functions like the glass of a greenhouse. The atmosphere allows the sun’s rays to pass through but acts as a barrier to prevent the rays from passing back, causing the Earth to heat up. For this reason, global warming is sometimes termed the “greenhouse effect.”

In 2010, China surpassed the United States for the first time as the largest consumer of energy in the world and as the world’s largest producer of greenhouse gases, accounting for perhaps a quarter of the world’s total. But China is home to five times as many people as the United States; therefore, the United States contributes more greenhouse gases per person than China. Most of America’s energy comes from nonrenewable fossil fuels—mainly petroleum and, to a lesser degree, coal and natural gas. The high level of U.S. energy consumption is partly due to the fact that Americans live in an advanced industrial economy with a high standard of living.

In 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a blue-ribbon group of scientists created by the UN Environment Program and its World Meteorological Organization, took the planet’s temperature and found it had risen steadily since the mid-twentieth century. Rising temperatures result in the rapid shrinking of arctic ice caps, along with mountain glaciers; long-term droughts in some regions, with greater rainfall in others; an increase in hurricane activity in the North Atlantic; and in general, more turbulence in global weather. Most significantly, the IPCC report stated unequivocally that

Tracking Your Ecological Footprint

The United States makes up roughly 4 percent of the global population yet uses nearly a third of the world's fossil fuel reserves (U.S. Energy Information Administration 2016). According to the Global Footprint Network, we would need 4.1 Earths to allow every person on the planet to live a typical American lifestyle (McDonald 2015). The many decisions we make each day—what kind of cars we drive, how much we fly, the size of our homes, and even how much time we spend in the shower each morning—contribute to the United States' high levels of resource consumption.

Many Americans, however, especially young adults, are taking conscious steps to monitor their energy use, by biking to school or work, recycling and composting, bringing old cell phones to e-waste facilities, and using refillable water bottles. But how do we know whether these efforts are enough, or what their impact is? A number of websites and apps have been developed that enable users to estimate their “ecological footprint,” the amount of energy they require given the details of their daily living. One of the most popular is the Ecological Footprint Quiz (<http://www.earthday.org/take-action/footprint-calculator/>), which provides an animated tour through one's lifestyle. While perhaps not perfectly scientifically accurate, it will give you a rough idea of how many planet Earths would be required if everyone on the planet consumed the land and other resources required to enjoy your lifestyle.

You begin by creating (and styling) your avatar and choosing your country. You next enter information about the food you eat (are you a vegan? meat eater? is your food mainly local?

organic?), the amount of clothing and other goods you have, the amount of trash you generate, the size and “greenness” of your home, how much you drive (and what gas mileage you get), whether you use public transportation, and how much you fly. As you chart your lifestyle, the many things you have come to enjoy surround your avatar.

If you are a struggling student at a U.S. college or university who lives in a dorm, is a vegan who eats only locally grown vegetables, gets around on a bicycle, travels long distances by bus, and never flies, you will require “only” 3.3 planets! That's because unless you are completely off the grid, you are still tied into a range of services that require energy, and in the United States those services are typically not energy efficient. Still, you are likely doing less ecological damage than the authors of this textbook. When one of the authors took the quiz, nearly 7 Earths were required: Living in a full-sized house, driving a car—even one that is energy-efficient—and flying around the world to conferences clearly takes a toll on the planet. On the other hand, if you lived in Switzerland and lived an ecologically conscious lifestyle, according to the quiz you would require only 2.4 planets.

The lesson that is derived from this exercise is simple: Your individual lifestyle can, in fact, make a difference. Still, a significant reduction in the global ecological footprint will require the countries of the world to adopt policies that will move them toward much greater energy efficiency. The Paris agreement provides a hopeful direction. It remains to be seen whether its goals will be fulfilled.

How many planet Earths would it take if everyone on the planet consumed the resources required to enjoy your lifestyle?





Kids play on a merry-go-round near an oil refinery at the Carver Terrace housing project playground in west Port Arthur, Texas. Port Arthur sits squarely on a two-state corridor routinely ranked as one of the country's most polluted regions.

human activity was the principal source of global warming, very likely causing most of the temperature increase over the last century. By 2014, when the IPCC issued its synthesis report based on the most recent research, the expert warnings were even more dire: The report warned of “severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems,” including continued global warming to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century, more frequent and longer lasting heat waves, and more extreme weather such as tropical storms, cyclones, and hurricanes (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2015).

The predicted increase in average global temperature is sufficient, in the eyes of some scientists, to destabilize the ice sheets that cover Greenland and the western part of Antarctica; were they to melt in their entirety, sea levels would rise an estimated 30 feet or more. While such a catastrophic event is unlikely, during the past century sea levels have risen faster than at any time during the past several millennia; the consensus has been that it will likely rise three to four feet by the end of the century. However, even that consensus may be too conservative: The most recent studies have found the West Antarctic ice sheet to be far less stable than scientists once thought, meaning sea levels may rise even higher—faster (Leber 2014; Tollefson 2016; von Kaenel 2016). Rising sea levels will likely have devastating consequences for cities near the coasts or in low-lying areas.

The most vulnerable people around the world would be the most severely affected by climate change, since they would lack access to the resources that might enable them to adjust. Apart from severe droughts—

which will turn once-fertile lands into deserts and are already affecting major parts of the U.S. Southwest—global warming will threaten the water supplies of hundreds of millions of people, increase the danger of flooding for others, adversely affect agriculture in parts of the world, and further reduce planetary biodiversity. The 2014 IPCC report suggests ways that the worst consequences of global warming can be mitigated. The first and most important step would be for the countries of the world to adopt conservation measures that would limit global warming to no more than 2 degrees Celsius. This would require national policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which in turn would require massive conversion from economies based on fossil fuels to economies based on clean energy. Because some amount of global warming seems inevitable, the recent IPCC report also emphasized adaptation measures that might be taken to offset some of the predicted consequences. These included recommendations for such things as early warning systems, flood and cyclone shelters, sea walls and levees, desalinization plants

to convert sea water to drinking water, and programs to educate people about the dangers of global warming.

In December 2015, 195 nations met in Paris and reached an agreement to limit temperature increase to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit). Each country will submit a climate plan. The United States, for example, committed to a 2025 goal of greenhouse gas emissions 26 to 28 percent lower than they were in 2005. China took a somewhat different approach, pledging to lower emissions per unit of GDP by 60 to 65 percent (which would mean total emissions would continue to rise at least until 2030, since China hopes to continue building its rapidly growing GDP). While the Paris agreement is historically significant and is seen by many as a hopeful sign, it remains to be seen whether it will be honored. There are no enforcement mechanisms, apart from regular public reports that may shame countries into fulfilling their commitments.

Rather than calling for a reining in of economic growth, some policy recommendations are focused on sustainable development. **Sustainable development** is a term that was first used in a report by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), popularly referred to as the Brundtland Report after former Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, who chaired the commission. The report defined sustainable development simply as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (326). This definition sought to reconcile two seemingly intractably opposed communities: environmentalists—who were often seen as anti-growth—and business people—who were often seen as anti-environment. Environmentalists could now argue that at least in wealthy industrial nations, economic development should be limited if it was environmentally harmful, while conceding that economic growth might be necessary to lift people out of poverty in the global south. The notion of sustainable development, while popular, remains unclear: What are the needs of the present? How much development can occur without compromising the future, particularly since we don’t know what the future effects of technological change may be (Giddens 2009)? However imprecise the term, “sustainable development” is generally taken to mean that growth should, at least minimally, be carried on in such a way as to preserve and recycle physical resources rather than deplete them, maintain biodiversity, and keep pollution to a minimum by protecting clean air, water, and land.

Critics see the notion of sustainable development as neglecting the specific needs of poorer countries. The idea of sustainable development, according to critics, tends to focus attention only on the needs of richer countries; it does not consider the ways in which the high levels of consumption in more affluent countries are satisfied at the expense of other people. For instance, demands on Indonesia to conserve its rain forests could be seen as unfair because Indonesia has a greater need than the industrialized countries for the revenue it must forgo by accepting conservation. Acknowledging this concern, the Paris meeting adopted a “loss and damage” principle, under which wealthy countries agreed to create a fund to help poorer countries cope with the effects of global warming (UNFCCC 2015). And there is some hopeful evidence that economies can grow even without increasing greenhouse gases: Even though global GDP grew by 3 percent during the two-year period of 2014–2015, carbon emissions remained flat (International Energy Agency 2016).

sustainable development

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

A New Ecological Paradigm?

Environmental sociology is concerned with the interactions between humans and the natural environment—especially the social forces that create environmental problems, and their possible solutions. Classical sociology tended to minimize, if not completely ignore, the importance of human impacts on the environment. This was partly because the negative effects were less pervasive (recall that by 1900 there were still fewer than 2 billion people in the world) but primarily because sociology generally took human domination of nature for granted (Leiss 1994). As we saw in Chapter 1, sociology emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period that reflected what has been termed “optimistic ethnocentrism” during an “age of exuberance” (Catton and Dunlop 1980). This refers to the belief that science, technology, and industrial development, fueled by vast lands and resources in North and South America, as well as a seemingly endless supply of fossil fuel, would provide for limitless opportunity and endless progress. This view has been termed the *human exceptionalism paradigm* (HEP), reflecting the belief that humans are unique among all creatures: We dominate all species and can remake the world to serve our needs, since human destiny is shaped by social and cultural factors and not the physical environment (Catton and Dunlop 1980).

This view held sway until the early 1970s, when it was seriously questioned by a growing number of sociologists and ecologists. This was a period during which social movements were already challenging prevailing worldviews (see Chapter 16), including the taken-for-granted assumption that human life could somehow be divorced from the natural world. The HEP was further challenged when an offshore oil drilling platform in the Santa Barbara, California, channel blew out in late 1969, covering miles of pristine coastline with oil, killing thousands of birds and creating the largest ecological disaster in U.S. history. The oil spill received widespread media attention: Even President Nixon paid a visit. The spill inspired the first Earth Day as well as one of the country’s first environmental studies programs, at UC Santa Barbara. The oil spill also highlighted the tensions between the petroleum industry and local residents, raising questions about the nature of power in America (Molotch 1970). Popular books such as Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), which exposed the effects of pesticides on water, raised public awareness about environmental issues.

The result was labeled the new ecological paradigm (NEP), a framework that emphasized the complex interactions involved in global ecosystems. Humans, it argued, are not somehow exempt from the “web of nature,” and our biophysical environment is not limitless. On the contrary, the carrying capacity of our planet is limited, and we must come to understand and respect these limits, or we will pay a price (Catton and Dunlop 1980; see also Buttel 1987; Dunlap 2002; Freudenberg, Frickel, and Gramling 1995; Schnaiberg 1980). The challenge is similar to what the ecologist Garret Hardin (1968), drawing on a pamphlet written by a nineteenth-century English economist, called the “tragedy of the commons”: When individuals pursue their own self-interest, which requires using common resources without thinking of others, those common resources are quickly depleted. The solution, Hardin argued, was to give up individual freedom so that shared resources are preserved. Hardin, echoing Malthus, believed that the principal problem was population growth; he suggested that people must be educated to give up what they see as their right to have as many children as they choose. While education and family planning have

Anthropocene

A term used to denote the current geological epoch, in which many geologically significant conditions and processes are profoundly altered by human activities.

in fact contributed to a global decline in birthrates, future population growth has yet to be stemmed.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Paul Crutzen, an atmospheric chemist and recipient of the Nobel Prize in chemistry, popularized the term **Anthropocene** ("human epoch") to characterize the current geological period, a time when human activities have become the main agent of change in our planetary ecosystem. This label has caught on: The term has appeared in hundreds of scientific publications, and the International Union of Geological Sciences, the organization charged with identifying geological periods, has convened scholars to decide whether the Holocene (the period that began after the last ice age, some 12,000 years ago) has been officially superseded by the Anthropocene (Stromberg 2013).

The once radical ideas of the early environmental sociologists have by now become mainstream, acknowledged by the consensus of IPCC scientists, reflected in the Paris agreement, and perhaps even enshrined in a new—if problematic—geological era.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. Describe the basic processes that give rise to global warming.
2. Define sustainable development, and provide at least one critique of the concept.
3. What is meant by the human exceptionalism paradigm? What has replaced it?

The Big Picture

Urbanization, Population, and the Environment

Thinking Sociologically

1. Explain what makes the urbanization now occurring in developing countries different from and more problematic than the urbanization that took place a century ago in New York, London, Tokyo, and Berlin.
2. Following analysis presented in this chapter, concisely explain how the expanded quest for cheap energy and raw materials and present-day dangers of environmental pollution and resource depletion threaten not only the survival of people in developed countries but also that of people in less developed countries.

Learning Objectives

How Do Cities Develop and Evolve?

p. 459

Learn how cities have changed as a result of industrialization and urbanization. Learn how theories of urbanism have placed increasing emphasis on the influence of socioeconomic factors on city life.

How Do Rural, Suburban, and Urban Life Differ in the United States?

p. 465

Learn about key developments affecting American cities, suburbs, and rural communities in the last several decades: suburbanization, urban decay, gentrification, and population loss in rural areas.

How Does Urbanization Affect Life across the Globe?

p. 470

See that global economic competition has a profound impact on urbanization and urban life. Recognize the challenges of urbanization in the developing world.

What Are the Forces Behind World Population Growth?

p. 476

Learn why the world population has increased dramatically and understand the main consequences of this growth.

How Do Environmental Changes Affect Your Life?

See that the environment is a sociological issue related to economic development and population growth

Terms to Know

Concept Checks

suburbanization • megalopolis • urbanization • ecological approach • inner city • urban ecology • urbanism • created environment

1. What are two characteristics of ancient cities?
2. What is urbanization? How is it related to globalization?
3. How does urban ecology use physical science analogies to explain life in modern cities?
4. What is the urban interaction problem?
5. According to Jane Jacobs, the more people are on the streets, the more likely the street life will be orderly. Do you agree with Jacobs's hypothesis and her explanation for this pattern?

suburbanization • exurban counties • urban renewal • gentrification

1. Describe at least two problems facing rural America today.
2. Why did so many Americans move to suburban areas in the 1950s and 1960s?
3. What are two unintended consequences of suburbanization? How do they deepen socioeconomic and racial inequalities?

global city • informal economy

1. Discuss the effects of globalization on cities.
2. What are the four main characteristics of global cities?
3. Urban growth in the developing world is much higher than elsewhere. Discuss several economic, social, and environmental consequences of such rapid expansion of cities in developing nations.

demography • crude birthrate • fertility • fecundity • crude death rate • mortality • infant mortality rate • life expectancy • life span • exponential growth • doubling time • Malthusianism • demographic transition • dependency ratio

1. What is the difference between fertility and fecundity?
2. Explain Malthus's position on the relationship between population growth and the food supply.
3. Describe the stages of the demographic transition.
4. What is life expectancy? How does it differ from life span?

sustainable development • anthropocene

1. Describe the basic processes that give rise to global warming.
2. Define sustainable development, and provide at least one critique of the concept.
3. What is meant by the human exceptionalism paradigm? What has replaced it?

16

Globalization in a Changing World

Syria descended into civil war in 2011 after pro democracy protests turned violent. Since then, the Islamic State and other jihadist organizations have entered the fight, as have the United States and Russia. The conflict, which had claimed nearly half a million lives as of early 2016, has left much of the country in ruins.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

How does globalization affect social change?

Recognize that a number of factors influence social change, including the physical environment, political organization, culture, and economic factors.

What comes after modern industrial society?

Be able to critically evaluate the notion that social change is leading us into a postindustrial or postmodern stage of social organization.

What are social movements?

Understand what social movements are, why they occur, and how they affect society.

What factors contribute to globalization?

Recognize the importance of information flows, political changes, and transnational corporations.

How does globalization affect your life?

Recognize the ways that large global systems affect local contexts and personal experiences.



On December 17, 2010, Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest of the local police's confiscation of his wares and the harassment and humiliation that he experienced at the hands of a local government bureaucrat.

This act of frustration and defiance, many people believe, was the initial catalyst for the demonstrations and riots that erupted in protest of widespread corruption and inequality in the country. In the months following the Tunisian Revolution, protests spread like wildfire throughout Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and elsewhere in the Middle East in the spring of 2011—deemed the Arab Spring.

The nature and causes of the protests varied across countries and over time, yet most were led by educated but discontented young people who sought to fight against dictatorships, human rights violations, government corruption, economic declines, unemployment, extreme poverty, and persistent inequalities between the haves and have-nots. These revolutions eventually led to the resignation or overthrow of five heads of state: Tunisian president Zine

El Abidine Ben Ali, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen, Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi, and Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich. In Ukraine, more than 300,000 young people took to the streets in 2014, protesting corruption, economic stagnation, and Yanukovich's decision to sign a treaty and loan agreement with Russia, instead of an agreement that would have fostered closer ties with the European Union. When Ukraine's security forces responded with force, the demonstrations mounted and Yanukovich was driven from office (Black, Pearson, and Butenko 2014).

Peaceful protests against the dictatorship of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad were brutally suppressed, resulting in a civil war that had claimed nearly a half a million lives and injured some two million people as of early 2016 (Boghani 2016). The Islamic State and other jihadist organizations have also entered the fight, as has the United States, which has provided support for groups that opposed the Assad regime; Russia has done the same for pro-Assad forces. Because of the conflict, 4.6 million Syrians have fled the country (World Vision 2016), with more than a million entering Europe in 2015 (BBC 2016).

Unlike revolutions and protests at earlier points in history, all of these events were facilitated by the Internet. Through the use of Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, online chatrooms, and other forms of social media, protesters and refugees—as well as jihadists—could report in “real time” what they did and saw; these messages were transmitted not only to their peers and fellow protesters but to viewers worldwide, inspiring large protests across the globe (Kulish 2011). In India, hundreds of thousands of disillusioned young people supported rural activist Kisan Baburao “Anna” Hazare in his hunger strike. Hazare starved himself for twelve days until the Indian Parliament met some of his demands to implement an anticorruption measure. In Israel, an estimated 430,000 people gathered in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa to protest high unemployment, high costs of living, and other social injustices. In London, violence erupted at a protest march organized by the Trades Union Congress; an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 people marched from the Thames Embankment to the Houses of Parliament to Hyde Park to show their opposition to planned public spending cuts. In cities across the United States, protests have been organized over income inequality (Occupy Wall Street), police brutality and the mass incarceration of blacks (Black Lives Matter), and a higher minimum wage (Fight for 15), among other causes.

Yet protests do not always result in positive social change. While the overthrow of Egyptian president Mubarak did pave the way for the first democratic election in Egyptian history, the winner of the election—Mohamed Morsi, a leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood—soon issued a constitutional declaration giving himself virtually unlimited power. This triggered another wave of popular protests, and the Egyptian military staged a coup. Morsi was imprisoned and eventually sentenced to death. Thousands of his followers were killed or imprisoned by the Egyptian military, and Egypt returned to the autocratic rule that had prompted the uprisings in the first place. Yemen and Libya descended into civil war, with armed factions—often supported by outside powers—laying waste to cities and villages. Protests in Syria were brutally repressed by the Assad regime, drawing the United States and Russia into opposite sides in a civil war that forced millions of refugees to flee into Europe. This, in turn, has resulted in a rise of anti-immigrant political movements throughout Europe and has threatened the European Union's open-border policy—one of the key components of European unity. Social media, which had prompted protests and calls for democracy across the world in 2011, was effectively used by Islamic extremists to recruit jihadists and suicide bombers from Europe and North America, facilitating the creation of the so-called Islamic State across a vast swath of the Middle East.

The rapid spread of these social protests, and their sometimes violent aftermath, vividly reveals the power of globalization. **Globalization** refers to the fact that we all live in one world, so that individuals, groups, and nations become more interdependent. Such interdependence is increasingly at a global scale—that is, what happens halfway across the globe is more likely than ever before to have enormous consequences for our daily lives. A key part of the study of globalization is the emergence of a world system—for some purposes, we need to regard the world as forming a single social order. As we saw in the case of the Arab Spring protests that surged throughout the world—and the often violent response to the push for greater democracy—we are all global citizens whose lives are increasingly interdependent. In this chapter, we examine these global processes and see what leading sociologists and other social scientists have had to say about them.

Some of these ideas will already be familiar to you, since much of this book has been about the consequences of globalization. In this chapter, we go beyond our earlier discussions, considering why the modern period is associated with especially profound and rapid social change. We examine how globalization has contributed to such rapid social change and offer some thoughts on what the future is likely to bring.

How Does Globalization Affect Social Change?

The ways of living and the social institutions characteristic of the modern world are radically different from those of even the recent past. During a period of only two or three centuries—a small sliver of time in the context of human history—human social life has been wrenched away from the types of social order in which people lived for thousands of years. **Social change** can be defined as the transformation over time of the institutions and culture of a society. Globalization has accelerated the pace of social change, bringing virtually all of humanity into the same turbulent seas. As a result, far more than any generations before us, we face an uncertain future. To be sure, conditions of life for previous generations were always insecure: People were at the mercy of natural disasters, plagues, and famines. Yet, although these problems still trouble much of the world, today we must also deal with the social forces that we ourselves have unleashed.

Social theorists have tried for the past two centuries to develop a single grand theory that explains the nature of social change. Marx, for example, emphasized the importance of economic factors in shaping all aspects of social life, including politics and culture. But no single-factor theory can adequately account for the diversity of human social development from hunting-and-gathering and pastoral societies to traditional civilizations and finally to the highly complex social systems of today. In analyzing social change, we can at most accomplish two tasks: We can identify major factors that have consistently influenced social change, such as the physical environment, economics, political organization, and culture; and we can also develop theories that account for particular periods of change, such as modern times.

globalization

The development of social, cultural, political, and economic relationships stretching worldwide. In current times, we are all influenced by organizations and social networks located thousands of miles away.



Recognize that a number of factors influence social change, including the physical environment, political organization, culture, and economic factors.

social change

Alteration in basic structures of a social group or society. Social change is an ever-present phenomenon in social life, but has become especially intense in the modern era. The origins of modern sociology can be traced to attempts to understand the dramatic changes shattering the traditional world and promoting new forms of social order.

The Physical Environment

The physical environment often has an effect on the development of human social organization. This is clearest in extreme environmental conditions, where people must organize their ways of life in relation to the weather. People who live in Alaska, where the winters are long and cold and the days very short, tend to follow different patterns of social life from people who live in the much warmer American South. Most Alaskans spend more of their lives indoors and, except for the summer months, plan outdoor activities carefully, given the frequently inhospitable environment in which they live.

Less extreme physical conditions can also affect society. The native population of Australia has never stopped being hunters and gatherers, since the continent contained hardly any indigenous plants suitable for regular cultivation or animals that could be domesticated to develop pastoral production. Ease of communications across land and the availability of sea routes are also important: Societies cut off from others by mountain ranges, impassable jungles, or deserts often remain relatively unchanged over long periods of time.

A strong case for the importance of environment is made by Jared Diamond (2005) in his widely acclaimed book *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. Diamond—a physiologist, biologist, and geographer—examines more than a dozen past and present societies, some of which collapsed (past examples include Easter Island and the Anasazi of the southwestern United States; more recent candidates include Rwanda and Haiti) and some of which overcame serious challenges to succeed. Diamond identifies five sets of factors that can contribute to a society's collapse: the presence of hostile neighbors, the absence (or collapse of) trading partners for essential goods, climate change, environmental problems, and an inadequate response to environmental problems. Three of these five factors have to do with environmental conditions. The first four factors are often outside of a society's control and need not always result in collapse. The final factor, however, is always crucial: As the subtitle of his book suggests, success or failure depends on the choices made by a society and its leaders.

The collapse of Rwanda, for example, is typically attributed to ethnic rivalries between Hutu and Tutsi, fueled by Rwanda's colonial past. According to some explanations of the genocide that left more than 800,000 Tutsi dead in the span of a few horrific months in 1994, a large part of the cause lay in the legacy of colonialism. During the first part of the twentieth century, Belgium ran Rwanda through Tutsi administrators because according to the prevailing European racial theories of the time, the Tutsi—who tended on average to be somewhat taller and lighter skinned than the Hutu and, therefore, closer in resemblance to Europeans—were believed by the Belgians to be more civilized. This led to resentments and hatred, which boiled over in 1994, fueled by Hutu demagogues urging the killing of all Tutsi.

Diamond does not reject this explanation but shows that it is only part of the story and by itself cannot account for the depth of the violence. Instead, through careful analysis of patterns of landholding, population, and killing, he argues that the root causes are found in overpopulation and resulting environmental destruction. Rwanda, he shows, had one of the fastest-growing populations in the world, with disastrous consequences for its land as well as its people, who had become some of the most impoverished on the planet. Faced with starvation and the absence of land to share among the growing number of (male) children, Rwanda was ripe for violence and collapse. Although ethnic rivalries may have



Rwandan refugees try to reach the United Nations camp in Tanzania. Over 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed during a period of 100 days in 1994. Hundreds of thousands of Rwandans fled to neighboring countries to escape the bloodshed.

fueled the fires of rage, Diamond shows that in some hard-hit provinces Hutu killed other Hutu, as young men sought to acquire scarce farmland by any means.

Some have criticized Diamond for overemphasizing the importance of the environment at the expense of other factors. The environment alone does not necessarily determine how a society develops. Today especially, when humans can exert a high degree of control over their immediate living conditions, environment would seem to be less important: Modern cities have sprung up in the arctic cold and the harshest deserts.

Political Organization

A second factor strongly influencing social change is the type of political organization that operates in a society. In hunter-gatherer societies, this influence is minimal, since there are no political authorities capable of mobilizing the community. In all other types of society, however, the existence of distinct political agencies—chiefs, lords, monarchs, and governments—strongly affects the course of development a society takes.

How a society and its leaders respond to a crisis can play a decisive role in whether they thrive or fail. A leader capable of pursuing dynamic policies and generating a mass following or radically altering preexisting modes of thought can overturn a previously established order. However, individuals can reach positions of leadership and become effective only if favorable social conditions exist. Mahatma Gandhi, the famous pacifist leader in India, effectively secured his country's independence from Britain because World War II and other events had unsettled the existing colonial institutions there.

The most important political factor that has helped speed up patterns of change in the modern era is the emergence of the modern state, which has proved a vastly more efficient mechanism of government than the types that existed in premodern societies. Globalization today may be challenging the ability of national governments to effectively exert leadership. Sociologist William Robinson (2001, 2004, 2014), for one, claims that as economic power has become increasingly deterritorialized, so too has political power: Just as transnational corporations operate across borders, with little or no national allegiance,

transnational political organizations are becoming stronger even as national governments are becoming weaker. The World Trade Organization (WTO), for example, has the power to punish countries that violate its principles of free trade (Conti 2011).

Will the twenty-first century see new forms of political organization better suited to a world in which people, products, knowledge, religious beliefs, and social networking all cross borders with ever-greater ease? As the recent string of protests suggest, it seems likely that the most important forms of political organization of the twenty-first century will bear little resemblance to those of the twentieth.

Culture

The third main influence on social change is culture, including communication systems, religious and other belief systems, and popular culture. Communication systems, in particular, affect the character and pace of social change. The invention of writing, for instance, allowed for effective recordkeeping, making possible the development of large-scale organizations. In addition, writing altered people's perception of the relation between past, present, and future. Societies that write keep a record of past events, which then enables them to develop a sense of their society's overall line of evolution. The existence of a written constitution and laws makes it possible for a country to have a legal system based on the interpretation of specific legal precedents—just as written scripture enables religious leaders to justify their beliefs by citing chapter and verse from religious texts like the Bible or the Qur'an.

We have seen in this and previous chapters how in recent years the Internet and the proliferation of smartphones have transformed our personal relationships, the nature of politics and social movements, our forms of recreation, and the ways in which we learn and work—in fact, almost every aspect of modern life. These changes have been among the most rapid in human history, resulting in what geographer David Harvey (1989) has aptly referred to as “the time-space compression.” And they have all occurred within the last several decades—a single generation.

Religion, as we have seen, may be either a conservative or an innovative force in social life. Some forms of religious belief and practice have acted as a brake on change, emphasizing above all the need to adhere to traditional values and rituals. Yet, as Max Weber emphasized, religious convictions frequently play a mobilizing role in pressures for social change. For instance, throughout history many American church leaders have promoted attempts to lessen poverty or diminish inequalities in society. Religious leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were at the forefront of the American civil rights movement.

Yet at the same time, religion today has become one of the driving forces against many of the cultural aspects of globalization. Islamic fundamentalists, fundamentalist Christians, and ultra-Orthodox Jewish *haredim* all reject what they regard as the corrupting influences of modern secular culture, now rapidly spreading throughout the world thanks to mass media and the Internet (Juergensmeyer 2003, 2009; Juergensmeyer, Griego, and Soboslai 2015). Fundamentalist Islamists call this “westoxification”—literally, getting drunk on the temptations of modern Western culture. Although such religious communities are usually willing to embrace modern technology, which they often use effectively to disseminate their ideas, they reject what they view as the “McWorld” corruptions that go along with it.

Juergensmeyer (1994) predicted that in the twenty-first century, the principal cultural clashes would not be between so-called civilizations but rather between those who believe that truthful understanding is derived from religious faith and those who argue that such

understanding is grounded in science, critical thinking, and secular thought. Although it is too early to fully evaluate the accuracy of Juergensmeyer's prediction, we do see compelling evidence already. For example, in the United States, political debates rage between religious conservatives who promote teaching creationism (versus evolution) in schools and oppose gay marriage on religious grounds, and liberals who believe policies should be guided by scientific evidence and preservation of civil rights. Not surprisingly, creationism is much more likely to be taught in public school systems in politically conservative districts in the South than in more liberal regions of the North (Kirk 2014).

Economic Factors

Of economic influences, the farthest reaching is industrial capitalism. Capitalism differs in a fundamental way from preexisting production systems because it involves the constant expansion of production and the ever-increasing accumulation of wealth. In traditional production systems, levels of production were fairly stable, since they were geared to habitual, customary needs. Capitalism requires the constant revision of the technology of production, a process into which science is increasingly drawn. The rate of technological innovation fostered in modern industry is vastly greater than in any previous type of economic order. And such technological innovation, as we have seen, has helped create a truly global economy—one whose production lines draw on a worldwide workforce.

Economic changes help shape other changes as well. Science and technology, for example, are driven in part (often in large part) by economic factors. Governments often get into the act, spending far more money than individual businesses can afford in an effort to ensure that their countries don't fall behind technologically, militarily, or economically. For instance, when the Soviet Union launched the world's first satellite (Sputnik) into space in 1957, the United States responded with a massive and costly space program, inspired by fear that the Russians were winning the space race. During the 1960 presidential campaign, John F. Kennedy effectively stoked that fear by repeatedly accusing the Republicans of being lax on Russian missile technology, suggesting that a growing "missile gap" made us vulnerable to a nuclear attack. Even as recently as 2013, President Barack Obama proposed boosting funding for the Energy Department to modernize the United States' existing nuclear weapons with the goal of maintaining "a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent" (Guarino 2013). In each of these historical cases, the arms race—fueled by government contracts with corporations—provides major economic support for scientific research as well as more general support for the U.S. economy.



The Internet and the proliferation of smartphones have transformed nearly every aspect of modern life.



CONCEPT CHECKS

1. Name three examples of cultural factors that may influence social change.

2. What are the most important political factors that influence social change?

3. How does industrial capitalism affect social change?

What Comes After Modern Industrial Society?



Be able to critically evaluate the notion that social change is leading us into a postindustrial or postmodern stage of social organization.

postindustrial society

A society based on the production of information rather than material goods. According to postindustrialists, we are currently experiencing a series of social changes as profound as those that initiated the industrial era.



Scholars say that we now live in a postindustrial society and that knowledge and information—rather than manufactured goods—are the chief output of the U.S. economy.



Where is social change leading us today? In this section, we examine two competing perspectives: the notion that we are a postindustrial society and the idea that we have reached a postmodern period. In the final section of this chapter, we examine theories that have focused on the dimensions, causes, and consequences of globalization.

Toward a Postindustrial Society?

Some observers have suggested that what is occurring today is a transition to a new society no longer primarily based on industrialism. We are entering, they claim, a phase of development beyond the industrial era altogether. A variety of terms have been coined to describe this new social order, such as *information society*, *service society*, and *knowledge society*. The term that has come into most common use, however—first employed by Daniel Bell (1976) in the United States and Alain Touraine (1974) in France—is **postindustrial society**, the *post* (meaning “after”) referring to the sense that we are moving beyond the old forms of industrial development.

The diversity of names is one indication of the many ideas put forward to interpret current social changes. But one theme appears consistently: the significance of information or knowledge in the society of the future. Our way of life throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, based in large part on machine power (the manufacture of material goods in factories), is being gradually displaced by one in which information is the basis of the production system.

One of the earliest comprehensive portrayals of these changes is provided by Daniel Bell in his now-classic *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1976). The postindustrial order, Bell argues, is distinguished by a growth of service occupations at the expense of jobs that produce material goods. The blue-collar worker, employed in a factory or workshop, is no longer the most essential type of employee. White-collar (clerical and professional) workers outnumber blue-collar (factory) workers, with professional and technical occupations growing fastest of all. People working in higher-level white-collar occupations specialize in the production of information and knowledge. The production and control of what Bell calls “codified knowledge”—systematic, coordinated information—are society’s main productive resource. Those who create and distribute this knowledge—scientists, computer specialists, economists, engineers, and professionals of all kinds—increasingly become the leading social groups, replacing the industrialists and entrepreneurs of the old system.

Postmodernity

Some scholars have gone as far as saying that the developments now occurring are even more profound than signaling the end of the era of industrialism. They claim that what is happening is nothing short of a movement beyond modernity—the attitudes and ways of life associated with modern societies, such as our belief in progress, the benefits of

science, and our ability to control the modern world. An era of **postmodernism** is arriving, or has already arrived. The advocates of postmodernity claim that modern societies took their inspiration from the idea that history has a shape—it “goes somewhere” and leads to progress—and that now this notion has collapsed. Not only is there no general notion of progress that can be defended, there is no such thing as history. The postmodern world is thus a highly pluralistic and diverse one. In countless films, videos, websites, and TV programs, images circulate around the world. We come into contact with many ideas and values, but these have little connection with the history of the areas in which we live, or indeed with our own personal histories. Everything seems constantly in flux.

Most contemporary social theorists accept that information technology and new communications systems, together with other technological changes, are producing major social transformations for all of us. However, the majority disagree with core ideas of postmodernists, who argue that our attempts to understand general processes in the social world are doomed to fail, as is the notion that we can change the world for the better. Writers such as Ulrich Beck and one of the authors of this textbook, Anthony Giddens, claim that we need as much as ever to develop general theories of the social world and that such theories can help us intervene to shape it in a positive way. These theories have focused on how contemporary societies are becoming globalized, while everyday life is breaking free from the hold of tradition and custom. But these changes should not spell the end of attempts at social and political reform. Values such as a belief in the importance of social community, equality, and caring for the weak and vulnerable are still very much alive throughout the world.

postmodernism

The belief that society is no longer governed by history or progress. Postmodern society is highly pluralistic and diverse, with no “grand narrative” guiding its development.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- 1 What is a “postindustrial society”?
- 2 What is the “postmodern era”? What is the main critique of this concept?

What Are Social Movements?

In addition to economics, technology, politics, and culture, one of the most common ways social change occurs is through social movements. As we saw earlier in this chapter, **social movements** are collective attempts to further a common interest or secure a common goal (such as forging social change) through action outside the sphere of established institutions. A wide variety of social movements, some enduring, some transient, have existed in modern societies. They are a vital feature of the contemporary world, as are the formal, bureaucratic organizations they often oppose. Many contemporary social movements are international in scope and rely heavily on the use of information technology in linking local social movement participants to global issues, as we saw in the case of many of the Arab Spring uprisings and the protests that followed in Israel, India, England, the Ukraine, and elsewhere (Kulich 2011).

Why Do Social Movements Occur?

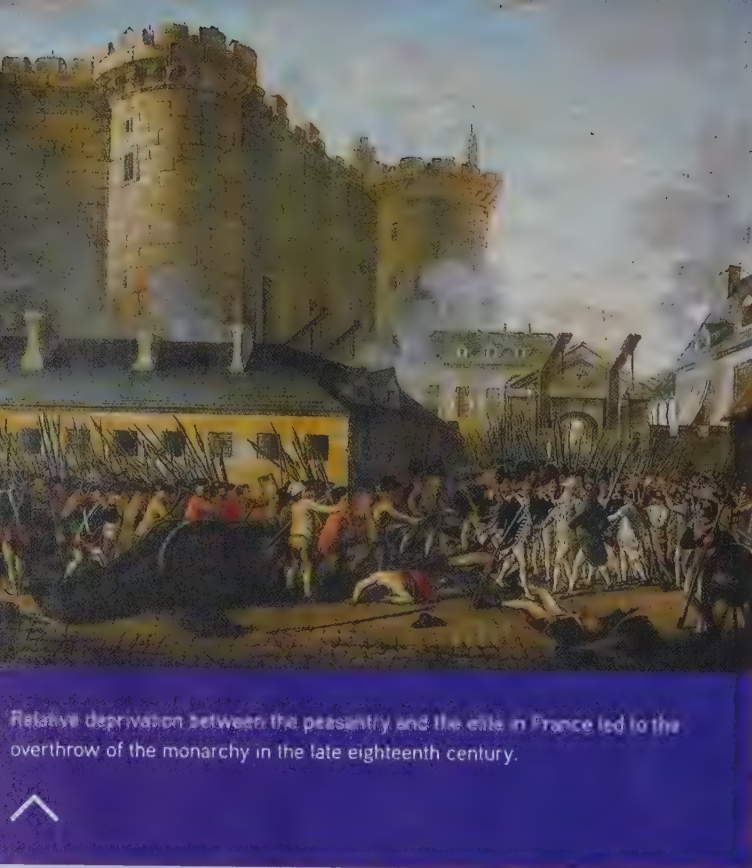
Sociology arose in the late nineteenth century as part of an effort to come to grips with the massive political and economic transformations that Europe experienced on its way from the preindustrial to the modern world (Moore 1966). Perhaps because sociology



Understand what social movements are, why they occur, and how they affect society.

social movement

Large groups of people who seek to accomplish, or to block, a process of social change. Social movements normally exist in conflict with organizations whose objectives and outlook they oppose. However, movements that successfully challenge power can develop into organizations.



was founded in this context, sociologists have never lost their fascination with these transformations.

Since mass social movements have been so important in world history over the past two centuries, it is not surprising that a range of theories exist to try to account for them. Some theories were formulated early in the history of the social sciences; the most important was that of Karl Marx. Marx, who lived well before any of the social movements undertaken in the name of his ideas took place, intended his views to be taken not just as an analysis of the conditions that fostered revolutionary change but as a means of furthering such change. Whatever their intrinsic validity, Marx's ideas had an immense practical impact on twentieth-century social change.

We shall look at four frameworks for the study of social movements, many of which were developed in the context of revolution: economic deprivation, resource mobilization, structural strain, and fields of action.

ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION

Marx's view of social movements is based on his general interpretation of human history (see Chapter 1). According to Marx, the development of societies is marked by periodic class conflicts that, when they become acute, tend to end in a process of revolutionary change. Class struggles derive from the unresolvable tensions (he termed them "contradictions") in societies. The main sources of tension can be traced to economic changes, or changes in the *forces of production*. In any stable society, there is a balance among the economic structure, social relationships, and the political system. As the forces of production alter, contradictions are intensified, leading to open clashes between classes—and ultimately, Marx predicted, to revolution.

Contrary to Marx's expectations, revolutions failed to occur in the advanced industrialized societies of the West. Why? The sociologist James Davies, a critic of Marx, pointed to periods of history when people lived in dire poverty but did not rise up in protest. Constant poverty or deprivation does not make people into revolutionaries; rather, they usually endure such conditions with resignation or silent frustration. Social protest, and ultimately revolution, is more likely to occur when there is an improvement in people's living conditions, according to Davies (1962). Once standards of living have started to rise, people's levels of expectation also go up. If improvement in actual conditions subsequently slows down, propensities to revolt are created because rising expectations are frustrated. Thus, it is not absolute deprivation that leads to protest but *relative deprivation*—the

discrepancy between the lives people are forced to lead and what they think could realistically be achieved.

Davies's theory, however, does not show how and why different groups mobilize to seek revolutionary change. Charles Tilly's theory of resource mobilization, by contrast, helps explain how groups become collectively organized to make effective political challenges.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

In *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Tilly (1978) analyzed processes of revolutionary change in the context of broader forms of protest and violence. He distinguished four main components of *collective action*, action taken to contest or overthrow an existing social order:

1. **The organization of the group or groups involved.** Protest movements are organized in many ways, varying from the spontaneous formation of crowds to tightly disciplined revolutionary groups. The Russian Revolution, for example, began as a small group of activists.
2. **Mobilization—the ways in which a group acquires sufficient resources to make collective action possible.** Such resources may include material goods, political support, and weaponry. In the Russian Revolution, Vladimir Lenin was able to acquire material and moral support from a sympathetic peasantry.
3. **The common goals and interests of those engaging in collective action—what they see as the gains and losses likely to be achieved by their policies.** Lenin managed to weld together a broad coalition of support because many people had a common interest in removing the existing government.
4. **Opportunity.** Chance events may occur that provide opportunities to pursue revolutionary aims. There was no inevitability to Lenin's success, which depended on a number of contingent factors—including success in battle. If Lenin had been killed, would there have been a revolution?

Collective action itself can simply be defined as people acting together in pursuit of interests they share. For example, as we noted earlier, 430,000 young Israelis disenchanted with the country's high costs of living and other social injustices gathered in 2011 for the nation's largest street demonstration in history (Sherwood 2011). In December 2013, an estimated 300,000 people, mostly students, protested in the streets in the Ukraine, calling for the resignation of President Viktor Yanukovich after he failed to deliver on his promise to sign political and free-trade agreements with the European Union (Herszenhorn 2014). In many such protests, some activists may be intensely involved; others may lend more passive or sporadic support. Effective collective action, such as action that culminates in revolution, usually moves through a series of gradual stages.

Typical modes of collective action and protest vary with historical and cultural circumstances. In the United States today, for example, most people are familiar with forms of demonstration like mass marches, large assemblies, and street riots, whether or not they have participated in such activities. Other types of collective protest, however, have become less common or have disappeared altogether in most modern societies (such as fights between villages or lynchings). Protesters can also build on strategies adopted

elsewhere; for instance, guerrilla movements proliferated in various parts of the world once disaffected groups learned how successful guerrilla actions can be against regular armies.

STRUCTURAL STRAIN

Neil Smelser (1963) distinguished six conditions underlying the origins of collective action in general, and social movements in particular:

1. *Structural conduciveness* refers to the general social conditions promoting or inhibiting the formation of social movements of different types.
2. Just because the conditions are conducive to the development of a social movement does not mean those conditions will bring it into being. There must be **structural strain**, or tensions that produce conflicting interests within societies. Uncertainties, anxieties, ambiguities, or direct clashes of goals are expressions of such strains.
3. *Generalized beliefs and ideologies* crystallize grievances and suggest courses of action that might be pursued to remedy them.
4. *Precipitating factors* are events or incidents that actually trigger direct action by those who become involved in the movement.
5. The first four conditions combined might precede minor protests, but they do not lead to the development of social movements unless there is a coordinated group that becomes mobilized for action. *Leadership* and some means of regular *communication* among participants, together with funding and material resources, are necessary for a social movement to exist.
6. The development of a social movement is strongly influenced by *social control forces*. A harsh reaction by governing authorities might encourage further protest and help solidify the movement, whereas divisions within the military can be crucial in deciding the outcome of confrontations with revolutionary movements.

Smelser's model is useful for analyzing the sequences in the development of social movements, and collective action in general. His theory treats social movements as responses to situations, rather than allowing that their members might spontaneously organize to achieve desired social changes. In this respect his ideas contrast with the approach developed by Alain Touraine, which we will discuss next. While Smelser maintained that social movements develop in response to situations of structural strain, Touraine examined the historical context of social movements and the "field of action," or the arena within which social movements interact with established organizations. Touraine argued that this process of interaction is central in shaping social movements.

FIELDS OF ACTION

Touraine's (1977, 1981) theory of social movements is based on four main ideas. The first, which he called *historicity*, explains why there are so many more movements in the modern world than there were in earlier times. In modern societies, individuals and groups know

structural strain

Tensions that produce conflicting interests within societies.

that social activism can be used to achieve social goals and reshape society. Second, social movements typically have *rational objectives*; they develop from specific views and rational strategies as to how injustices can be overcome. Third, social movements are shaped by *social interaction*. They do not develop in isolation; instead, they develop in deliberate antagonism with established organizations and sometimes with other rival social movements.

Fourth, social movements and change occur in the context of what Touraine called *fields of action*, referring to the connections between a social movement and the forces or influences opposing it. The process of mutual negotiation among antagonists in a field of action may lead to the social changes sought by the movement as well as to changes in the social movement itself and in its antagonists. In either circumstance, the movement may evaporate—or become institutionalized as a permanent organization. For example, while the Tea Party began as a grassroots movement of politically conservative Americans concerned with national spending, it became institutionalized when national political figures like former Minnesota representative Michele Bachmann helped to form and ultimately chair an official Tea Party caucus (Lorber 2010).

Globalization and Social Movements

Social movements come in all shapes and sizes. Some are very small, numbering fewer than a dozen members; others include thousands or even millions of people. Some social movements carry on their activities within the laws of the society, such as those carrying out peaceful protests in public squares, while others operate as illegal or underground groups, perhaps by breaking into a nuclear power plant to protest its operations. However, most protest movements operate near the margins of what is defined as legally permissible by governments at any particular time or place.

Social movements often arise with the aim of bringing about a major change, such as expanding civil rights for a segment of the population. In response, countermovements sometimes arise in defense of the status quo. The campaign for women's right to legal abortion, for example, has been vociferously challenged by anti-abortion ("pro-life") activists, who believe that abortion should be illegal. Similarly, protests calling for the rights of transgender individuals have often been met by counterprotests from religious conservatives; most recently, the countermovement against transgender equality has taken the form of "bathroom bills" that prevent people from using a bathroom that doesn't correspond to their biological sex.

Often, laws or policies are altered as a result of the action of social movements. These changes in legislation can have far-ranging effects. For example, it used to be illegal for groups of workers to call their members out on strike, and striking was punished with varying degrees of severity in different countries. Eventually, however, the laws were amended, making the strike a permissible tactic of industrial conflict.

NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The last three decades have seen an explosion of social movements in countries around the globe, with a heightened increase in the last two years alone. These movements—epitomized by the civil rights and feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the anti-nuclear movement of the 1980s, the gay rights campaign of the 1990s, and protests against economic inequality and police brutality today—are often referred to by

Demonstrators in New York participate in a march against police brutality. New social movements such as the Black Lives Matter movement call for large-scale changes in the way people think and act.



commentators as *new social movements*. This description seeks to differentiate contemporary social movements from those that preceded them in earlier decades. They are often concerned with the quality of private life as much as with political and economic issues, calling for large-scale changes in the way people think and act. In other words, what makes new social movements “new” is that—unlike conventional social movements—they are not based on single-issue objectives that typically involve changes in the distribution of economic resources or power. Rather, they involve the creation of collective identities based around entire lifestyles, often calling for sweeping cultural changes. New social movements have emerged in recent years around issues such as ecology, peace, gender and sexual identity, gay and lesbian rights, women’s rights, alternative medicine, and opposition to globalization. Although the triggers of the Arab Spring protests differed across nations, the catalysts for many of the uprisings in Northern African and the Persian Gulf countries included discontent over the persistent concentration of wealth in the hands of autocrats in power, insufficient transparency in government policies and practices, corruption, and the refusal of the youth to accept the status quo (Khalidi 2011).

Participation in new social movements is often viewed as a moral obligation (and even a pleasure), rather than a calculated effort to achieve some specific goal. Moreover, the forms of protest chosen by new social movements are a form of “expressive logic” whereby participants make a statement about who they are: Protest is an end in itself, a way of affirming one’s identity, as well as a means to achieving concrete objectives (Polletta and Jasper 2001).

The rise of new social movements in recent years is a reflection of the changing risks facing human societies. The conditions are ripe for social movements: Increasingly, traditional political institutions are unable to cope with the challenges before them. Existing democratic political institutions cannot hope to fix sweeping problems like

climate change and the dangers of nuclear energy. As a result, these unfolding challenges are frequently ignored or avoided until it is too late and a full-blown crisis is at hand. The cumulative effect of these new challenges and risks is a sense that people are losing control of their lives in the midst of rapid change. Individuals feel less secure and more isolated—a combination that leads to a sense of powerlessness. By contrast, corporations, governments, and the media appear to be dominating more and more aspects of people's lives, heightening the sensation of a runaway world. There is a growing sense that, left to its own logic, globalization will present ever-greater risks to citizens' lives.

Although faith in traditional politics seems to be waning, the growth of new social movements is evidence that citizens in late modern societies are not apathetic or uninterested in politics, as is sometimes claimed. Rather, there is a belief that direct action and participation are more useful than reliance on politicians and political systems. New social movements are helping to revitalize democracy in many countries. They are at the heart of a strong civic culture or **civil society**—the sphere between the state and the marketplace occupied by family, community associations, and other noneconomic institutions.

Technology and Social Movements

In recent years, two of the most influential forces in late modern societies—information technology and social movements—have come together with astonishing results. In our current information age, social movements around the globe are able to join together in huge regional and international networks comprising nongovernmental organizations, religious and humanitarian groups, human rights associations, consumer protection advocates, environmental activists, and others who campaign in the public interest. These electronic networks now have the unprecedented ability to respond immediately to events as they occur, gain access to and share sources of information, and put pressure on corporations, governments, and international bodies as part of their campaigning strategies. For example, crowdsourcing websites like Rally and ActBlue allow like-minded individuals to make contributions to the political causes and candidates they support (see Digital Life box in Chapter 5).

The Internet and social media have been the driving force behind these changes; with the click of a finger, local stories are disseminated internationally. The ability of citizens to coordinate international protests is highly worrisome for governments. For example, in response to massive protests against government corruption in January 2011, the Egyptian government blocked social media sites and mobile phone networks, before ultimately pulling the plug on Egypt's access to the Internet. In an effort to control information flows, the Chinese government created the "Great Firewall," which makes it virtually impossible for Chinese citizens to access Google or Facebook.

From global protests in favor of canceling developing nations' debt to the international campaign to ban landmines (which culminated in a Nobel Peace Prize), the Internet has the potential to unite campaigners across national and cultural borders. Some observers argue that the information age is witnessing a migration of power away from nation-states into new nongovernmental alliances and coalitions.

civil society

The sphere of activity that lies between the state and the marketplace, including the family, schools, community associations, and other noneconomic institutions. Civil society, or civic culture, is essential to vibrant democratic societies.

CONCEPT CHECKS

- Compare and contrast four theoretical approaches to the study of social movements.
- What distinguishes new social movements from their precursors?



Recognize the importance of information flows, political changes, and transnational corporations.

What Factors Contribute to Globalization?

Globalization is often portrayed solely as an economic phenomenon. Some make much of the role of transnational corporations whose massive operations stretch across national borders, influencing global production processes and the international distribution of labor. Others point to the electronic integration of global financial markets and the enormous volume of global capital flows. Still others focus on the unprecedented scope of world trade, which involves a much broader range of goods and services than ever before.

Although economic forces are an integral part of globalization, it would be wrong to suggest that they alone produce it. Globalization is created by the coming together of technological, political, and economic factors. It has been driven forward above all by the development of information and communications technologies that have intensified the speed and scope of interaction between people all over the world.

Information Flows

The explosion in global communications has been facilitated by some important advances in technology and the world's telecommunications infrastructure. In the post-World War II era, there has been a profound transformation in the scope and intensity of telecommunications flows. Traditional telephone communication, which depended on analog signals sent through wires and cables, has been replaced by integrated systems in which vast amounts of information are compressed and transferred digitally. Cable technology and the spread of communications satellites, beginning in the 1960s, have been integral in expanding international communications. The Union of Concerned Scientists (2016) estimates that more than 1,300 satellites are in orbit, of which more than half are primarily for communications purposes.

The impact of these communications systems has been staggering. In countries with highly developed telecommunications infrastructures, homes and offices now have multiple links to the outside world, including telephones (both landlines and cell phones), digital and cable television, and the Internet. The Internet has emerged as the fastest-growing communication tool ever developed. More than 3.5 billion people worldwide (nearly half of the world population) were estimated to be using the Internet in 2016—representing more than 200 percent growth in usage since 2005 (International Telecommunication Union 2016).

As we noted earlier, these forms of technology facilitate the compression of time and space: Two individuals located on opposite sides of the planet can hold a conversation in real time and send documents and images or tweet their ideas to each other with the help of satellite technology. Widespread use of the Internet and smartphones is spurring on and accelerating processes of globalization; more and more people are becoming interconnected through the use of these technologies and are doing so in places that have previously been isolated or poorly served by traditional communications. Although the telecommunications infrastructure is not evenly developed around the world, a growing

Online Activism Trends Upward

For young adults today, political protests have been reinvented by digital media technologies. As we have seen in this chapter, technology has played a critical role in mobilizing both social movements and public protests. The Arab Spring (as well as the civil wars and jihadist movements that followed), Occupy Wall Street, and Black Lives Matter were all fueled by social media.

Black Lives Matter, which began as an online protest movement against police killings of African Americans, has grown into a social movement that “affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, Black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements. It is a tactic to (re)build the Black liberation movement” (BlackLivesMatter 2016). It played a role in the 2015 presidential primaries, using social media to disrupt campaign rallies, as well as forcing the resignations of the president of the University of Missouri and a Yale professor (Foran 2015).

To take another example, Twitter was an essential player in the antigovernment protests in Turkey in 2013. Since the local media did not adequately cover the protests, many Turks would have had little knowledge of what was happening without Twitter. Over the course of three days, an estimated 10 million tweets were posted by protesters and observers using the most popular hashtags, according to researchers from New York University. Unlike other recent protests, however, these tweets came from people on the frontlines, rather than people sharing their views from outside the nation. Researchers have documented that roughly 90 percent of geotagged tweets were coming from inside the country, with half from Istanbul—the epicenter of the protests (Fitzpatrick 2013).

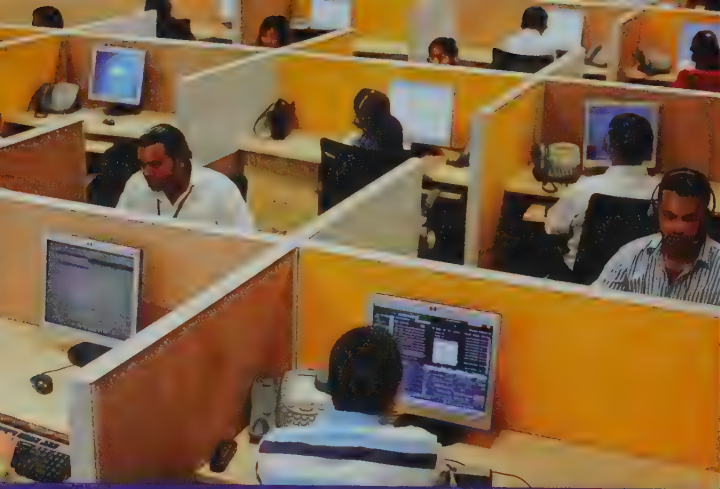
Dissatisfied with the local mainstream media’s coverage of the uprisings, young Turkish protesters began live-tweeting about their actions and using their smartphones to live-stream video of the daily events. These tweets and videos, along with articles in the Western news media, became the major source of information about the movement. Protesters even urged their fellow Turks to turn off their televisions in protest of the lack of coverage by the local mainstream media, using the hashtag #BugünTelevizyonlarıKapat (literally, “turn off the TVs today”). Instead, they directed people to turn to the Internet to find out what was really happening (Fitzpatrick 2013).

Electronic media were also critical players in the January 2014 protests in the Ukraine. For example, early tweets by journalists and activists were considered the primary trigger that brought hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians into the streets on the eve of November 21, 2013. Even before dedicated Twitter feeds and Facebook pages were created, protesters tracked the events using hashtags. Very early on, #Euromaidan emerged as the main hashtag used for protest-related tweets. Shortly thereafter, an official Euromaidan Facebook page was created. Its popularity set a record in Ukraine, attracting 76,000 “likes” in its first week. The page was used to provide real-time updates, as well as information on activists’ future plans and advice on how to deal with potentially aggressive police officers. The speed and reach of such digital messages was remarkable and unprecedented (Arndt 2014).

Have you ever used a Facebook site, followed tweets, or used digital media to participate in or spread news about a political issue or event? What do you see as the pros and cons? What can digital media achieve that old 1960s-style protests could not?

The January 25, 2011, protest in Egypt relied so heavily on social media for its organization that pundits refer to the day as the “Facebook Revolution.”





At a call center in Gurugrah, India, employees field questions and concerns from people in the United States and elsewhere, representing a global flow of information.

number of countries now have access to international communications networks in a way that was previously impossible.

Globalization is also being driven forward by the electronic integration of the world economy. The global economy is increasingly dominated by activity that is weightless and intangible (Quah 1999). This *weightless economy* is one in which products have their base in information, as is the case with computer software, media and entertainment products, and Internet-based services. The emergence of the knowledge society has been linked to the development of a broad base of consumers who are technologically literate and who eagerly integrate new advances in computing, entertainment, and telecommunications into their everyday lives.

The very operation of the global economy reflects the changes that have occurred in the information age. Many aspects of the economy

now work through networks that cross national boundaries, rather than stopping at them (Castells 1996). To be competitive in globalizing conditions, businesses and corporations have restructured themselves to be more flexible and less hierarchical. Production practices and organizational patterns have become more flexible, partnering arrangements with other firms have become commonplace, and participation in worldwide distribution networks has become essential for doing business in a rapidly changing global market.

Whether a job is in a factory or a call center, it can be done more cheaply in China, India, or some other developing country than in developed countries like the United States. This is increasingly true for the work of software engineers, graphic designers, and financial consultants as well. Of course, to the extent that global competition for labor reduces the cost of goods and services, it also provides for a wealth of cheaper products (Roach 2005). As consumers, we all benefit from low-cost flat-panel TVs made in China and inexpensive computer games programmed in India. It is an open question, however, whether the declining cost of consumption will balance out wage and job losses due to globalization.

Political Changes

A number of political changes are driving forces behind contemporary globalization.¹ One of the most significant is the collapse of Soviet-style communism, which occurred in a series of dramatic revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989 and culminated in the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself in 1991. Since the fall of Soviet-style communism, countries in the former Soviet bloc—including Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, the Baltic states, the states of the Caucasus and Central Asia, and many others—have moved (unevenly, to be sure) toward Western-style political and economic systems. They are no longer isolated from the global community but are becoming integrated within it. The collapse of communism has hastened processes of globalization but should also be

seen as a result of globalization itself. The centrally planned communist economies and the ideological and cultural control of communist political authority were ultimately unable to survive in an era of global media and an electronically integrated world economy.

A second important political factor leading to intensifying globalization is the growth of international and regional mechanisms of government. The United Nations and the European Union (EU) are the two most prominent examples of international organizations that bring together nation-states in a common political forum. Whereas the United Nations does this as an association of individual nation-states, the EU is a more pioneering form of transnational governance in which a certain degree of national sovereignty is relinquished by its member states. The governments of individual EU states are bound by directives, regulations, and court judgments from common EU bodies, but they also reap economic, social, and political benefits from their participation in the regional union.

Yet both the UN and the EU have been challenged in recent years. The UN, unfortunately, has proven to be a weak actor. One of the reasons is that significant UN actions require the consent of its Security Council, which in turn requires the agreement of at least nine of its fifteen members, including all five of its permanent members (the United States, France, England, Russia, and China). Another reason is that member nations are not willing to give up their sovereignty to the UN, which consequently lacks the means to enforce its actions. The EU has had difficulty managing the economic slowdown of its member nations, including the near insolvency of debt-ridden countries such as Greece. The influx of refugees (1.3 million in 2015 alone) from war-torn Syria and other countries has created seemingly insurmountable challenges, particularly since once they are in any European country, migrants can freely cross borders into any other. Anti-migrant sentiments have grown, leading some to question the “open borders” policies that have thus far created a strongly unified Europe.

One result was the so-called “Brexit” vote in Britain, a June 2016 referendum in which slightly more than half of all voters (52 percent) called for Britain to withdraw from the EU. While the eventual outcome remains unclear, the vote is binding, and Britain must plan to complete its exit within roughly two years. The vote passed both because of voters’ concerns about immigration and the belief that Britain was surrendering too much national sovereignty to the EU governance system in Brussels. While opponents of Brexit argued that such concerns were greatly overblown, they could not assuage the fears of a majority



In a June 2016 referendum popularly referred to as “Brexit,” 52 percent of British voters voted to exit the European Union.

of voters. The Brexit vote sent shock waves throughout the EU, since it raised fears that other countries may eventually follow suit.

A third important political factor is the growing importance of *international governmental organizations* (IGOs) and *international nongovernmental organizations* (INGOs). An IGO is a body that is established by participating governments and given responsibility for regulating or overseeing a particular domain of activity that is transnational in scope. The first such body, the International Telegraph Union, was founded in 1865. Since that time, a great number of similar bodies have been created to regulate a range of business activities, including civil aviation, broadcasting, and the disposal of hazardous waste. In 1909, there were thirty-seven IGOs in existence to regulate transnational affairs; by 2005, there were estimated to be more than 7,000 (Union of International Organizations 2005). Prominent examples include the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the United Nations.

As the name suggests, INGOs differ from IGOs in that INGOs are not affiliated with government institutions. Rather, they are independent organizations that work alongside governmental bodies in making policy decisions and addressing international issues. Some of the best-known INGOs—Greenpeace, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), the Red Cross, and Amnesty International—are involved in environmental protection and humanitarian relief efforts. But the activities of the nearly 40,000 lesser-known groups also link together countries and communities (United States Institute of Peace 2013).

Finally, the spread of information technology has expanded the possibilities for contact between people around the globe. Every day, the global media bring news, images, and information into people's homes, linking them directly and continuously to the outside world. Some of the most gripping events of the past three decades—such as the fall of the Berlin Wall; the violent crackdown on democratic protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square; the terrorist attacks in New York City in 2001, Paris in 2015, and Brussels in 2016; and the protests of the Arab Spring—have unfolded through the media before a truly global audience. Such events, along with thousands of less dramatic ones, have resulted in a reorientation in people's thinking from the level of the nation-state to the global stage. Individuals are now more aware of their interconnectedness with others and more likely to identify with global issues and processes than in times past.

This shift to a global outlook has two significant dimensions. First, as members of a global community, people increasingly perceive that social responsibility does not stop at national borders but instead extends beyond them. There is a growing assumption that the international community has an obligation to act in crisis situations to protect the physical well-being or human rights of people whose lives are under threat. In the case of natural disasters, such interventions take the form of humanitarian relief and technical assistance. In recent years, earthquakes in Haiti and Japan, floods in Mozambique, famine in Africa, hurricanes in Central America, the tsunami that hit Asia and Africa, and the typhoon that struck the Philippines have been rallying points for global assistance. Today, with a growing awareness of the scientific consensus on the possible ramifications of global warming, environmental movements—united by social media—have mushroomed from the Marshall Islands to Miami.

Second, a global outlook means that people are increasingly looking to sources other than the nation-state in formulating their own sense of identity. Local cultural identities

in various parts of the world are experiencing powerful revivals at a time when the traditional hold of the nation-state is undergoing profound transformation. In Europe, for example, inhabitants of Scotland and the Basque region of Spain might be more likely to identify themselves as Scottish or Basque—or simply as Europeans—rather than as British or Spanish. The nation-state as a source of identity is waning in many areas as political shifts at the regional and global levels loosen people's orientations toward the states in which they live. A form of nationalism based on ethnicity, religion, or culture—rather than nation-state—is reflected in growing persecution in many countries, and sometimes outright violence, against those perceived as non-native, such as immigrants or members of religious minorities.

Economic Changes

Among the many economic factors driving globalization, the role of transnational corporations is particularly important. **Transnational corporations** are companies that produce goods or market services in more than one country. These may be relatively small firms with one or two factories outside the country in which they are based, or gigantic international ventures whose operations crisscross the globe.

Transnational corporations account for some two-thirds of all world trade, they are instrumental in the diffusion of new technology around the globe, and they are major actors in international financial markets. As we noted in Chapter 13, a Swiss study of more than 43,000 transnational corporations found that a mere 737 firms—less than 2 percent of the total—accounted for four-fifths of their combined monetary value. The financial services industry is a power player in the global economy: The top fifty firms were primarily financial organizations such as banks and giant investment firms (Vitali, Glattfelder, and Battiston 2011). The world's 500 largest transnational corporations had combined revenues

transnational corporations

Business corporations located in two or more countries.



Transnational corporations such as Coca-Cola are eager to tap growing markets in countries like China and India. Here, corporate leaders break ground on a new plant in the Gansu province of China. The plant is one of thirty-five bottling plants Coca-Cola has opened in mainland China since it reentered the country in 1979.

of more than \$28 trillion in 2015 (Fortune 2016); in the same year, \$76.7 trillion in goods and services were produced by the entire world (World Bank 2016h). While the United States remains home to the largest number of giant transnational corporations, its share has slipped considerably in recent years, particularly with the rise of Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, and especially China.

The “electronic economy” is another factor that underpins economic globalization. Banks, corporations, fund managers, and individual investors are able to shift funds internationally with the click of a mouse or a tap on a smartphone. This new ability to instantaneously move “electronic money” carries with it great risks, however. Transfers of vast amounts of capital can destabilize economies, triggering international financial crises such as the ones that spread from the Asian “tiger economies” to Russia and beyond in 1998. As the global economy becomes increasingly integrated, a financial collapse in one part of the world can have an enormous effect on distant economies. This became painfully evident when the once-venerable financial services firm Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy in 2008. The collapse of Lehman Brothers, which held an estimated \$600 billion in assets, caused financial shockwaves throughout the United States and global economies. The Dow Jones dropped by more than 4 percentage points immediately following Lehman’s filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, making it the largest single drop since the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Banks and insurers throughout the world, from Scotland to Japan, registered devastating losses as a result (Council on Foreign Relations 2013).

The political, economic, social, and technological factors we have described are joining together to produce a phenomenon that lacks any earlier parallel in terms of its intensity and scope. The consequences of globalization are many and far-reaching, as we will see later in this chapter. But first we turn our attention to the main views of globalization.

The Globalization Debate

In recent years, globalization has become a hotly debated topic. Most people accept that important transformations are occurring around us, but the extent to which it is valid to explain these as “globalization” is contested. As an unpredictable and turbulent process, globalization is seen and understood very differently by observers. David Held and his colleagues (1999) have surveyed the controversy and divided its participants into three schools of thought: *skeptics*, *hyperglobalizers*, and *transformationalists*. These three tendencies within the globalization debate are summarized in Table 16.1.

THE SKEPTICS

Some thinkers argue that the idea of globalization is overrated—that the debate over globalization is a lot of talk about something that is not new. The skeptics in the globalization controversy believe that current levels of economic interdependence are not unprecedented. Pointing to nineteenth-century statistics on world trade and investment, they contend that modern globalization differs from the past only in the intensity of interaction between nations. The skeptics agree that there may now be more contact between countries than in previous eras, but in their eyes the current world economy is not sufficiently integrated to constitute a truly globalized economy. This is because the bulk of trade occurs within three regional groups: Europe, Asia-Pacific, and North America (Hirst 1997).

Many skeptics focus on processes of regionalization within the world economy such as the emergence of major financial and trading blocs. To skeptics, the growth of

TABLE 16.1

Conceptualizing Globalization: Three Tendencies

CHARACTERISTIC	SKEPTICS	TRANSFORMATIONALISTS	HYPERGLOBALIZERS
What's new?	Trading blocs, weaker geogovernance	Historically unprecedented levels of global interconnectedness	A global age
Dominant features	World less interdependent than in 1890s	"Thick" (intensive and extensive) globalization	Global capitalism, global governance, global civil society
Power of national governments	Reinforced or enhanced	Reconstituted, restructured	Declining or eroding
Driving forces of globalization	Governments and markets	Combined forces of modernity	Capitalism and technology
Pattern of stratification	Increased marginalization of global south	New architecture of world order	Erosion of old hierarchies
Dominant motif	National interest	Transformation of political community	McDonald's, Beyoncé, etc.
Conceptualization of globalization	As internationalization and regionalization	As the reordering of interregional relations and action at a distance	As a reordering of the framework of human action
Historical trajectory	Regional blocs/clash of civilizations	Indeterminate: global integration and fragmentation	Global civilization
Summary argument	Internationalization depends on government acquiescence and support.	Globalization is transforming government power and world politics.	Globalization means the end of the nation-state.

Source: Adapted from Held et al. 1999

regionalization is evidence that the world economy has become less integrated rather than more (Boyer and Drache 1996; Hirst and Thompson 1999). Compared with the patterns of trade that prevailed a century ago, they argue, the world economy is less global in its geographical scope and more concentrated on intense pockets of activity.

According to the skeptics, national governments continue to be key players because of their involvement in regulating and coordinating economic activity. For example, skeptics point out that national governments are the driving force behind many trade agreements and policies of economic liberalization.

THE HYPERGLOBALIZERS

The hyperglobalizers take an opposing position to that of the skeptics. They argue that globalization is a very real phenomenon whose consequences can be felt almost everywhere. They see globalization as a process that is indifferent to national borders. It is producing a

new global order, swept along by powerful flows of cross-border trade and production. One of the best-known popularizers of the idea of hyperglobalization is the Japanese writer Kenichi Ohmae (1990, 1995), who sees globalization as leading to a “borderless world”—a world in which market forces are more powerful than national governments. Another is journalist Thomas Friedman, whose pair of bestselling books—*The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (2000) and *The World Is Flat* (2005)—paint a picture of globalization as a juggernaut that sweeps up everything in its path, sometimes with unfortunate short-term results but ultimately with enormous benefit for everyone.

Much of the analysis of globalization offered by hyperglobalizers focuses on the changing role of the nation-state. It is argued that individual countries no longer control their economies because of the vast growth in world trade. Some hyperglobalizers believe that the power of national governments is also being challenged from above—by new regional and international institutions such as the EU. Taken together, these shifts signal to the hyperglobalizers the dawning of a global age (Albrow 1997) in which national governments decline in importance and influence.

Social scientists endorsing the “strong globalization” position include sociologists such as William Robinson (2001, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2014), Leslie Sklair (2002a, 2002b, 2003), and Saskia Sassen (1996, 2005). While these scholars do not see themselves as hyperglobalists, they argue that transnational economic actors and political institutions are challenging the dominance of national ones. Robinson, one of the strongest proponents of this position, has studied these changes throughout the world, with a special focus on Latin America. He argues that the most powerful economic actors on the world scene today are not bound by national boundaries; they are, instead, transnational in nature. For example, he argues that nation-states are being transformed into “component elements” of a transnational state—exemplified by the WTO, whose purpose is to serve the interests of global businesses as a whole by ensuring that individual countries adhere to the principles of free trade. Robinson (2001) concludes that “the nation-state is a historically-specific form of world social organization in the process of becoming transcended by globalization.”

THE TRANSFORMATIONALISTS

The transformationalists take more of a middle position. Writers such as David Held (Held et al. 1999) and one of the authors of this textbook, Anthony Giddens (1990), see globalization as the central force behind a broad spectrum of changes that are currently shaping modern societies. In this view, the global order is being transformed, but many of the old patterns remain. Governments, for instance, retain a good deal of power in spite of the advance of global interdependence. These transformations are not restricted to economics alone but are equally prominent within the realms of politics, culture, and personal life. Transformationalists contend that the current level of globalization is breaking down established boundaries between internal and external, international and domestic. In trying to adjust to this new order, societies, institutions, and individuals are being forced to navigate contexts where previous structures have been shaken up.

Unlike hyperglobalizers, transformationalists see globalization as a dynamic and open process that is subject to influence and change. Globalization is not a one-way process, as some claim, but a two-way flow of images, information, and influences. Global

migration, media, and telecommunications are contributing to the diffusion of cultural influences. The world's vibrant "global cities" are thoroughly multicultural, with ethnic groups and cultures intersecting and living side by side. According to transformationalists, globalization is a decentered and self-aware process characterized by links and cultural flows that work in a multidirectional way. Because globalization is the product of numerous intertwined global networks, it cannot be seen as being driven from one particular part of the world.

Rather than losing sovereignty, as the hyperglobalizers argue, countries are seen by transformationalists as restructuring in response to new forms of economic and social organization that are nonterritorial in basis (e.g., corporations, social movements, and international bodies). They argue that we are no longer living in a state-centric world; governments are being forced to adopt a more active, outward-looking stance toward governance under the complex conditions of globalization (Rosenau 1997).

Whose view is most nearly correct? There are elements of truth in all three views, although the view of the transformationalists is perhaps the most balanced. The skeptics underestimate how far the world is changing; world finance markets, for example, are organized on a global level much more than they ever were before. Yet, at the same time, the world has undergone periods of intense globalization before, only to withdraw into periods in which countries sought to protect their markets and closed their borders to trade. While the march of globalization today often seems inevitable, it is by no means certain that it will continue unabated: Countries that find themselves losing out may attempt to stem the tide.

On the one hand, the hyperglobalizers are correct in pointing to the current strength of globalization as dissolving many national barriers, changing the nature of state power, and creating new and powerful transnational social classes. On the other hand, they often see globalization too much in economic terms and as too much of a one-way process. In reality, globalization is much more complex. National governments will neither dissolve under the weight of a globalized economy (as some hyperglobalizers argue) nor reassert themselves as the dominant political force (as some skeptics argue) but rather will seek to steer global capitalism to their own advantage. The world economy of the future may be much more globalized than today's, with multinational corporations and global institutions such as the WTO playing increasingly important roles. But some countries in the world economy may still be more powerful than even the most powerful transnational actors.

How Does Globalization Affect Your Life?

Although globalization is often associated with changes within big systems—such as the world financial markets, production and trade, and telecommunications—the effects of globalization are felt equally strongly in the private realm. Earlier in this chapter we mentioned protests happening across the Atlantic, yet protests have erupted in the United States as well. The issue of growing inequality, first raised in the 2011 Occupy Wall Street

CONCEPT CHECKS

- Compare and contrast how skeptics, hyperglobalizers, and transformationalists explain the phenomenon of globalization.
- How might skeptics, hyperglobalizers, and transformationalists differently interpret the growing global prominence of China?



Recognize the ways that large global systems affect local contexts and personal experiences.

protests, grew into a nationwide social movement. Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders took up the call during the 2016 Democratic presidential primaries, energizing thousands of students with his call for reducing income inequality, increasing taxes on the wealthy, and offering free higher education.

Globalization is fundamentally changing the nature of our everyday experiences. As societies undergo profound transformations, the established institutions that used to underpin them have become outmoded. This is forcing a redefinition of intimate and personal aspects of our lives, such as the family, gender roles, sexuality, personal identity, interactions with others, and relationships to work.

The Rise of Individualism

In our current age, individuals have much more opportunity to shape their own lives than once was the case. At one time, tradition and custom exercised a very strong influence on the path of people's lives. Factors such as social class, gender, ethnicity, and even religious affiliation could close off certain avenues for individuals or open up others. In times past, individuals' personal identities were formed in the context of the community into which they were born. The values, lifestyles, and ethics prevailing in that community provided relatively fixed guidelines according to which people lived their lives.

Under conditions of globalization, however, we are faced with a move toward a new individualism in which people have to actively construct their own identities. The weight of tradition and established values is diminishing as local communities interact with a new global order. We are constantly responding and adjusting to the changing environment around us; as individuals, we evolve with and within the larger context in which we live. Even the small choices we make in our daily lives—what we wear, how we spend our leisure time, and how we take care of our health—are part of an ongoing process of creating and re-creating our self-identities.

Work Patterns

Globalization has unleashed profound transformations within the world of work. New patterns of international trade and the shift to a knowledge economy have had a significant impact on long-standing employment patterns. Many traditional industries have been made obsolete by new technological advances or are losing their share of the market to competitors abroad whose labor costs are lower than in industrialized countries. Global trade and new forms of technology have had a strong effect on traditional manufacturing communities, where industrial workers have been left unemployed and without the types of skills needed to enter the new knowledge-based economy. These communities are facing a new set of social problems, including long-term unemployment and rising crime rates, as a result of economic globalization.

If at one time people's working lives were dominated by employment with one employer over the course of several decades—the so-called job-for-life framework—today many more individuals create their own career paths, pursuing individual goals and exercising choice in attaining them. Often this involves changing jobs several times over the course of a career, building up new skills and abilities, and transferring them to diverse work contexts. Standard patterns of full-time work are being dissolved into more flexible arrangements: working from home with the help of information technology, job

sharing, short-term consulting projects, flextime, and so forth. While this affords new opportunities for some, for most it means far greater uncertainty. Job security—and the health and retirement benefits that went with it—have largely become things of the past.

Women have entered the workforce in large numbers, a fact that has strongly affected the personal lives of people of both sexes. Expanded professional and educational opportunities have led many women to delay marriage and children until after they have begun a career. These changes have also meant that many working women return to work shortly after having children, instead of remaining at home with young children as was once the case. These shifts have required important adjustments within families in relation to the domestic division of labor and the role of men in child rearing, and more family-friendly working policies have emerged to accommodate the needs of dual-earner couples.

Popular Culture

The cultural effects of globalization have received much attention. Images, ideas, goods, and styles are now disseminated around the world more rapidly than ever before. Trade, information technologies, the international media, and global migration have all contributed to the free movement of culture across national borders. Many people believe that we now live in a single information order—a massive global network where information is shared quickly and in great volumes. Films like *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and *Jurassic World* have enjoyed worldwide popularity. The film *Avatar*, the most popular film of all time, has grossed nearly \$2.8 billion in fifty-five countries since its release in 2009—two-thirds of it outside the United States.

Some people worry that globalization is leading to the creation of a global culture in which the values of the most powerful and affluent—in this instance, Hollywood filmmakers—overwhelm the strength of local customs and tradition. According to this view, globalization is a form of cultural imperialism in which the values, styles, and outlooks of the Western world are being spread so aggressively that they smother individual national cultures.

Others, by contrast, claim that global society is now characterized by an enormous diversity of cultures existing side by side. Local traditions are joined by a host of additional cultural forms from abroad, presenting people with a bewildering array of lifestyle options from which to choose. Rather than a unified global culture, what we are witnessing is the fragmentation of cultural forms (Baudrillard 1988). Established identities and ways of life grounded in local communities and cultures are giving way to new forms of hybrid identity composed of elements from contrasting cultural sources (Hall 1992). For example, while *bhangra* melodies hail from the Punjab region of India, U.S. music fans may recognize *bhangra* harmonies and rhythms from hip-hop artists such as Beyoncé and Jay Z. India's film industry (dubbed "Bollywood") sells twice as many tickets as Hollywood—although revenues from U.S. films eclipse those from Bollywood.



American films such as *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* dominate the global box office. Does this amount to cultural imperialism?



Globalization and Risk

The consequences of globalization are far-reaching, affecting virtually all aspects of the social world. Yet because globalization is an open-ended and internally contradictory process, it produces outcomes that are difficult to predict and control. Another way of thinking of this dynamic is in terms of risk. Many of the changes wrought by globalization are presenting us with new forms of risk that differ greatly from those that existed in previous eras. Unlike risks from the past, which had established causes and known effects, today's risks are incalculable in origin and indeterminate in their consequences.

THE SPREAD OF "MANUFACTURED RISK"

Humans have always had to face risks of one kind or another, but today's risks are qualitatively different from those of earlier times. Until quite recently, human societies were threatened by **external risk**—dangers such as drought, earthquakes, famines, and storms that spring from the natural world and are unrelated to the actions of humans. Today, however, we are increasingly confronted with various types of **manufactured risk**—risks that are created by the impact of our own knowledge and technology on the natural world. As we shall see, many environmental and health risks facing contemporary societies are instances of manufactured risk; they are the outcomes of our own interventions into nature.

One of the clearest illustrations of manufactured risk are threats to the natural environment (see Chapter 15). One of the consequences of accelerating industrial and technological development is that few aspects of the natural world remain untouched by humans. Urbanization, industrial production and pollution, large-scale agricultural projects, the construction of dams and hydroelectric plants, and nuclear power are just some of the ways in which human beings have had an impact on their natural surroundings. The collective outcome of such processes has been widespread environmental destruction whose precise cause is indeterminate and whose consequences are similarly difficult to calculate.

In our globalizing world, ecological risk confronts us in many guises. Concern over global warming has been mounting in the scientific community for some years. Most scientists now accept that Earth's temperature has been increasing due to a rising concentration of greenhouse gases—a by-product of man-made processes such as deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels. The potential consequences of global warming are devastating: If polar ice caps continue to melt at the current rate, sea levels will rise and may threaten low-lying land masses and their human populations. Changes in climate patterns have been cited as possible causes of the severe floods that afflicted Mozambique in 2000; the record number of hurricanes that swept through the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico in the fall of 2005 as well as Hurricane Katrina, which devastated New Orleans; and Hurricane Sandy, which leveled entire neighborhoods in New Jersey and New York in 2012.

In the past decade, the dangers posed to human health by manufactured risks have attracted great attention. For example, sun exposure has been linked to a heightened risk of skin cancer in many parts of the world. This is thought to be related to the depletion of the ozone layer—the layer of Earth's atmosphere that normally filters out ultraviolet light. Because of the high volume of chemical emissions that are produced by human activities

external risk

Dangers that spring from the natural world and are unrelated to the actions of humans. Examples include droughts, earthquakes, famines, and storms.

manufactured risk

Dangers that are created by the impact of human knowledge and technology on the natural world. Examples include global warming and genetically modified foods.

and industry, the concentration of ozone in the atmosphere has been diminishing. Satellite images confirm the presence of an ozone hole—an area of exceptionally depleted ozone—over the Antarctic. There is, however, some good news: According to a 2014 report, the ozone layer is on track to make a substantial recovery by mid-century, largely because of the 1987 Montreal Protocol, which banned ozone-depleting chemicals such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) (UNEP/WMO 2014).

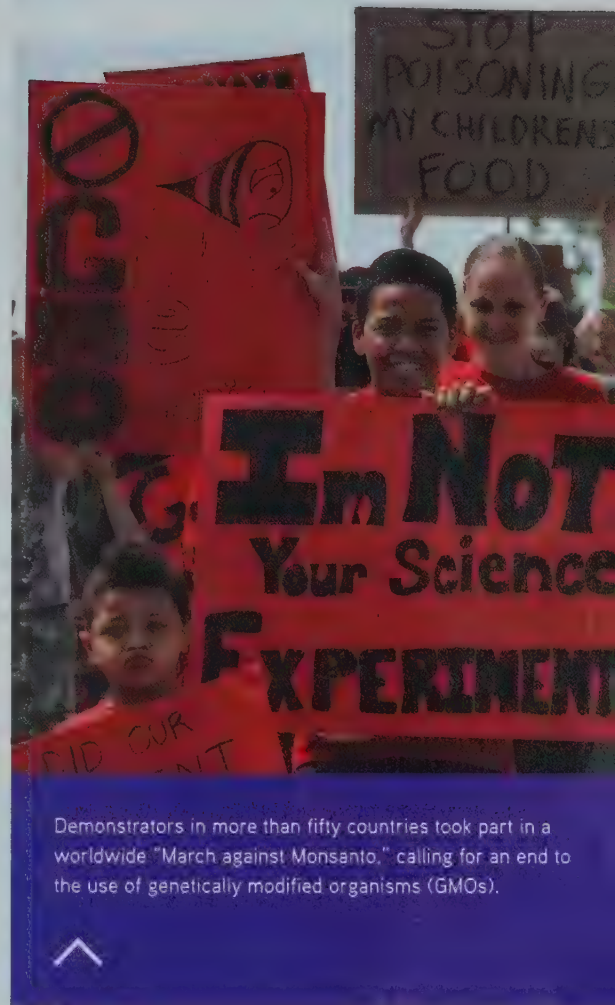
There are many examples of manufactured risk that are linked to food. For example, chemical pesticides and herbicides are widely used in commercial agriculture, and many animals (such as chickens and pigs) are pumped full of hormones and antibiotics. Some scientists have suggested that farming techniques such as these, and widespread production of genetically modified foods, could compromise food safety and have an adverse effect on humans.

THE GLOBAL “RISK SOCIETY”

Manufactured risks have presented individuals with new choices and challenges in their everyday lives. Because there is no roadmap to these new dangers, individuals, countries, and transnational organizations must negotiate risks as they make choices about how lives are to be lived. The German sociologist Ulrich Beck (1992) sees these risks contributing to the formation of a global *risk society*. As technological change progresses more and more rapidly and produces new forms of risk, we must constantly respond and adjust to these changes. The risk society, he argues, is not limited to environmental and health risks alone; it includes a whole series of interrelated changes within contemporary social life: shifting employment patterns, heightened job insecurity, the erosion of traditional family patterns, and the democratization of personal relationships. Because personal futures are much less fixed than they were in traditional societies, decisions of all kinds present risks for individuals. According to Beck (1995), an important aspect of the risk society is that its hazards are not restricted spatially, temporally, or socially. Today's risks affect all countries and all social classes; they have global, not merely personal, consequences.

Globalization and Inequality

Beck and other scholars have drawn attention to risk as one of the main outcomes of globalization and technological advance. New forms of risk present complex challenges for both individuals and whole societies that are forced to navigate unknown terrain. Yet globalization is generating other important challenges as well. Globalization is proceeding in an uneven way. Next to mounting ecological problems, the expansion of inequalities within and between societies is one of the most serious challenges facing the world today.



Demonstrators in more than fifty countries took part in a worldwide “March against Monsanto,” calling for an end to the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

INEQUALITY AND GLOBAL DIVISIONS

As we learned in our discussions of types of societies (Chapter 2) and of global inequality (Chapter 8), the vast majority of the world's wealth is concentrated in the industrialized countries of the global north, whereas countries in the global south suffer from widespread poverty, overpopulation, inadequate educational and health care systems, and crippling foreign debt. The disparity between the industrial north and the global south widened steadily over the course of the twentieth century and is now the largest it has ever been. A recent report on global wealth shows that global inequality is at extreme levels. The richest 10 percent of the global population now own 88 percent of the world's wealth, and the richest 1 percent alone hold half of all global wealth. In sharp contrast, the bottom half of the global population owns less than 1 percent of total wealth (Credit Suisse 2015).

These vast disparities in economic well-being are all the more jarring when daily income is considered. Recent data from the World Bank show that there are 702 million people living in extreme poverty today; that is, they live on less than \$1.90 per day. Although the proportion of persons who live under such dire circumstances has decreased markedly over the last three decades—from 44 percent in 1981 to 9.6 percent in 2015—the absolute numbers living in abject poverty remain high, because the populations in these poor nations are so large. Further, extreme poverty is clustered in sub-Saharan Africa, which accounts for half of the world's extreme poor (World Bank 2015).

In much of the global south, levels of economic growth and output over the past century have not kept up with the rate of population growth, whereas the level of economic development in industrialized countries has far outpaced it. These opposing tendencies have led to a marked divergence between the richest and poorest countries of the world. China, for example, accounts for 21 percent of the global adult population but only 9 percent of global wealth. The gap between population and wealth is even more extreme in India, which accounts for 17 percent of the global adult population but only 1.4 percent of global wealth.

Globalization is exacerbating these trends by further concentrating income, wealth, and resources within a small core of countries. As we have seen in this chapter, the global economy is growing and integrating at an extremely rapid rate. The expansion of global trade has been central to this process. Global trade in goods and services has almost doubled in the last decade, from \$13 trillion in 2005 to \$24 trillion in 2014 (UN Development Programme 2016). The volume of merchandise exports in 2014 exceeded \$19 trillion, or 25 percent of total global output—up from \$6.5 trillion in 2000 (World Bank 2016i). The volume of service exports in 2014 was over \$5 trillion, or 8.5 percent of total global output—up from \$2.6 trillion in 2005 (World Bank 2016j). Only a handful of developing countries have managed to benefit from that rapid growth, and the process of integration into the global economy has been uneven. Some countries—such as the East Asian economies, Chile, India, and Poland—have fared well, with significant growth in exports. Other countries—such as Russia, Venezuela, Algeria, and most of sub-Saharan Africa—have seen few benefits from expanding trade and globalization (UN Development Programme 2006). There is a danger that many of the countries most in need of economic growth will be left even further behind as globalization progresses (World Bank 2000).

Free trade is seen by many as the key to economic development and poverty relief. Organizations such as the WTO work to liberalize trade regulations and to reduce barriers

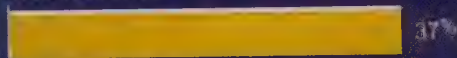
In 2015 global wealth reached \$250 trillion (U.S. dollars). While emerging economies such as China and India are growing at a rapid clip, much of this wealth is still predominately concentrated in Europe and the United States.

■ Share of total wealth*

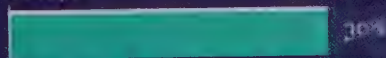


■ Share of adult population

North America



Europe



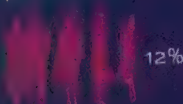
Asia-Pacific



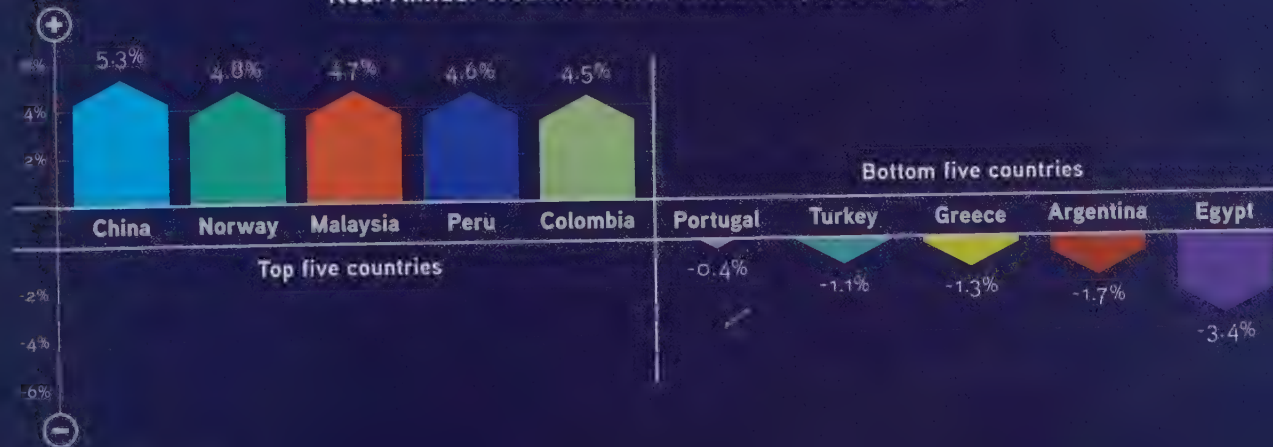
Latin America



Africa



Real Annual Wealth Growth Rates (%), 2000–2015



Source: Credit Suisse 2015

*Global household wealth as defined by Credit Suisse as the marketable value of financial assets plus non-financial assets (principally housing and land) minus debts.



A Kenyan man marches at an anti-WTO protest in Nairobi. What are some of the criticisms that activists level at the WTO?

to trade among the countries of the world. Free trade across borders is viewed as a win-win proposition for countries in the global north and south. While the industrialized economies are able to export their products to markets around the world, it is claimed that countries in the global south will also benefit by gaining access to world markets. This, in turn, is supposed to improve their prospects for integration into the global economy. But many are now challenging this belief, since free trade has also resulted in the loss of millions of U.S. jobs to low-wage countries.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR GLOBAL JUSTICE

Not everyone agrees that free trade is the solution to poverty and global inequality. In fact, many critics argue that free trade is a rather one-sided affair that benefits those who are already well-off, leads to massive job loss of industrial workers in the advanced economies, and exacerbates existing patterns of poverty and depen-

dency within the global south. During the 2016 presidential primary campaigns, Democrat Bernie Sanders and Republican Donald Trump seemed to agree on just one thing: Free trade agreements such as the proposed Trans Pacific Partnership were costing Americans their jobs.

Recently, much of this criticism of free trade has focused on the activities and policies of the WTO, which is at the forefront of efforts to increase global trade. In December 1999, more than 50,000 people from around the world took to the streets of Seattle, Washington, to protest during the WTO's "Millennium Round" of trade talks. Negotiators from the WTO's 134 member states (the number of members has since risen to 164) had come together to discuss and agree on measures to liberalize conditions for global trade and investment in agriculture and forest products, among other issues. Yet the talks broke off early with no agreements reached. The trade unionists, environmentalists, human rights activists, farmers, and representatives from hundreds of NGOs were triumphant—not only had the demonstrations succeeded in disrupting the talks, but internal disputes among delegates had also risen to the surface. The Seattle protests were heralded as the biggest victory to date for campaigners for "global justice." Since that time, every ministerial meeting of the WTO has been met by massive demonstrations by those excluded from the processes of setting the rules for global trade.

In the months following the Seattle protests, similar demonstrations were held in other cities around the world, including London and Washington, D.C. These events were much smaller than those that took place in Seattle, but they were organized around similar themes. Protesters argued that free trade and economic globalization succeed in further concentrating wealth in the hands of a few, while increasing poverty for the majority of the world's population. Most of these activists agree that global trade is necessary and potentially beneficial for national economies, but they claim that it needs to be regulated by different rules from those favored by the WTO. They argue that trade rules should be

focused, first and foremost, on protecting human rights, the environment, labor rights, and local economies—not on ensuring larger profits for already rich corporations.

The protesters claim that the WTO is an undemocratic organization that is dominated by the interests of the world's richest nations—particularly the United States. Such imbalances have very real consequences. For example, although the WTO has insisted that countries in the global south open their markets to imports from industrialized countries, it has allowed industrialized countries to maintain high barriers to agricultural imports and provide vast subsidies for their domestic agriculture production in order to protect their own agricultural sectors. Between 1995 and 2014, the U.S. government spent \$322 billion on subsidies to boost the income of crop and livestock farmers (Environmental Working Group 2016). For certain crops, like sugar and rice, agricultural subsidies amount to as much as 80 percent of farm income (Stiglitz 2007). The EU spends \$69 billion each year on their farmers, and the farm budget takes up to 40 percent of the EU's yearly expenditure (Reuters 2013). This has meant that the world's poorest countries, many of which remain predominantly agricultural, do not have access to the large markets for agricultural goods in industrialized countries.

Protesters against the WTO and other international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund argue that exuberance over global economic integration and free trade is forcing people to live in an economy rather than a society. Many are convinced that such moves will further weaken the economic position of poor societies by allowing transnational corporations to operate with few or no safety and environmental regulations. Commercial interests, they claim, are increasingly taking precedence over concern for human well-being. Not only within developing nations but in industrialized ones as well, there needs to be more investment in “human capital”—public health, education, and training—if global divisions are not to deepen even further. The issues raised in the WTO protests were, in many ways, echoed in the protests that sprung up throughout dozens of nations in 2011. The key challenge for the twenty-first century is to ensure that globalization works for people everywhere, not only for those who are already well placed to benefit from it.

CONCEPT CHECKS

How has technology facilitated the compression of time and space?

1 What are the three causes of increasing globalization?

2 What effects does globalization have on our everyday lives?

3 Why is globalization associated with new forms of risks? What are they?

The Big Picture

Globalization in a Changing World

Thinking Sociologically

1. Discuss the many influences on social change: environmental, political, and cultural factors. Summarize how each element can contribute to social change.
2. According to this chapter, we now live in a society where we are increasingly confronted by various types of manufactured risks. Briefly explain what these risks consist of. Do you think the last decade has brought us any closer to or farther away from confronting the challenges of manufactured risks? Explain.
3. Provide an evaluation of how well the four theories of social movements explain the Arab Spring uprisings. Which theory is most effective? Why?

Learning Objectives

How Does Globalization Affect Social Change?

p. 497

Recognize that a number of factors influence social change, including the physical environment, political organization, culture, and economic factors.

What Comes After Modern Industrial Society?

p. 502

Be able to critically evaluate the notion that social change is leading us into a postindustrial or postmodern stage of social organization.

What Are Social Movements?

p. 503

Understand what social movements are, why they occur, and how they affect society.

What Factors Contribute to Globalization?

p. 510

Recognize the importance of information flows, political changes, and transnational corporations

How Does Globalization Affect Your Life?

Terms to Know

Concept Checks

globalization • social change

1. Name three examples of cultural factors that may influence social change.
2. What are the most important political factors that influence social change?
3. How does industrial capitalism affect social change?

information society • service society •
knowledge society • postindustrial society •
postmodernism

1. What do we mean by “postindustrial society”?
2. What is the “postmodern era”? What is the main critique of this concept?

social movement • structural strain • civil society

1. Compare and contrast four theoretical approaches to the study of social movements.
2. What distinguishes new social movements from their precursors?

transnational corporations

1. Compare and contrast how skeptics, hyperglobalizers, and transformationalists explain the phenomenon of globalization
2. How might skeptics, hyperglobalizers, and transformationalists differently interpret the growing global prominence of China?

external risk • manufactured risk

1. How has technology facilitated the compression of time and
2. What are the three causes of increasing globalization
3. What effects does globalization have on our everyday lives?
4. Why is globalization associated with new forms of risk? What are they

Glossary

A

absolute poverty The minimal requirements necessary to sustain a healthy existence.

activity theory A functionalist theory of aging that maintains that busy, engaged people are more likely to lead fulfilling and productive lives.

ageism Discrimination or prejudice against a person on the basis of age.

agency The ability to think, act, and make choices independently.

agents of socialization Groups or social contexts within which processes of socialization take place.

aging The combination of biological, psychological, and social processes that affect people as they grow older.

agrarian societies Societies whose means of subsistence are based on agricultural production (crop growing).

alienation The sense that our own abilities as human beings are taken over by others. Karl Marx used the term to refer to the loss of workers' control over the nature and products of their labor.

anomie A concept first brought into wide usage in sociology by Durkheim, referring to a situation in which social norms lose their hold over individual behavior.

Anthropocene A term used to denote the current geological epoch, in which many geologically significant conditions and processes are profoundly altered by human activities.

assimilation The acceptance of a minority group by a majority population, in which the new group takes on the values and norms of the dominant culture.

authority A government's legitimate use of power.

automation Production processes monitored and controlled by machines with only minimal supervision from people.

B

biological determinism The belief that differences we observe between groups of people, such as men and women, are explained wholly by biological causes.

biological essentialism The view that differences between men and women are natural and inevitable consequences of the intrinsic biological natures of men and women.

biomedical model of health The set of principles underpinning Western medical systems and practices, which defines diseases

objectively, in accordance with the presence of recognized symptoms, and holds that the healthy body can be restored through scientifically based medical treatment.

black feminism A strand of feminist theory that highlights the multiple disadvantages of gender, class, and race that shape the experiences of nonwhite women. Black feminists reject the idea of a single, unified gender oppression that is experienced evenly by all women and argue that early feminist analysis reflected the specific concerns of white, middle-class women.

blue- and pink-collar jobs Jobs that typically pay low wages and often involve manual or low-skill labor. Blue-collar jobs typically are held by men (e.g., factory worker), whereas pink-collar jobs are typically held by women (e.g., clerical assistant).

bourgeoisie People who own companies, land, or stocks (shares) and use these to generate economic returns, according to Marx.

broken windows theory A theory proposing that even small acts of crime, disorder, and vandalism can threaten a neighborhood and render it unsafe.

bureaucracy A type of organization marked by a clear hierarchy of authority and the existence of written rules of procedure and staffed by full-time, salaried officials.

C

capitalism An economic system based on the private ownership of wealth, which is invested and reinvested in order to produce profit.

caste system A social system in which one's social status is determined at birth and set for life.

churches Large, established religious bodies, normally having a formal, bureaucratic structure and a hierarchy of religious officials. The term is also used to refer to the place in which religious ceremonies are carried out.

citizens Members of a political community, having both rights and duties associated with that membership.

civil inattention The process whereby individuals in the same physical setting demonstrate to each other that they are aware of the other's presence.

civil rights Legal rights held by all citizens in a given national community.

civil society The sphere of activity that lies between the state and the marketplace, including the family, schools, community

associations, and other noneconomic institutions. Civil society, or civic culture, is essential to vibrant democratic societies.

class Although it is one of the most frequently used concepts in sociology, there is no clear agreement about how the term should be defined. Most sociologists use the term to refer to socioeconomic variations among groups of individuals that create variations in their material prosperity and power.

clock time Time as measured by the clock, in terms of hours, minutes, and seconds. Before the invention of clocks, time reckoning was based on events in the natural world, such as the rising and setting of the sun.

cognition Human thought processes involving perception, reasoning, and remembering.

cohabitation Two people living together in a sexual relationship of some permanence without being married to each other.

collective bargaining The rights of employees and workers to negotiate with their employers for basic rights and benefits.

colonialism The process whereby Western nations established their rule in parts of the world away from their home territories.

communism A set of political ideas associated with Marx, as developed particularly by Lenin and institutionalized in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and some developing countries.

community policing A renewed emphasis on crime prevention rather than law enforcement to reintegrate policing within the community.

comparative questions Questions concerned with drawing comparisons among different human societies for the purposes of sociological theory or research.

comparative research Research that compares one set of findings on one society with the same type of findings on other societies.

complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) A diverse set of approaches and therapies for treating illness and promoting well-being that generally fall outside of standard medical practices.

compulsion of proximity People's need to interact with others in their presence.

concrete operational stage The stage of human cognitive development, as formulated by Jean Piaget, in which the child's thinking is based primarily on physical perception of the world. In this phase, the child is not yet capable of dealing with abstract concepts or hypothetical situations.

conflict theories A sociological perspective that emphasizes the role of political and economic power and oppression as contributing to the existing social order.

constitutional monarchs Kings or queens who are largely figureheads. Real power rests in the hands of other political leaders.

continuity theory Theoretical perspective on aging that specifies that older adults fare best when they participate in activities consistent with their personality, preferences, and activities earlier in life.

control theory A theory that views crime as the outcome of an imbalance between impulses toward criminal activity and controls that deter it. Control theorists hold that criminals are rational beings who will act to maximize their own reward unless they are rendered unable to do so through either social or physical controls.

conurbation A cluster of towns or cities forming an unbroken urban environment.

conversation analysis The empirical study of conversations, employing techniques drawn from ethnomethodology. Conversation analysis examines details of naturally occurring conversations to reveal the organizational principles of talk and its role in the production and reproduction of social order.

core countries According to world-systems theory, the most advanced industrial countries, which take the lion's share of profits in the world economic system.

corporate crime Offenses committed by large corporations in society, including pollution, false advertising, and violations of health and safety regulations.

corporate culture An organizational culture involving rituals, events, or traditions that are unique to a specific company.

corporations Business firms or companies.

correlation coefficient A measure of the degree of correlation between variables.

countercultures Cultural groups within a wider society that largely reject the values and norms of the majority.

created environment Constructions established by human beings to serve their own needs, including roads, railways, factories, offices, homes, and other buildings.

crimes Any actions that contravene the laws established by a political authority.

crude birthrate A statistical measure representing the number of births within a given population per year, normally calculated as the number of births per 1,000 members. Although the crude birthrate is a useful index, it is only a general measure, because it does not specify numbers of births in relation to age distribution.

crude death rate A statistical measure representing the number of deaths that occur annually in a given population per year, normally calculated as the number of deaths per 1,000 members. Crude death rates give a general indication of the mortality levels of a community or society but are limited in their usefulness because they do not take into account the age distribution.

cults Fragmentary religious groupings to which individuals are loosely affiliated but that lack any permanent structure.

cultural appropriation When members of one cultural group borrow elements of another group's culture.

cultural capital Noneconomic or cultural resources that parents pass down to their children, such as language or knowledge. These resources contribute to the process of social reproduction, according to Bourdieu.

cultural relativism The practice of judging a society by its own standards.

cultural universals Values or modes of behavior shared by all human cultures.

culture The values, norms, and material goods characteristic of a given group. Like the concept of society, the notion of culture is widely used in sociology and the other social sciences (particularly anthropology). Culture is one of the most distinctive properties of human social association.

culture of poverty The thesis, popularized by Oscar Lewis, that poverty is not a result of individual inadequacies but is instead the outcome of a larger social and cultural atmosphere into which successive generations of children are socialized. The culture of poverty refers to the values, beliefs, lifestyles, habits, and traditions that are common among people living under conditions of material deprivation.

D

data Factual information used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation. Social science data often refer to individuals' responses to survey questions.

debriefing Following a research study, informing study participants about the true purpose of the study and revealing any deception that happened during the study.

degree of dispersal The range or distribution of a set of figures.

democracy A political system that allows the citizens to participate in political decision making or to elect representatives to government bodies.

democratic elitism A theory of the limits of democracy, which holds that in large-scale societies democratic participation is necessarily limited to the regular election of political leaders.

demographic transition Changes in the ratio of births to deaths in the industrialized countries from the nineteenth century onward, which followed a three-stage process.

demography The study of the size, distribution, and composition of populations.

denomination A religious sect that has lost its revivalist dynamism and become an institutionalized body, commanding the adherence of significant numbers of people.

dependency culture A term popularized by Charles Murray to describe individuals who rely on state welfare provision rather than entering the labor market. The dependency culture is seen as the outcome of the "paternalistic" welfare state that undermines individual ambition and people's capacity for self-help.

dependency ratio The ratio of people of dependent ages (children and the elderly) to people of economically active ages.

dependency theories Marxist theories of economic development arguing that the poverty of low-income countries stems directly from their exploitation by wealthy countries and the multinational corporations that are based in wealthy countries.

developing world The less-developed societies, in which industrial production is either virtually nonexistent or only developed to a limited degree. The majority of the world's population live in less-developed countries.

developmental questions Questions that sociologists pose when looking at the origins and path of development of social institutions from the past to the present.

deviance Modes of action that do not conform to the norms or values held by most members of a group or society. What is regarded as deviant is as variable as the norms and values that distinguish different cultures and subcultures from one another.

deviant subculture A subculture whose members hold values that differ substantially from those of the majority.

diaspora The dispersal of an ethnic population from an original homeland into foreign areas, often in a forced manner or under traumatic circumstances.

differential association An interpretation of the development of criminal behavior proposed by Edwin H. Sutherland, according to whom criminal behavior is learned through association with others who regularly engage in crime.

direct democracy A form of participatory democracy that allows citizens to vote directly on laws and policies.

discrimination Behavior that denies to the members of a particular group resources or rewards that can be obtained by others. Discrimination must be distinguished from prejudice: Individuals who are prejudiced against others may not engage in discriminatory practices against them; conversely, people may act in a discriminatory fashion toward a group even though they are not prejudiced against that group.

disengagement theory A functionalist theory of aging that holds that it is functional for society to remove people from their traditional roles when they become elderly, thereby freeing up those roles for others.

displacement The transferring of ideas or emotions from their true source to another object.

division of labor The specialization of work tasks, by means of which different occupations are combined within a production system. All societies have at least some rudimentary form of division of labor, especially between the tasks allocated to men and those performed by women.

dominant group The group that possesses more wealth, power, and prestige in a society.

doubling time The time it takes for a particular level of population to double.

downward mobility Social mobility in which individuals' wealth, income, or status is lower than what they or their parents once had.

dyad A group consisting of two persons.

E

ecological approach A perspective on urban analysis emphasizing the "natural" distribution of city neighborhoods into areas having contrasting characteristics.

economic interdependence The fact that in the division of labor, individuals depend on others to produce many or most of the goods they need to sustain their lives.

economy The system of production and exchange that provides for the material needs of individuals living in a given society. Economic institutions are of key importance in all social orders.

egocentric According to Jean Piaget, the characteristic quality of a child during the early years of his or her life. Egocentric thinking involves understanding objects and events in the environment solely in terms of the child's own position.

emerging economies Developing countries that over the past two or three decades have begun to develop a strong industrial base, such as Singapore and Hong Kong.

emigration The movement of people out of one country in order to settle in another.

empirical investigation Factual inquiry carried out in any area of sociological study.

encounter A meeting between two or more people in a situation of face-to-face interaction. Our daily lives can be seen as a series of different encounters strung out across the course of the day. In modern societies, many of these encounters are with strangers rather than people we know.

endogamy The forbidding of marriage or sexual relations outside one's social group.

entrepreneur The owner or founder of a business firm.

ethnicity Cultural values and norms that distinguish the members of a given group from others. An ethnic group is one whose members share a distinct awareness of a common cultural identity, separating them from other groups.

ethnocentrism The tendency to look at other cultures through the eyes of one's own culture, and thereby misrepresent them.

ethnography The firsthand study of people using participant observation or interviewing.

ethnomethodology The study of how people make sense of what others say and do in the course of day-to-day social interaction. Ethnomethodology is concerned with the "ethnomethods" by which people sustain meaningful exchanges with one another.

experiment A research method in which variables can be analyzed in a controlled and systematic way, either in an artificial situation constructed by the researcher or in naturally occurring settings.

exponential growth A geometric, rather than linear, rate of increase. Populations tend to grow exponentially.

extended family A family group consisting of more than two generations of relatives.

external risk Dangers that spring from the natural world and are unrelated to the actions of humans. Examples include droughts, earthquakes, famines, and storms.

exurban counties Low-density suburban counties on the periphery of large metro areas.

F

factual questions Questions that raise issues concerning matters of fact (rather than theoretical or moral issues).

family A group of individuals related to one another by blood ties, marriage, or adoption, who form an economic unit, the adult members of which are often responsible for the upbringing of children. All known societies involve some form of family system, although the nature of family relationships varies widely.

family capitalism Capitalistic enterprise owned and administered by entrepreneurial families.

family of orientation The family into which an individual is born or adopted.

family of procreation The family an individual initiates through marriage or by having children.

fecundity A measure of the number of children that it is biologically possible for a woman to produce.

feminism Advocacy of the rights of women to be equal with men in all spheres of life. Feminism dates from the late eighteenth century in Europe, and feminist movements exist in most countries today.

feminist theories A sociological perspective that emphasizes the centrality of gender in analyzing the social world and particularly the experience of women. There are many strands of feminist theory, but they all seek to explain gender inequalities in society and to work to overcome them.

feminization of poverty An increase in the proportion of the poor who are female.

fertility The average number of live-born children produced by women of childbearing age in a particular society.

focused interaction Interaction between individuals engaged in a common activity or in direct conversation with each other.

folkways Norms that guide casual or everyday interactions. Violations are sanctioned subtly or not at all.

food deserts Geographic areas in which residents do not have easy access to high-quality affordable food. These regions are concentrated in rural areas and poor urban neighborhoods.

formal operational stage According to Jean Piaget, the stage of human cognitive development at which the growing child becomes capable of handling abstract concepts and hypothetical situations.

formal organization Means by which a group is rationally designed to achieve its objectives, often using explicit rules, regulations, and procedures.

formal relations Relations that exist in groups and organizations, laid down by the norms, or rules, of the official system of authority.

franchise The right to vote.

functional literacy Having reading and writing skills that are beyond a basic level and are sufficient to manage one's everyday activities and employment tasks.

functionalism A theoretical perspective based on the notion that social events can best be explained in terms of the functions they perform—that is, the contributions they make to the continuity of a society.

gender Social expectations about behavior regarded as appropriate for the members of each sex. Gender refers not to the physical attributes distinguishing men and women but to socially formed traits of masculinity and femininity.

gender inequality The inequality between men and women in terms of wealth, income, and status.

gender socialization The learning of gender roles through social factors such as schooling, the media, and status.

gender typing Designation of occupations as male or female, with "women's" occupations, such as secretarial and retail positions, having lower status and pay, and "men's" occupations, such as managerial and professional positions, having higher status and pay.

generalized other A concept in the theory of George Herbert Mead, according to which the individual takes over the general values of a given group or society during the socialization process.

genocide The systematic, planned destruction of a racial, ethnic, religious, political, or cultural group.

gentrification A process of urban renewal in which older, deteriorated housing is refurbished by affluent people moving into the area.

glass ceiling A promotion barrier that prevents a woman's upward mobility within an organization.

global capitalism The current transnational phase of capitalism, characterized by global markets, production, finances; a transnational capitalist class whose business concerns are global rather than national; and transnational systems of governance (such as the World Trade Organization) that promote global business interests.

global city A city—such as London, New York, or Tokyo—that has become an organizing center of the new global economy.

global commodity chain A worldwide network of labor and production processes yielding a finished product.

global inequality The systematic differences in wealth and power among countries.

globalization The development of social, cultural, political, and economic relationships stretching worldwide. In current times, we are all influenced by organizations and social networks located thousands of miles away.

government The enacting of policies, decisions, and matters of state on the part of officials within a political apparatus. In most modern societies governments are run by officials who do not inherit their positions of power but are elected or appointed on the basis of qualifications.

groupthink A process by which the members of a group ignore ways of thinking and plans of action that go against the group consensus.

H

hate crime A criminal act by an offender who is motivated by some bias, such as racism, sexism, or homophobia.

heterosexuality Sexual or romantic attraction to persons of the opposite sex.

hidden curriculum Traits of behavior or attitudes that are learned at school but not included within the formal curriculum—for example, gender differences.

home schooling The practice of parents or guardians educating their children at home, for religious, philosophical, or safety reasons.

homophobia An irrational fear or disdain of homosexuals.

homosexuality Sexual or romantic attraction to persons of one's own sex.

housework Unpaid work carried on in the home, usually by women; domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, and shopping. Also called *domestic labor*.

human resource management A style of management that regards a company's workforce as vital to its economic competitiveness.

hypothesis An idea or a guess about a given state of affairs, put forward as a basis for empirical testing.

I

ideal type A "pure-type," constructed by emphasizing certain traits of a social item that do not necessarily exist in reality. An example is Max Weber's ideal type of bureaucratic organization.

ideology Shared ideas or beliefs that serve to justify the interests of dominant groups. Ideologies are found in all societies in which there are systematic and ingrained inequalities among groups. The concept of ideology connects closely with that of power, since ideological systems serve to legitimize the power that groups hold.

immigration The movement of people into one country from another for the purpose of settlement.

impression management Preparing for the presentation of one's social role.

in-groups Groups toward which one feels particular loyalty and respect—the groups to which "we" belong.

income Payment, usually derived from wages, salaries, or investments.

industrialization The emergence of machine production, based on the use of inanimate power resources (such as steam or electricity).

industrialized societies Highly developed nation-states in which the majority of the population work in factories or offices rather than in agriculture, and most people live in urban areas.

infant mortality rate The number of infants who die during the first year of life, per 1,000 live births.

infanticide The intentional killing of a newborn. Female babies are more likely than male babies to be murdered in cultures that devalue women.

informal economy Economic transactions carried on outside the sphere of formal paid employment.

informal networks Relations that exist in groups and organizations developed on the basis of personal connections; ways of doing things that depart from formally recognized modes of procedure.

information society A society no longer based primarily on the production of material goods but on the production of knowledge. The notion of the information society is closely bound up with the rise of information technology.

information technology Forms of technology based on information processing and requiring microelectronic circuitry.

informed consent The process whereby the study investigator informs potential participants about the risks and benefits involved in the research study. Informed consent must be obtained before an individual participates in a study.

inner city The areas composing the central neighborhoods of a city, as distinct from the suburbs. In many modern urban settings in industrialized nations inner-city areas are subject to dilapidation and decay, the more affluent residents having moved to outlying areas.

instinct A fixed pattern of behavior that has genetic origins and that appears in all normal animals within a given species.

institutional capitalism Capitalistic enterprise organized on the basis of institutional shareholding.

institutional racism Patterns of discrimination based on ethnicity that have become structured into existing social institutions.

intelligence Level of intellectual ability, particularly as measured by IQ (intelligence quotient) tests.

interactional vandalism The deliberate subversion of the tacit rules of conversation.

interest group A group organized to pursue specific interests in the political arena, operating primarily by lobbying the members of legislative bodies.

intergenerational mobility Movement up or down a social stratification hierarchy from one generation to another.

interlocking directorates Linkages among corporations created by individuals who sit on two or more corporate boards.

intersectionality A sociological perspective that holds that our multiple group memberships affect our lives in ways that are distinct from single group membership. For example, the experience of a black female may be distinct from that of a white female or a black male.

intersex An individual possessing both male and female genitalia. Although statistically rare, this subpopulation is of great interest to gender scholars.

intragenerational mobility Movement up or down a social stratification hierarchy within the course of a personal career.

IQ (intelligence quotient) A score attained on tests of symbolic or reasoning abilities.

iron law of oligarchy A term coined by Weber's student Robert Michels meaning that large organizations tend toward centralization of power, making democracy difficult.

J

joint adoption A family in which both partners adopt a child together.

K

kinship A relation that links individuals through blood ties, marriage, or adoption.

knowledge economy A society no longer based primarily on the production of material goods but based instead on the production of knowledge. Its emergence has been linked to the development of a broad base of consumers who are technologically literate and have made new advances in computing, entertainment, and telecommunications part of their lives.

knowledge society Another common term for information society—a society based on the production and consumption of knowledge and information.

L

labeling theory An approach to the study of deviance that suggests that people become “deviant” because certain labels are attached to their behavior by political authorities and others.

language A system of symbols that represent objects and abstract thoughts; the primary vehicle of meaning and communication in a society.

latent functions Functional consequences that are not intended or recognized by the members of a social system in which they occur.

laws Rules of behavior established by a political authority and backed by state power.

leader A person who is able to influence the behavior of other members of a group.

liberal democracies Representative democracies in which elected representatives hold power.

liberal feminism Form of feminist theory that believes that gender inequality is produced by unequal access to civil rights and certain social resources, such as education and employment, based on sex. Liberal feminists tend to seek solutions through changes in legislation that ensure that the rights of individuals are protected.

liberation theology An activist Catholic religious movement that combines Catholic beliefs with a passion for social justice for the poor, particularly in Central and South America and in Africa.

life chances A term introduced by Max Weber to signify a person's opportunities for achieving economic prosperity.

life course The various transitions and stages people experience during their lives.

life course theory A perspective based on the assumptions that the aging process is shaped by historical time and place; individuals make choices that reflect both opportunities and constraints; aging is a lifelong process; and the relationships, events, and experiences of early life have consequences for later life.

life expectancy The number of years the average person can expect to live.

life span The maximum length of life that is biologically possible for a member of a given species.

literacy The ability to read and write.

local nationalisms The beliefs that communities that share a cultural identity should have political autonomy, even within smaller units of a nation-state.

lower class A social class composed of those who work part time or not at all and whose household income is typically low.

M

macrosociology The study of large-scale groups, organizations, or social systems.

Malthusianism A doctrine about population dynamics developed by Thomas Malthus, according to which population increase comes up against “natural limits,” represented by famine and war.

managerial capitalism Capitalistic enterprises administered by managerial executives rather than by owners.

manifest functions The functions of a particular social activity that are known to and intended by the individuals involved in the activity.

manufactured risk Dangers that are created by the impact of human knowledge and technology on the natural world. Examples include global warming and genetically modified foods.

market-oriented theories Theories about economic development that assume that the best possible economic consequences will result if individuals are free to make their own economic decisions, uninhibited by governmental constraint.

marriage A socially and legally approved sexual relationship between two individuals.

Marxism A body of thought deriving its main elements from Karl Marx's ideas.

material goods The physical objects that a society creates; these influence the ways in which people live.

materialist conception of history The view developed by Marx, according to which material, or economic, factors have a prime role in determining historical change.

mean A statistical measure of central tendency, or average, based on dividing a total by the number of individual cases.

means of production The means whereby the production of material goods is carried on in a society, including not just technology but the social relations among producers.

measures of central tendency The ways of calculating averages.

median The number that falls halfway in a range of numbers—a way of calculating central tendency.

Medicare A program under the U.S. Social Security Administration that reimburses hospitals and physicians for medical care provided to qualifying people over sixty-five years old.

megalopolis The “city of all cities” in ancient Greece—used in modern times to refer to very large conurbations.

melting pot The idea that ethnic differences can be combined to create new patterns of behavior drawing on diverse cultural sources.

microsociology The study of human behavior in contexts of face-to-face interaction.

middle class A social class composed broadly of those working in white-collar and highly skilled blue-collar jobs.

minority group A group of people who are in a minority in a given society and who, because of their distinct physical or cultural characteristics, find themselves in situations of inequality within that society. Also known as *ethnic minority*.

mode The number that appears most often in a given set of data.

modernization theory A version of market-oriented development theory that argues that low-income societies develop economically only if they give up their traditional ways and adopt modern economic institutions, technologies, and cultural values that emphasize savings and productive investment.

monogamy A form of marriage in which each married partner is allowed only one spouse at any given time.

monopoly A situation in which a single firm dominates in a given industry.

mores Norms that are widely adhered to and have great moral or social significance. Violations are generally sanctioned strongly.

mortality The number of deaths in a population.

multiculturalism The viewpoint according to which ethnic groups can exist separately and share equally in economic and political life.

nation-state A particular type of state, characteristic of the modern world, in which a government has sovereign power within a defined territorial area, and the population are citizens who believe themselves to be part of a single nation or people.

nationalism A set of symbols and beliefs expressing identification with a national community.

neoliberalism The economic belief that free-market forces, achieved by minimizing government restrictions on business, provide the only route to economic growth.

network A set of informal and formal social ties that links people „to one another.

nonverbal communication Communication between individuals based on facial expression or bodily gestures rather than on language.

norms Rules of conduct that specify appropriate behavior in a given range of social situations. A norm either prescribes a given type of behavior or forbids it. All human groups follow norms, which are always backed by sanctions of one kind or another—varying from informal disapproval to physical punishment.

nuclear family A family group consisting of an adult or adult couple and their dependent children.



obesity Excessive body weight, indicated by a body mass index (BMI) over 30.

occupation Any form of paid employment in which an individual regularly works.

old old Sociological term for persons between the ages of seventy-five and eighty-four.

oldest old Sociological term for persons age eighty-five and older.

oligarchy Rule by a small minority within an organization or society.

oligopoly The domination by a small number of firms in a given industry.

oral history Interviews with people about events they witnessed earlier in their lives.

organic solidarity According to Émile Durkheim, the social cohesion that results from the various parts of a society functioning as an integrated whole.

organization A large group of individuals with a definite set of authority relations. Many types of organizations exist in industrialized societies, influencing most aspects of our lives. While not all organizations are bureaucratic, there are close links between the development of organizations and bureaucratic tendencies.

organized crime Criminal activities carried out by organizations established as businesses.

out-groups Groups toward which one feels antagonism and contempt—“those people.”



pariah groups Groups that suffer from negative status discrimination—they are looked down on by most other members of society.

participant observation A method of research widely used in sociology and anthropology in which the researcher takes part in the activities of the group or community being studied. Also called *fieldwork*.

participatory democracy A system of democracy in which all members of a group or community participate collectively in making major decisions.

pastoral societies Societies whose subsistence derives from the rearing of domesticated animals.

patriarchy The dominance of men over women. All known societies are patriarchal, although there are variations in the degree and nature of the power men exercise, as compared with women.

peer group A friendship group composed of individuals of similar age and social status.

peripheral countries Countries that have a marginal role in the world economy and are thus dependent on the core producing societies for their trading relationships.

personal space The physical space individuals maintain between themselves and others.

personal troubles Difficulties that are located in individual biographies and their immediate milieu, a seemingly private experience.

personality stabilization According to the theory of functionalism, the role families play in assisting adult members emotionally. Marriage between adults is the arrangement through which adult personalities are supported and kept healthy.

pilot study A trial run in survey research.

pluralism A model for ethnic relations in which all ethnic groups in a society retain their independent and separate identities, yet share equally in the rights and powers of citizenship.

pluralist theories of modern democracy Theories that emphasize the role of diverse and potentially competing interest groups, none of which dominate the political process.

political rights Rights of political participation, such as the right to vote in elections and to run for office, held by citizens of a national community.

politics The means by which power is used to affect the nature and content of governmental activities.

polyandry A form of marriage in which a woman may have two or more husbands simultaneously.

polygamy A form of marriage in which a person may have two or more spouses simultaneously.

polygyny A form of marriage in which a man may have two or more wives simultaneously.

postindustrial society A society based on the production of information rather than material goods. According to postindustrialists, we are currently experiencing a series of social changes as profound as those that initiated the industrial era some two centuries ago.

postmodernism The belief that society is no longer governed by history or progress. Postmodern society is highly pluralistic and diverse, with no "grand narrative" guiding its development.

poverty line An official government measure to define those living in poverty in the United States.

power The ability of individuals or the members of a group to achieve aims or further the interests they hold. Power is a pervasive element in all human relationships. Many conflicts in society are struggles over power, because how much power an individual or group is able to obtain governs how far they are able to put their wishes into practice.

power elite Small networks of individuals who, according to C. Wright Mills, hold concentrated power in modern societies.

prejudice The holding of preconceived ideas about an individual or group, ideas that are resistant to change even in the face of new information. Prejudice may be either positive or negative.

preoperational stage According to Jean Piaget, the second stage of human cognitive development, in which the child has advanced sufficiently to master basic modes of logical thought.

primary deviance According to Edwin Lemert, the actions that cause others to label one as a deviant.

primary group A group that is characterized by intense emotional ties, face-to-face interaction, intimacy, and a strong, enduring sense of commitment.

primary socialization The process by which children learn the cultural norms of the society into which they are born. Primary socialization occurs largely in one's family.

profane That which belongs to the mundane, everyday world.

proletariat People who sell their labor for wages, according to Marx.

proportional representation An electoral system in which seats in a representative assembly, often called a Parliament, are allocated according to the proportions of the vote received; the head of state (called a prime minister) is the head of the party that has the largest number of seats.

psychopath A specific personality type; such individuals lack the moral sense and concern for others held by most normal people.

public issues Difficulties or problems that are linked to the institutional and historical possibilities of social structure.



qualitative methods Approaches to sociological research that often rely on personal and/or collective interviews, accounts, or observations of a person or situation.

quantitative methods Approaches to sociological research that draw on objective and statistical data and often focuses on documenting trends, comparing subgroups, or exploring correlations.



race Differences in human physical characteristics used to categorize large numbers of individuals.

race socialization The specific verbal and nonverbal messages that older generations transmit to younger generations regarding the meaning and significance of race.

racialization The process by which understandings of race are used to classify individuals or groups of people. Racial distinctions are more than ways of describing human differences; they are also important factors in the reproduction of patterns of power and inequality.

racism The attribution of characteristics of superiority or inferiority to a population sharing certain physically inherited characteristics.

radical feminism Form of feminist theory that believes that gender inequality is the result of male domination in all aspects of social and economic life.

random sampling Sampling method in which a sample is chosen so that every member of the population has the same probability of being included.

rape The forcing of nonconsensual vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse.

rape culture Social context in which attitudes and norms perpetuate the treatment of women as sexual objects and instill in men a sense of sexual entitlement.

rates of population growth or decline A measure of population change calculated by subtracting the yearly number of deaths per 1,000 from the number of births per 1,000.

reference group A group that provides a standard for judging one's attitudes or behaviors.

refugees Persons who have fled their home due to a political, economic, or natural crisis.

regionalization The division of social life into different regional settings or zones.

relative deprivation The recognition that one has less than his or her peers.

relative poverty Poverty defined according to the living standards of the majority in any given society.

religion A set of beliefs adhered to by the members of a community, incorporating symbols regarded with a sense of awe or wonder together with ritual practices. Religions do not universally involve a belief in supernatural entities.

religious economy A theoretical framework within the sociology of religion that argues that religions can be fruitfully understood as organizations in competition with one another for followers.

religious nationalism The linking of strongly held religious convictions with beliefs about a people's social and political destiny.

representative sample A sample from a larger population that is statistically typical of that population.

resocialization The process of learning new norms, values, and behaviors when one joins a new group or takes on a new social role, or when life circumstances change dramatically.

response cries Seemingly involuntary exclamations individuals make when, for example, being taken by surprise, dropping something inadvertently, or expressing pleasure.

S

sacred Describing something that inspires awe or reverence among those who believe in a given set of religious ideas.

sample A small proportion of a larger population.

sampling Studying a proportion of individuals or cases from a larger population as representative of that population as a whole.

sanction A mode of reward or punishment that reinforces socially expected forms of behavior.

scapegoats Individuals or groups blamed for wrongs that were not of their doing.

science The disciplined marshaling of empirical data, combined with theoretical approaches and theories that illuminate or explain those data. Scientific activity combines the creation of new modes of thought with the careful testing of hypotheses and ideas. One major feature that helps distinguish science from other idea systems (such as religion) is the assumption that all scientific ideas are open to criticism and revision.

scientific racism The use of scientific research or data to justify or reify beliefs about the superiority or inferiority of particular racial groups. Much of the "data" used to justify such claims is flawed or biased.

second parent adoption A family in which one partner adopts a child and the other partner applies to be a second parent or co-parent.

second shift The excessive work hours borne by women relative to men; these hours are typically spent on domestic chores following the end of a day of work outside the home.

secondary deviance According to Edwin Lemert, following the act of primary deviance, secondary deviation occurs when an individual accepts the label of deviant and acts accordingly.

secondary group A group characterized by its large size and by impersonal, fleeting relationships.

sect A religious movement that breaks away from orthodoxy and follows its own unique set of rules and principles.

secular thinking Worldly thinking, particularly as seen in the rise of science, technology, and rational thought in general.

secularization A process of decline in the influence of religion. Secularization can refer to levels of involvement with religious organizations (such as rates of church attendance), the social and material influence wielded by religious organizations, and the degree to which people hold religious beliefs.

segregation The practices of keeping racial and ethnic groups physically separate, thereby maintaining the superior position of the dominant group.

self-consciousness Awareness of one's distinct social identity as a person separate from others. Human beings are not born with self-consciousness but acquire an awareness of self as a result of early socialization.

self-identity The ongoing process of self-development and definition of our personal identity through which we formulate a unique sense of ourselves and our relationship to the world around us.

semiperipheral countries Countries that supply sources of labor and raw materials to the core industrial countries and the world economy but are not themselves fully industrialized societies.

sensorimotor stage According to Jean Piaget, the first stage of human cognitive development, in which the child's awareness of his or her environment is dominated by perception and touch.

service society A social order distinguished by the growth of service occupations at the expense of industrial jobs that produce material goods.

sex The biological and anatomical differences distinguishing females from males.

sex segregation The concentration of men and women in different jobs. These differences are believed to contribute to the gender pay gap.

sexual harassment The making of unwanted sexual advances by one individual toward another, in which the first person persists even though it is clear that the other party is resistant.

sexual orientation The direction of one's sexual or romantic attraction.

shaming A way of punishing criminal and deviant behavior based on rituals of public disapproval rather than incarceration. The goal of shaming is to maintain the ties of the offender to the community.

short-range downward mobility Social mobility that occurs when an individual moves from one position in the class structure to another of nearly equal status.

sick role A term Talcott Parsons used to describe the patterns of behavior that a sick person adopts in order to minimize the disruptive impact of his or her illness on others.

signifier Any vehicle of meaning and communication.

slavery A form of social stratification in which some people are owned by others as their property.

social aggregate A collection of people who happen to be together in a particular place but do not significantly interact or identify with one another.

social capital The social knowledge and connections that enable people to accomplish their goals and extend their influence.

social category People who share a common characteristic (such as gender or occupation) but do not necessarily interact or identify with one another.

social change Alteration in basic structures of a social group or society. Social change is an ever-present phenomenon in social life, but has become especially intense in the modern era. The origins of modern sociology can be traced to attempts to understand the dramatic changes shattering the traditional world and promoting new forms of social order.

social class gradient in health The strong inverse association between socioeconomic resources and risk of illness or death.

social conflict theories of aging Arguments that emphasize the ways in which the larger social structure helps to shape the opportunities available to older adults. Unequal opportunities are seen as creating the potential for conflict.

social constraint The conditioning influence on our behavior by the groups and societies of which we are members. Social constraint was regarded by Émile Durkheim as one of the distinctive properties of social facts.

social construction of gender A perspective holding that gender differences are a product of social and cultural norms and expectations, rather than biology.

social exclusion The outcome of multiple deprivations that prevent individuals or groups from participating fully in the economic, social, and political life of the society in which they live.

social facts According to Émile Durkheim, the aspects of social life that shape our actions as individuals. Durkheim believed that social facts could be studied scientifically.

social gerontologists Social scientists who study older adults and life-course influences on aging processes.

social group A collection of people who regularly interact with one another on the basis of shared expectations concerning behavior and who share a sense of common identity.

social identity The characteristics that other people attribute to an individual.

social interaction The process by which we act with and react to those around us.

- social mobility** Upward or downward movement of individuals or groups among different social positions.
- social movement** Large groups of people who seek to accomplish, or to block, a process of social change. Social movements normally exist in conflict with organizations whose objectives and outlook they oppose. However, movements that successfully challenge power, once they become institutionalized, can develop into organizations.
- social position** The social identity an individual has in a given group or society. Social positions may be general in nature (those associated with gender roles) or may be more specific (occupational positions).
- social reproduction** The process whereby societies have structural continuity over time. Social reproduction is an important pathway through which parents transmit or produce values, norms, and social practices among their children.
- social rights** Rights of social and welfare provision held by all citizens in a national community, including, for example, the right to claim unemployment benefits and sickness payments provided by the state.
- social roles** Socially defined expectations of an individual in a given status, or occupying a particular social position. In every society, individuals play a number of social roles, such as teenager, parent, worker, or political leader.
- Social Security** A government program that provides economic assistance to persons faced with unemployment, disability, or old age.
- social self** According to the theory of George Herbert Mead, the identity conferred upon an individual by the reactions of others. A person achieves self-consciousness by becoming aware of this social identity.
- social stratification** The existence of structured inequalities between groups in society in terms of their access to material or symbolic rewards.
- socialization** The social processes through which we develop an awareness of social norms and values and achieve a distinct sense of self.
- socialization of nature** The process by which phenomena regarded as “natural” have now become social.
- society** A group of people who live in a particular territory, are subject to a common system of political authority, and are aware of having a distinct identity from other groups. Some societies, like hunting-and-gathering societies, are small, numbering no more than a few dozen people. Others are large, numbering millions—modern Chinese society, for instance, has a population of more than a billion people.
- sociobiology** An approach that attempts to explain the behavior of both animals and human beings in terms of biological principles.
- sociological imagination** The application of imaginative thought to the asking and answering of sociological questions. Someone using the sociological imagination “thinks himself away” from the familiar routines of daily life.
- sociology** The study of human groups and societies, giving particular emphasis to analysis of the industrialized world. Sociology is one of a group of social sciences, which include anthropology, economics, political science, and human geography. The divisions among the various social sciences are not clear-cut, and all share a certain range of common interests, concepts, and methods.
- sociology of the body** Field that focuses on how our bodies are affected by social influences and the norms and values of the groups to which we belong. Health and illness, for instance, are shaped by social and cultural influences.
- sovereignty** The undisputed political rule of a state over a given territorial area.
- standard deviation** A way of calculating the spread of a group of figures.
- standardized testing** A procedure whereby all students in a state take the same test under the same conditions.
- state** A political apparatus (government institutions plus civil service officials) ruling over a given territorial order whose authority is backed by law and the ability to use force.
- state-centered theories** Development theories that argue that appropriate government policies do not interfere with economic development, but rather can play a key role in bringing it about.
- status** The social honor or prestige that a particular group is accorded by other members of a society. Status groups normally display distinct styles of life—patterns of behavior that the members of a group follow. Status privilege may be positive or negative.
- stepfamily** A family in which at least one partner has children from a previous marriage.
- stereotype** A fixed and inflexible category.
- stigma** Any physical or social characteristic that is labeled by society as undesirable.
- strike** A temporary stoppage of work by a group of employees in order to express a grievance or enforce a demand.
- structural strain** Tensions that produce conflicting interests within societies.
- structuration** The two-way process by which we shape our social world through our individual actions and by which we are reshaped by society.
- structure** The recurrent patterned arrangements and hierarchies that influence or limit the choices and opportunities available to us.
- subcultures** Cultural groups within a wider society that hold values and norms distinct from those of the majority.
- suburbanization** The development of towns surrounding a city.
- suffrage** A legal right to vote guaranteed by the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution; guaranteed to women by the Nineteenth Amendment.
- suffragettes** Members of early women's movements who pressed for equal voting rights for women and men.
- surplus value** In Marxist theory, the value of a worker's labor power left over when an employer has repaid the cost of hiring the worker.
- survey** A method of sociological research in which questionnaires are administered to the population being studied.
- sustainable development** Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- symbol** One item used to stand for or represent another—as in the case of a flag, which symbolizes a nation.
- symbolic interactionism** A theoretical approach in sociology developed by George Herbert Mead that emphasizes the role of symbols and language as core elements of all human interaction.
- ## T
- target hardening** Practical measures used to limit a criminal's ability to commit crime, such as community policing and use of house alarms.
- technology** The application of knowledge of the material world to production; the creation of material instruments (such as machines) used in human interaction with nature.
- terrorism** A public act of violence meant to be intimidating.
- theism** A belief in one or more supernatural deities.
- theoretical questions** Questions posed by sociologists when seeking to explain a particular range of observed events. The asking of theoretical questions is crucial to allowing us to generalize about the nature of social life.
- theory of racial formation** The process by which social, economic, and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories.
- time-space** When and where events occur.

tracking Dividing students into groups that receive different instruction on the basis of perceived similarities in ability.

transactional leaders Leaders who are concerned with accomplishing the group's tasks, getting group members to do their jobs, and making certain that the group achieves its goals.

transformational leaders Leaders who are able to instill in the members of a group a sense of mission or higher purpose, thereby changing the nature of the group itself.

transgender A person who identifies as or expresses a gender identity that differs from their sex at birth.

transnational corporations Business corporations located in two or more countries.

transnational feminism A branch of feminist theory that highlights the way that global processes—including colonialism, racism, and imperialism—shape gender relations and hierarchies.

triad A group consisting of three persons.

triangulation The use of multiple research methods as a way of producing more reliable empirical data than are available from any single method.

underclass A class of individuals situated at the bottom of the class system, often composed of people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

unemployment rate The proportion of the population sixteen and older that is actively seeking work but is unable to find employment.

unfocused interaction Interaction occurring among people present in a particular setting but not engaged in direct face-to-face communication.

Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) Documents that contain official data on crime that is reported to law enforcement agencies that then provide the data to the FBI.

unions Organizations that advances and protects the interests of workers with respect to working conditions, wages, and benefits.

universal health coverage Public health care programs motivated by the goal of providing affordable health services to all members of a population.

upper class A social class broadly composed of the more affluent members of society, especially those who have inherited wealth, own businesses, or hold large numbers of stocks (shares).

urban ecology An approach to the study of urban life based on an analogy with the adjustment of plants and organisms to the physical environment. According to ecological theorists, the various neighborhoods and zones within cities are formed as a result of natural processes of adjustment on the part of populations as they compete for resources.

urban renewal The process of renovating deteriorating neighborhoods by encouraging the renewal of old buildings and the construction of new ones.

urbanism A term used by Louis Wirth to denote distinctive characteristics of urban social life, such as its impersonal or alienating nature.

urbanization The movement of the population into towns and cities and away from the land.

V

values Ideas held by individuals or groups about what is desirable, proper, good, and bad. What individuals value is strongly influenced by the specific culture in which they happen to live.

W

wealth Money and material possessions held by an individual or group.

welfare capitalism Practice in which large corporations protect their employees from the vicissitudes of the market.

welfare state A political system that provides a wide range of welfare benefits for its citizens.

white-collar crime Criminal activities carried out by those in white-collar, or professional, jobs.

winner take all An electoral system in which the seats in a representative assembly go to the candidate who receives the most votes in his or her electoral district (in the U.S. House of Representatives, for example, a candidate who gets 50 percent + 1 vote represents an entire Congressional district, even if another candidate got 50 percent - 1 vote).

work Carrying out tasks that require mental and physical effort, with the objective of the production of goods and services that cater to human needs. Work should not be thought of exclusively as paid employment. In modern societies, there remain types of work that do not involved direct payment.

working class A social class broadly composed of people working in blue-collar, or manual, occupations.

working poor People who work but whose earnings are not enough to lift them above the poverty line.

world-systems theory Pioneered by Immanuel Wallerstein, a theory that emphasizes the interconnections among countries based on the expansion of a capitalist world economy. This economy is made up of core countries, semiperipheral countries, and peripheral countries.

Y

young old Sociological term for persons between the ages of sixty-five and seventy-four.

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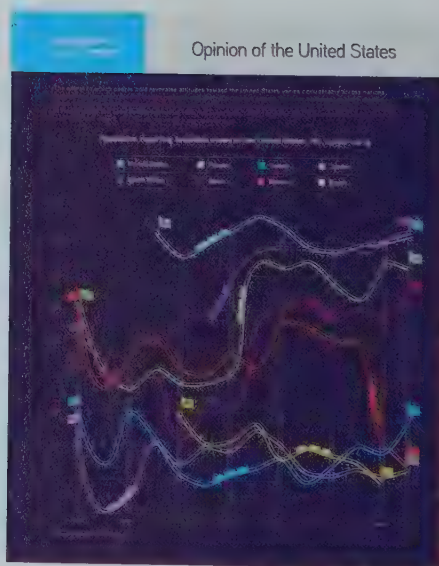
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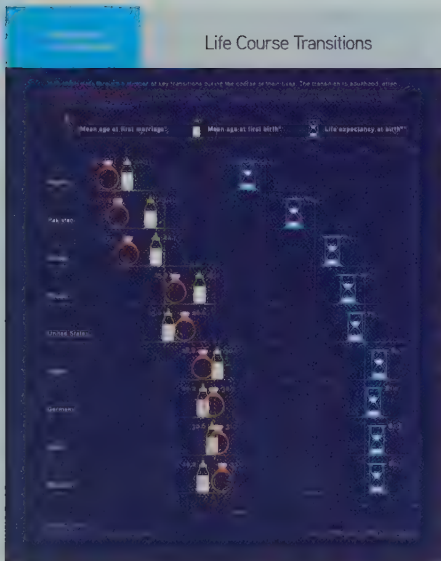
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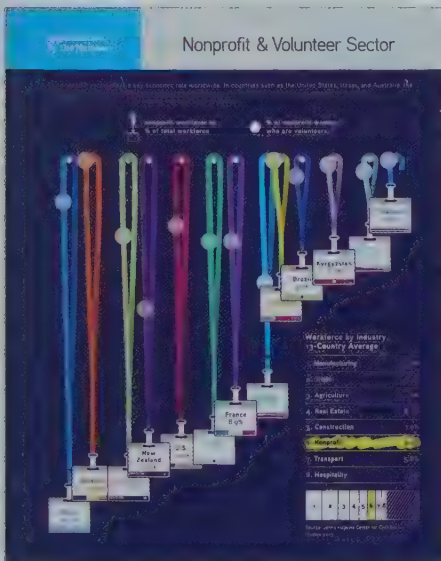
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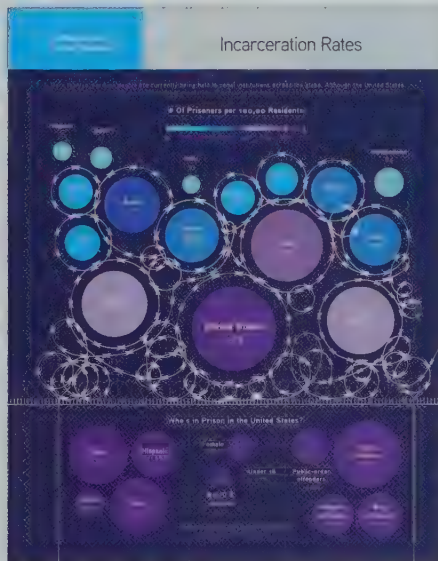
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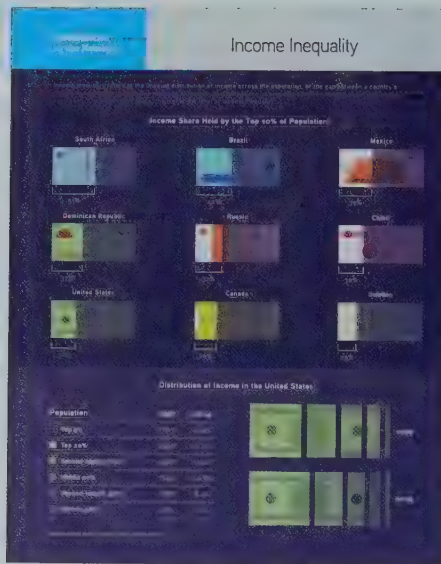
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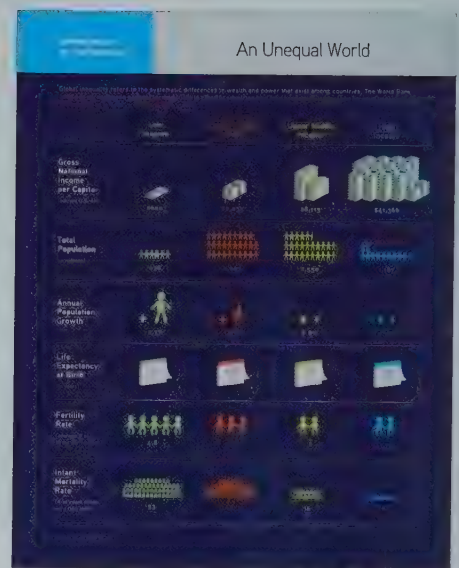
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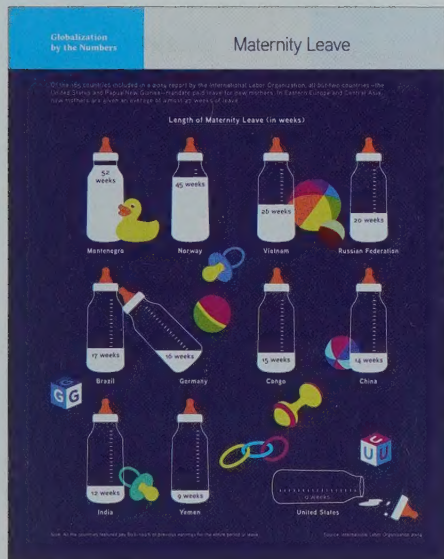
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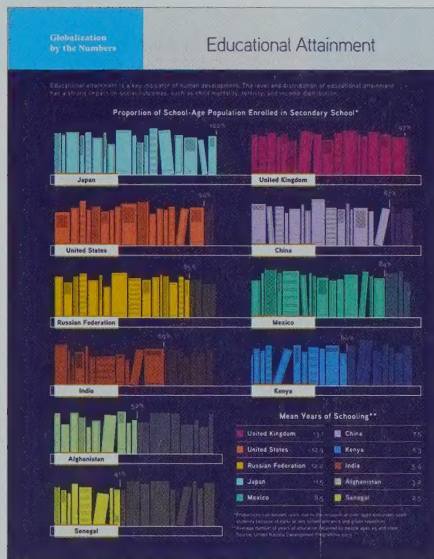
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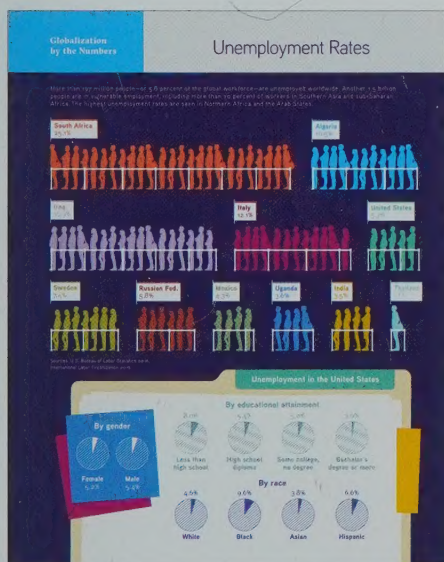
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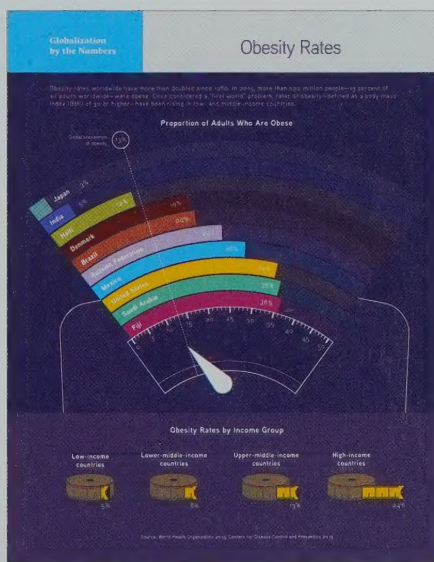
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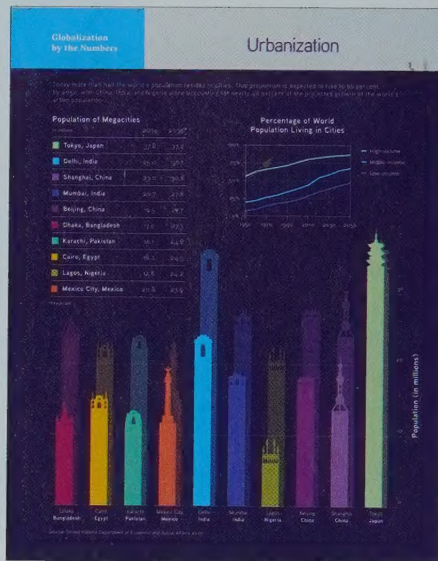
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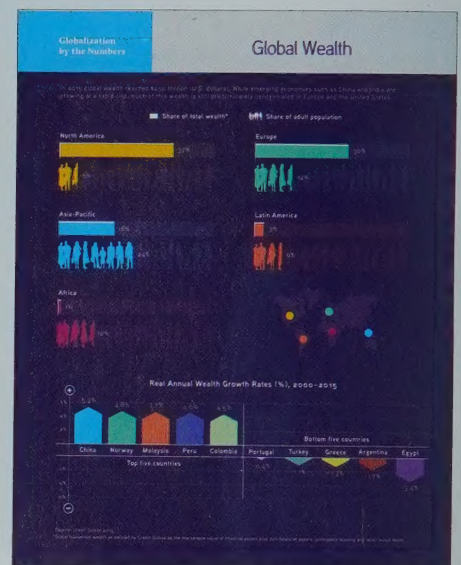
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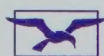
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