

BENOKRAITIS

# SOC<sup>6</sup>

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY



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# SOC<sup>6</sup>

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

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University of Baltimore



Australia • Brazil • Mexico • Singapore • United Kingdom • United States



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- 1 Thinking Like a Sociologist 2
- 2 Examining Our Social World 20
- 3 Culture 38
- 4 Socialization 60
- 5 Social Interaction in Everyday Life 82
- 6 Groups, Organizations, and Institutions 100
- 7 Deviance, Crime, and Social Control 118
- 8 Social Stratification: United States and Global 138
- 9 Gender and Sexuality 160
- 10 Race and Ethnicity 182
- 11 The Economy and Politics 204
- 12 Families and Aging 230
- 13 Education and Religion 254
- 14 Health and Medicine 282
- 15 Population, Urbanization, and the Environment 302
- 16 Social Change: Collective Behavior, Social Movements, and Technology 326

References 346

Name Index 387

Subject Index 400

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# CONTENTS



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## 1 Thinking Like a Sociologist 2

- 1-1 What Is Sociology? 3
- 1-2 What Is a Sociological Imagination? 5
- 1-3 Why Study Sociology? 5
- 1-4 Some Origins of Sociological Theory 7
- 1-5 Contemporary Sociological Theories 13

## 2 Examining Our Social World 20

- 2-1 How Do We Know What We Know? 21
- 2-2 Why Is Sociological Research Important in Our Everyday Lives? 21
- 2-3 The Scientific Method 22
- 2-4 Basic Steps in the Research Process 26
- 2-5 Some Major Data Collection Methods 27
- 2-6 Ethics and Social Research 35

## 3 Culture 38

- 3-1 Culture and Society 39
- 3-2 The Building Blocks of Culture 40
- 3-3 Some Cultural Similarities 48

- 3-4 Some Cultural Variations 50
- 3-5 High Culture and Popular Culture 52
- 3-6 Cultural Change and Technology 54
- 3-7 Sociological Perspectives on Culture 56

## 4 Socialization 60

- 4-1 Socialization: Its Purpose and Importance 61
- 4-2 Nature and Nurture 62
- 4-3 Sociological Explanations of Socialization 65
- 4-4 Primary Socialization Agents 69
- 4-5 Socialization Throughout Life 75
- 4-6 Resocialization and Total Institutions 79

## 5 Social Interaction in Everyday Life 82

- 5-1 Social Structure 83
- 5-2 Status 83
- 5-3 Role 85
- 5-4 Explaining Social Interaction 87
- 5-5 Nonverbal Communication 91
- 5-6 Online Interaction 95



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PG Arphexad/Alamy Stock Photo

## 6 Groups, Organizations, and Institutions 100

- 6-1 Social Groups 101
- 6-2 Formal Organizations 106
- 6-3 Sociological Perspectives on Social Groups and Organizations 112
- 6-4 Social Institutions 116

## 7 Deviance, Crime, and Social Control 118

- 7-1 What Is Deviance? 119
- 7-2 Types of Deviance and Crime 121
- 7-3 Functionalist Perspectives on Deviance 126
- 7-4 Conflict Perspectives on Deviance 128
- 7-5 Feminist Perspectives on Deviance 130
- 7-6 Symbolic Interaction Perspectives on Deviance 132
- 7-7 Controlling Deviance and Crime 134

## 8 Social Stratification: United States and Global 138

- 8-1 Social Stratification Systems and Bases 139

- 8-2 Social Class in America 142
- 8-3 Poverty 145
- 8-4 Social Mobility 148
- 8-5 Global Stratification 151
- 8-6 Sociological Explanations: Why There Are Haves and Have-Nots 154

## 9 Gender and Sexuality 160

- 9-1 Sex, Gender, and Culture 161
- 9-2 Contemporary Gender Inequality 166
- 9-3 Sexuality 169
- 9-4 Some Current Social Issues About Sexuality 171
- 9-5 Gender and Sexuality Across Cultures 173
- 9-6 Sociological Explanations of Gender and Sexuality 175

## 10 Race and Ethnicity 182

- 10-1 U.S. Racial and Ethnic Diversity 183
- 10-2 The Social Significance of Race and Ethnicity 183



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- 10-3 Our Changing Immigration Mosaic 185
- 10-4 Dominant and Minority Groups 187
- 10-5 Some Sources of Racial-Ethnic Friction 189
- 10-6 Major U.S. Racial and Ethnic Groups 191
- 10-7 Sociological Explanations of Racial-Ethnic Inequality 198
- 10-8 Interracial and Interethnic Relationships 202

## 11 The Economy and Politics 204

- 11-1 Global Economic Systems 205
- 11-2 Corporations and the Economy 207
- 11-3 Work in U.S. Society Today 208
- 11-4 Sociological Explanations of Work and the Economy 214
- 11-5 Global Political Systems 217
- 11-6 Politics, Power, and Authority 219
- 11-7 Politics and Power in U.S. Society 221
- 11-8 Sociological Perspectives on Politics and Power 225



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## 12 Families and Aging 230

- 12-1 What Is a Family? 231
- 12-2 How U.S. Families Are Changing 235
- 12-3 Family Conflict and Violence 242
- 12-4 Our Aging Society 245
- 12-5 Sociological Explanations of Family and Aging 249

## 13 Education and Religion 254

- 13-1 Education and Society 255
- 13-2 Sociological Perspectives on Education 255



- 13-3 Some Current Issues in U.S. Education 263
- 13-4 Religion and Society 268
- 13-5 Religious Organization and Major World Religions 269
- 13-6 Religion in the United States 271
- 13-7 Sociological Perspectives on Religion 275

## 14 Health and Medicine 282

- 14-1 Global Health and Illness 283
- 14-2 Health and Illness in the United States 283
- 14-3 Health Care: United States and Global 291
- 14-4 Sociological Perspectives on Health and Medicine 293



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## 15 Population, Urbanization, and the Environment 302

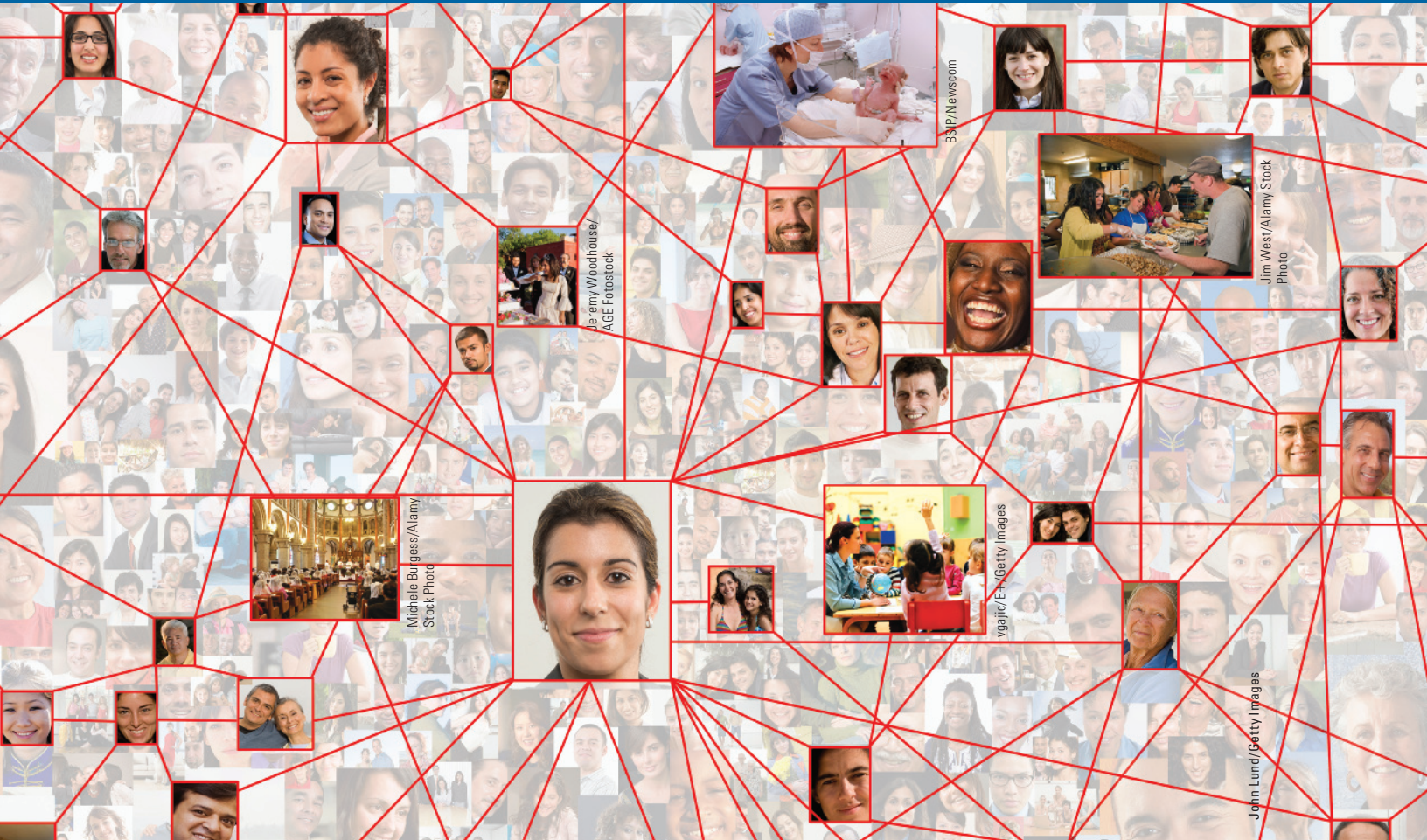
- 15-1 Population Changes 303
- 15-2 Urbanization 310
- 15-3 The Environment 316

## 16 Social Change: Collective Behavior, Social Movements, and Technology 326

- 16-1 Collective Behavior 327
- 16-2 Social Movements 335
- 16-3 Technology and Social Change 340

- References 346
- Name Index 387
- Subject Index 400

# Thinking Like a Sociologist



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 1-1 Explain what sociology is and how it differs from other social sciences and common sense.
- 1-2 Explain how and why a sociological imagination helps us understand society.
- 1-3 Identify and illustrate why it's worthwhile to study sociology.
- 1-4 Describe and explain the origins of sociology, why sociology developed, and its most influential early theorists.
- 1-5 Compare, illustrate, and evaluate the four contemporary sociological perspectives.

After finishing  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 19** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**



Texting and emailing are associated with the highest risk of car crashes, and headset cell phones aren't much safer than handheld cell phones. Almost 90 percent of U.S. drivers say that distracted driving is a serious safety threat. However, 70 percent talk on a cell phone, text, surf the Internet, and even video chat while driving. In 2014 alone, such distractions contributed to 18 percent of all crashes that resulted in death or severe injury (AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 2015; AT&T Newsroom, 2015; National Center for Statistics and Analysis, 2016).

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Sociology is basically common sense.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree						strongly disagree

Why is there such a disconnection between many Americans' attitudes and behavior? This chapter examines these and other questions. Let's begin by considering what sociology is (and isn't) and how a "sociological imagination" can give us more control over our lives. We'll then look at how sociologists grapple with complex theoretical issues in explaining social life. Before reading further, take the True or False?

## 1-1 WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY?

Stated simply, **sociology** is the scientific study of human behavior in society. Sociologists study behavior patterns that occur between individuals, among small groups (e.g., families), large organizations (e.g., Apple), and entire societies (e.g., the United States). But, you might protest, "I'm unique."

### 1-1a Are You Unique?

Yes and no. Each of us is unique in the sense that you and I are like no one else on earth. Even identical twins, who have the same physical characteristics and genetic matter, often differ in personality and interests. One of my colleagues likes to tell the story about his 3-year-old twin girls who received the same doll. One twin chattered that the doll's name was Lori, that she loved Lori, and would take good care of her. The second twin

muttered, "Her name is Stupid," and flung the doll into a corner.

Despite some individual differences, identical twins, you, and I are like other people in many ways. Around

## True or False?

### EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT...

1. The death penalty reduces crime.
2. Women's earnings are now similar to men's, especially in high-income occupations.
3. People age 65 and older make up the largest group of those who are poor.
4. There are more married than unmarried U.S. adults.
5. Divorce rates are higher today than in the past.
6. Latinos are the fastest-growing racial-ethnic group in the United States.
7. The best way to get an accurate measure of public opinion is to poll as many people as possible.
8. Illegal drugs are the biggest health hazard.

The answers are at the end of 1-1.

the world, we experience grief when a loved one dies, participate in rituals that celebrate marriage or the birth of a child, and want to have healthy and happy lives. Some actions, such as terrorist attacks, are unpredictable. For the most part, however, people conform to expected and acceptable behavior. From the time that we get up until we go to bed, we follow a variety of rules and customs about what we eat, how we drive, how

**sociology** the scientific study of human behavior in society.

## Marriage without Love? No Way!

When I ask my students, “Would you marry someone you’re not in love with?” most laugh, raise an eyebrow, or stare at me in disbelief. “Of course not!” they exclaim. In fact, the “open” courtship and dating systems common in Western nations, including the United States, are foreign to much of the world. In many African, Asian, Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern countries, marriages are arranged: They forge bonds between families rather than individuals, and preserve family continuity along religious and socioeconomic lines. Love isn’t a prerequisite for marriage in societies that value kin groups rather than individual choices (see Chapters 9 and 12).

we act in different social situations, and how we dress for work, classes, and leisure activities.

So what? you might shrug. Isn’t it “obvious” that we dress differently for classes than for job interviews? Isn’t all of this just plain old common sense?

### 1-1b Isn’t Sociology Just Common Sense?

No. Sociology goes well beyond conventional wisdom, what we call common sense, in several ways:

- ▶ **Common sense is subjective.** If a woman crashes into my car, I might conclude, according to conventional wisdom, statements that we’ve heard over the years, that “women are terrible drivers.” In fact, most drivers involved in crashes are men—especially teenagers and those age 70 and older (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 2013). Thus, *objective* data show that, overall, men are worse drivers than women.
- ▶ **Common sense ignores facts.** Because common sense is subjective, it ignores facts that challenge cherished beliefs. For example, many Americans are most concerned about street crimes, such as robbery or homicide. FBI and sociological data show, however, that we’re much more likely to be assaulted or murdered by someone we know or live with (see Chapters 7 and 12).
- ▶ **Common sense varies across groups and cultures.** Many Americans believe that working harder decreases poverty. In contrast, Europeans tend to think that poverty is due to forces outside people’s control (see Chapters 3 and 8). Thus,

common sense notions about economic success vary considerably across countries.

- ▶ **Much of our common sense is based on myths and misconceptions.** A common myth is that living together is a good way to find out whether partners will get along after marriage. Generally, however, couples who live together before marriage have higher divorce rates than those who don’t (see Chapter 12).

Sociology, in contrast to conventional wisdom, examines claims and beliefs critically, considers many points of view, and enables us to move beyond established ways of thinking. The *sociological perspective* analyzes how social context influences people’s lives. The “sociological imagination” is at the center of the sociological perspective.

## True or False?

### EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT...

*All of the answers are false.*

1. States without the death penalty have had consistently lower homicide rates than those with death penalties (see Chapter 7).
2. Regardless of education or occupation, women’s earnings are lower than men’s (see Chapters 9 and 11).
3. Children ages 5 and under make up the largest group of Americans who are poor (see Chapter 8).
4. The number of unmarried U.S. adults outnumber those who are married (see Chapter 12).
5. Divorce rates are lower today than they were between 1975 and 1990 (see Chapter 12).
6. Latinos are the largest ethnic group in the United States, but Asian Americans are the fastest growing (see Chapter 10).
7. What matters in polling is not the number of people polled, but their representativeness in the population studied (see Chapter 2).
8. In the United States and worldwide, tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disability (see Chapter 14).



## WHAT IS A SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION?

According to sociologist C. Wright Mills (1916–1962), social factors such as religion, ethnicity, and politics affect our behavior. Mills (1959) called this ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and larger social influences the **sociological imagination**. The sociological imagination emphasizes the connection between personal troubles (biography) and structural (public and historical) issues.

Consider unemployment. If only a small group of people can't find a job, it's a *personal trouble* that may be due, in part, to an individual's low educational attainment, lack of specific skills that employers want, not searching for work, and so on. If unemployment is widespread, it's a *public issue* because economic problems are also the result of structural factors such as mass layoffs, sending jobs overseas, technological changes, and restrictive hiring policies (see Chapter 11). Thus, people may be unemployed regardless of skills, a college degree, and job searches.

A sociological imagination helps us understand how larger social forces impact our everyday lives. It identifies why our personal troubles are often due to larger public issues and policies over which we have little, if any, control. A sociological imagination relies on both micro- and macro-level approaches to understand our social world.

### 1-2a Microsociology: How People Affect Our Everyday Lives

**Microsociology** examines the patterns of individuals' social interaction in specific settings. In most of our relationships, we interact with others on a micro, or "small," level (e.g., members of a work group discussing who will perform which tasks). These everyday interactions involve what people think, say, or do on a daily basis.

### 1-2b Macrosociology: How Social Structure Affects Our Everyday Lives

**Macrosociology** focuses on large-scale patterns and processes that characterize society as a whole. Macro, or "large," approaches are especially useful in understanding some of the constraints—such as economic forces and public policies.

Microsociology and macrosociology differ conceptually, but are interrelated. Consider the reasons for



Jessica Miglio/Netflix/Everett Collection

Netflix's *Orange Is the New Black* revolves around a white, upper-middle-class woman who's in prison for drug smuggling. For sociologists, the series illustrates the connection between micro-level individual behavior (the inmates' and prison guards' experiences) and macro-level factors (social class, family structures, racial discrimination, corruption, and prison overcrowding).

divorce. On a micro level, sociologists study factors like extramarital affairs, substance abuse, arguments about money, and other everyday interactions that fuel marital tension and unhappiness, leading to divorce. On a macro level, sociologists look at how the economy, laws, cultural values, and technology affect divorce rates (see Chapter 12). Examining micro, macro, and micro-macro forces is one of the reasons why sociology is a powerful tool in understanding (and changing) our behavior and society at large (Ritzer, 1992).

## WHY STUDY SOCIOLOGY?

Sociology offers explanations that can greatly improve the quality of your everyday life. These explanations can influence choices that range from your personal decisions to expanding your career opportunities.

### 1-3a Making Informed Decisions

Sociology can help us make more informed decisions. We often hear that grief counseling is essential after the death

**sociological imagination**  
seeing the relationship between individual experiences and larger social influences.

**microsociology** examines the patterns of individuals' social interaction in specific settings.

**macrosociology** examines the large-scale patterns and processes that characterize society as a whole.

of a loved one. In fact, 4 in 10 Americans are better off without it. Grief is normal, and most people work through their losses on their own, whereas counseling sometimes prolongs depression and anxiety (Stroebe et al., 2000).

### 1-3b Understanding Diversity

The racial and ethnic composition of the United States is changing. By 2025, only 58 percent of the U.S. population is projected to be white, down from 76 percent in 1990 and 86 percent in 1950 (Passel et al., 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). As you'll see in later chapters, this racial/ethnic shift has already affected interpersonal relationships as well as education, politics, religion, and other spheres of social life.

Recognizing and understanding diversity is one of sociology's central themes. Our gender, social class, marital status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age—among other factors—shape our beliefs, behavior, and experiences. If, for example, you're a white middle-class male who attends a private college, your experiences are very different from those of a female Vietnamese immigrant who is struggling to pay expenses at a community college.

Increasingly, nations around the world are intertwined through political and economic ties. What happens in other societies often has a direct or indirect impact on contemporary U.S. life. Decisions in oil-producing countries, for example, affect gas prices, spur the development of hybrid cars that are less dependent on oil, and stimulate research on alternative sources of energy.



Suzanne Tucker/Shutterstock.com

### 1-3c Shaping Social and Public Policies and Practices

Sociology is valuable in applied, clinical, and policy settings because many jobs require understanding society and research to create social change. According to a director of a research institute, sociology increased her professional contributions: "I can look at problems of concern to the National Institutes of Health and say 'here's a different way to solve this problem'" (Nyseth et al., 2011: 48).

### 1-3d Thinking Critically

We develop a sociological imagination not only when we understand and can apply the concepts, but also when we can think, speak, and write critically. Much of our thinking and decision making is often impulsive and

## Snapshots



Jason Love/Cartoonstock.com

emotional. In contrast, critical thinking involves knowledge and problem solving (Paul and Elder, 2007).

Critical sociological thinking goes even further because we begin to understand how our individual lives, choices, and troubles are shaped by race, gender, social class, and social institutions like the economy, politics, and education (Eckstein et al., 1995; Grauerholz and Bouma-Holtrop, 2003). *Table 1.1* summarizes some of the basic elements of critical sociological thinking.

**Table 1.1** What Is Critical Sociological Thinking?

Critical sociological thinking requires a combination of skills. Some of the basic elements include the ability to:

- rely on reason rather than emotion
- ask questions, avoid snap judgments, and examine popular and unpopular beliefs
- recognize one's own and others' assumptions, prejudices, and points of view
- remain open to alternative explanations and theories
- examine competing evidence (see Chapter 2)
- understand how public policies affect private troubles





Some well-known people who were sociology majors: Rev. Martin Luther King, Ronald Reagan, Michelle Obama, Robin Williams, and Joe Theismann. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division[Leffler, Warren K/ LC-DIG-ds-00836]; U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Official White House Photo; Everett Collection/Shutterstock.com; Nate Fine/Getty Images Sport/Getty Images; iStock.com/belterz

### 1-3e Expanding Your Career Opportunities

A degree in sociology is a springboard for many jobs and professions. A national survey of under-graduate sociology majors found that 44 percent were in administrative or management positions, 22 percent were employed in social service and counseling, 18 percent were in sales and marketing, and 12 percent were teachers (Senter et al., 2014; see also Senter and Spalter-Roth, 2016).

What specific skills do sociology majors learn that are useful in their jobs? Some of the most important are being better able to work with people (71 percent), to organize information (69 percent), to write reports that nonsociologists understand (61 percent), and to interpret research findings (56 percent) (Van Vooren and Spalter-Roth, 2010).

In other cases, students major in sociology because it provides a broad liberal arts foundation for professions such as law, education, and social work. The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) now includes material from sociology because “Being a good physician is about more than scientific knowledge. It’s about understanding people—how they think, interact, and make decisions” (Olsen, 2016: 72).

Even if you don’t major in sociology, developing your sociological imagination can enrich your job skills. Sociology courses help you learn to think abstractly and critically, formulate problems, ask incisive questions, search for data in the most reliable and up-to-date sources, organize material, and improve your oral presentations (ASA Research Department, 2013; Spalter-Roth et al., 2013).

1-4

## SOME ORIGINS OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

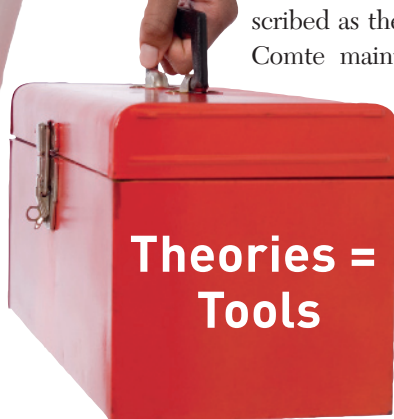
During college, most of my classmates and I postponed taking theory courses (regardless of our major) as long as possible. “This stuff is boring, boring, boring,” we’d grump, “and has nothing to do with the real world.” In fact, theorizing is part of our everyday lives. Every time you try to explain why your family and friends behave as they do, for example, you’re theorizing.

As people struggle to understand human behavior, they develop theories. A **theory** is a set of statements that explains why a phenomenon occurs. Theories produce knowledge, guide our research, help us analyze our findings, and, ideally, offer solutions for social problems.

Sociologist James White (2005: 170–171) describes theories as “tools” that don’t profess to know “the truth” but “may need replacing” over time as our understanding of society becomes more sophisticated. In effect, theories evolve over time because of cultural and technological changes. You’ll see shortly, for example, that sociological theories changed considerably after the rise of feminist scholarship during the late 1960s.

Sociological theories didn’t emerge overnight. Nineteenth-century thinkers grappled with some of the same questions that sociologists try to answer today: Why do people behave as they do? What holds society together? What pulls it apart? Of the many early sociological theorists, some of the most influential were Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Jane Addams, and W. E. B. Du Bois.

**theory** a set of statements that explains why a phenomenon occurs.



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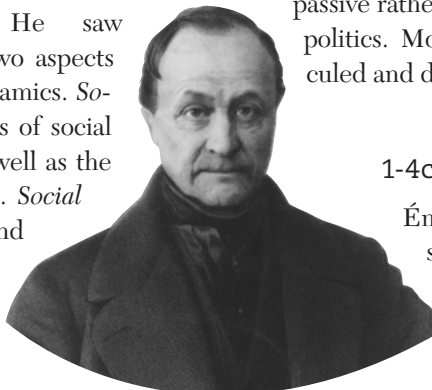
### 1-4a Auguste Comte

Auguste Comte (1798–1857) coined the term *sociology* and is often described as the “father of sociology.”

Comte maintained that the study of society must be **empirical**. That is, information should be based on observations, experiments, or other data collection rather than on ideology, religion, intuition, or conventional wisdom.

He saw

sociology as the scientific study of two aspects of society: social statics and social dynamics. *Social statics* investigates how principles of social order explain a particular society, as well as the interconnections between institutions. *Social dynamics* explores how individuals and societies change over time. Comte’s emphasis on social order and change within and across societies is still useful today because many sociologists examine the relationships between education and politics (social statics), as well as how such interconnections change over time (social dynamics).



Hulton Archive/Getty Images

The Father of Sociology—  
Auguste Comte

### 1-4b Harriet Martineau

Harriet Martineau (1802–1876), an English author, published several dozen books on a wide range of topics in social science, politics, literature, and history. Her translation and condensation of Auguste Comte’s difficult material for popular consumption was largely responsible for the dissemination of Comte’s work. “We might say, then, that sociology had parents of both sexes” (Adams and Sydnie, 2001: 32).

She emphasized the importance of systematic data collection through observation and interviews, and an objective analysis of data to explain events and behavior. She also published the first sociology research methods textbook.

**empirical** information that is based on observations, experiments, or other data collection rather than on ideology, religion, intuition, or conventional wisdom.

**social facts** aspects of social life, external to the individual, that can be measured.

Martineau, a feminist and strong opponent of slavery, denounced many aspects of capitalism as alienating and degrading, and criticized dangerous workplaces that often led to injury and death. Martineau promoted improving women’s positions in the workforce through education, nondiscriminatory employment, and training programs. She advocated women’s admission into medical schools and emphasized issues such as infant care, the rights of the aged, suicide prevention, and other social problems (Hoecker-Drysdale, 1992).

After a long tour of the United States, Martineau described American women as being socialized to be subservient and dependent rather than equal marriage partners. She also criticized American and European religious institutions for expecting women to be pious and passive rather than educating them in philosophy and politics. Most scholars, including sociologists, ridiculed and dismissed such ideas as too radical.

### 1-4c Émile Durkheim

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), a French sociologist and writer, agreed with Comte that societies are characterized by unity and cohesion because their members are bound together by common interests and attitudes. Whereas Comte acknowledged the importance of using scientific methods to study society, Durkheim actually did so by poring over

official statistics to test a theory about suicide (Adams and Sydnie, 2001).

### SOCIAL FACTS

To be scientific, Durkheim maintained, sociology must study **social facts**—aspects of social life, external to the individual, that can be measured. Sociologists can determine *material facts* by examining demographic characteristics such as age, place of residence, and population size.

They can gauge *nonmaterial facts*, like communication processes, by observing everyday behavior and how people relate to each other (see Chapters 3 to 6). For contemporary sociologists, social facts



Spencer Arnold/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Harriet Martineau



also include collecting and analyzing data on *social currents* such as collective behavior and social movements (see Chapter 16).

## DIVISION OF LABOR

One of Durkheim's central questions was how people can be autonomous and individualistic while being integrated in society. **Social solidarity**, or social cohesiveness and harmony, according to Durkheim, is maintained by a **division of labor**—an interdependence of different tasks and occupations, characteristic of industrialized societies, that produces social unity and facilitates change.

As the division of labor becomes more specialized, people become increasingly dependent on others for specific goods and services. Today, for example, many couples who marry often contract “experts” (e.g., photographers, florists, deejays, caterers, bartenders, travel agents, and even “wedding planners”).

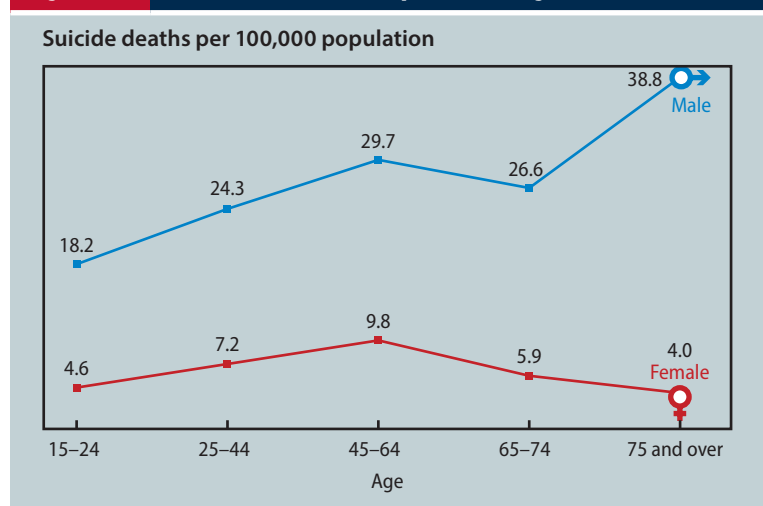
## SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Durkheim was one of the first sociologists to test a theory using data. In his classic study, *Suicide*, Durkheim (1897/1951) relied on extensive data collection to test his theory that suicide is associated with social integration. He concluded that people who experience meaningful social relationships in families, social groups, and communities are less likely to commit suicide than those who feel alone, helpless, or hopeless. Thus, many seemingly isolated individual acts, including suicide, are often the result of structural arrangements, such as weak social ties.

We typically hear about high teenage suicide rates, but they're much higher at later ages. As in Durkheim's day, men have higher suicide rates than women across all age groups (Figure 1.1), and white males age 85 and older are the most likely to take their own lives (National Center for Health Statistics, 2015).

Durkheim's connection of social integration to the suicide rate is still relevant today. The high suicide rates of older white men are due to

**Figure 1.1** U.S. Suicide Rates, by Sex and Age



Source: Based on Curtin et al., 2016, Figures 2 and 3.

a complex interplay of depression, substance abuse, access to guns, hopelessness because of terminal illnesses, and not being “connected” to family, friends, community groups, and support systems that women tend to develop throughout their lives (American Association of Suicidology, 2009; see also Chapters 9 and 12).

### 1-4d Karl Marx

Karl Marx (1818–1883), a German social philosopher, is often described as the most influential social scientist who ever lived. Marx, like Comte and Durkheim, tried to explain the societal changes that were taking place during the Industrial Revolution.

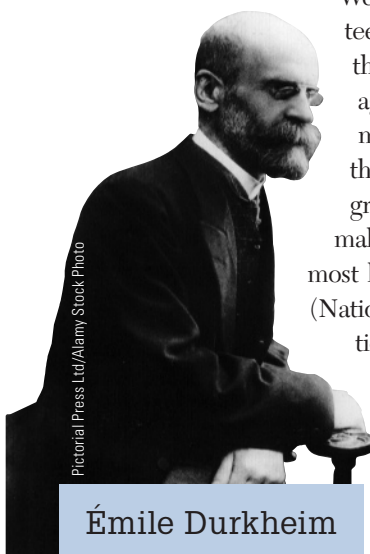
The Industrial Revolution began in England around 1780 and spread throughout Western Europe and the United States during the nineteenth century. A number of technological inventions—like the spinning wheel, the steam engine, and large weaving looms—enabled the development of large-scale manufacturing and mining industries over a relatively short period. The extensive mechanization shifted agricultural and home-based work to factories in cities. As masses of people migrated from small farms to factories to find jobs, urbanization and capitalism grew rapidly.

## CAPITALISM

Unlike his predecessors and contemporaries, Marx (1867/1967, 1964) maintained that economic issues produce divisiveness rather than social solidarity. For Marx, the most important

**social solidarity** social cohesiveness and harmony.

**division of labor** an interdependence of different tasks and occupations, characteristic of industrialized societies, that produces social unity and facilitates change.



Émile Durkheim

social change was the development of **capitalism**, an economic system in which the ownership of the means of production—such as land, factories, large sums of money, and machines—is private. As a result, Marx saw industrial society as composed of three social classes:

- ▶ **capitalists**—the ruling elite who own the means of producing wealth (such as factories)
- ▶ **petit bourgeoisie**—small business owners and workers who still have their own means of production but might end up in the proletariat because they're driven out by competition or their businesses fail
- ▶ **proletariat**—the masses of workers who depend on wages to survive, have few resources, and make up the working class

## CLASS CONFLICT

Marx believed that society is divided into the haves (capitalists) and the have-nots (proletariat). For Marx, capitalism is a class system in which conflict between the classes is common and society is anything but cohesive. Instead, class antagonisms revolve around struggles between the capitalists, who increase their profits by exploiting workers, and workers, who resist but give in because they depend on capitalists for jobs.

Marx argued that there's a close relationship between inequality, social conflict, and social class. History, he maintained, is a series of class struggles between capitalists and workers. As wealth becomes more concentrated in the hands of a few capitalists, Marx predicted, the ranks of an increasingly dissatisfied proletariat would swell, leading to bloody revolution and eventually a classless society. The Occupy Wall Street movement showed that thousands of Americans are very unhappy about the growing inequality between the haves and the have-nots, but there hasn't been a "bloody revolution" in the United States, unlike some countries in the Middle East.

## ALIENATION

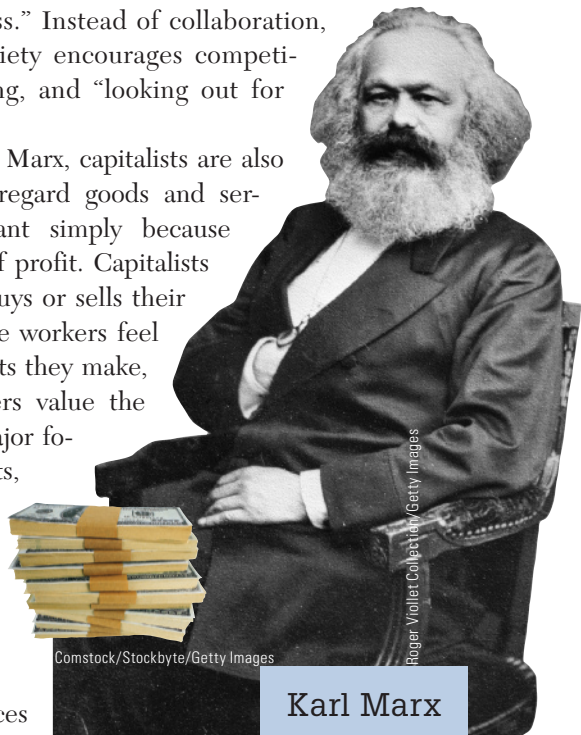
In industrial capitalist systems, Marx (1844/1964) contended, **alienation**—feeling separated from one's group or society—is common across all social classes. Workers feel alienated because they don't own or control

either the means of production or the product. Because meaningful labor is what makes us human, Marx maintained, our workplace has alienated us "from the essence

of our humanness." Instead of collaboration, a capitalistic society encourages competition, backstabbing, and "looking out for number one."

According to Marx, capitalists are also alienated. They regard goods and services as important simply because they're sources of profit. Capitalists don't care who buys or sells their products, how the workers feel about the products they make, or whether buyers value the products. The major focus, for capitalists, is on increasing profits as much as possible rather than feeling "connected" to the products or services they sell. Every

year, for example, companies must recall cars, pharmaceutical items, toys, and food that cause injuries, illness, or death.



Karl Marx



Occupy Wall Street (OWS) was a protest movement against corporate greed, corruption, and influence on government. It began in mid-September, 2011, in New York City's Wall Street financial district. The OWS slogan, "We are the 99%," referred to U.S. income and wealth inequality between the wealthiest 1 percent and the rest of the population. OWS received global attention and spawned similar movements worldwide but was short-lived (see Chapter 16).

**capitalism** an economic system based on the private ownership of property and the means of production.

**alienation** feeling separated from one's group or society.



## 1-4e **Max Weber**

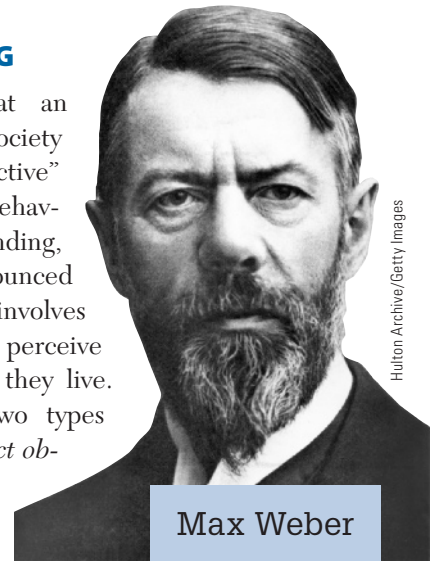
Max Weber (pronounced VAY-ber; 1864–1920) was a German sociologist, economist, legal scholar, historian, and politician. Unlike Marx's emphasis on economics as a major factor in explaining society, Weber focused on social organization, a subjective understanding of behavior, and a value-free sociology.

### **SOCIAL ORGANIZATION**

For Weber, economic factors were important, but ideas, religious values, ideologies, and charismatic leaders were just as crucial in shaping and changing societies. He maintained that a complete understanding of society requires an analysis of the social organization and interrelationships among economic, political, and cultural institutions. In his *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, for example, Weber (1920/1958) argued that the self-denial fostered by Calvinism supported the rise of capitalism and shaped many of our current values about working hard (see Chapters 3 and 6).

### **SUBJECTIVE UNDERSTANDING**

Weber posited that an understanding of society requires a “subjective” understanding of behavior. Such understanding, or *verstehen* (pronounced fer-SHTAY-en), involves knowing how people perceive the world in which they live. Weber described two types of *verstehen*. In *direct observational understanding*, the social scientist observes a person's facial expressions, gestures, and listens to his/her words. In *explanatory understanding*, the social scientist tries to grasp the intention and context of the behavior.



Hulton Archive/Getty Images

## Is It Possible to Be a Value-Free Sociologist?

Max Weber was concerned about popular professors who took political positions that pleased many of their students. He felt that these professors were behaving improperly because science, including sociology, must be “value free.” Faculty must set their personal values aside to make a contribution to society. According to a sociologist who agrees with Weber, sociology's weakness is its tendency toward moralism and ideology:

*Many people become sociologists out of an impulse to reform society, fight injustice, and help people. Those sentiments are noble, but unless they are tempered by skepticism, discipline, and scientific detachment, they can be destructive. Especially when you are morally outraged and burning with a desire for action, you need to be cautious (Massey, 2007: B12).*

Some argue that being value free is a myth because it's impossible for a scholar's attitudes and opinions to be totally divorced from her or his scholarship (Gouldner, 1962). Many sociologists, after all, do research on topics that they consider significant and about which they have strong views.

Others maintain that one's values should be passionately partisan, should frame research issues, and should improve society (Feagin, 2001). Sociologists

### **CAN SOCIOLOGISTS BE VALUE FREE—ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY HAVE STRONG FEELINGS ABOUT MANY SOCIETAL ISSUES? SHOULD THEY BE?**

shouldn't apologize for being subjective in their teaching and research. By staying silent, social scientists “cede the conversation to those with the loudest voices or deepest pockets . . . people with megaphones who spread sensational misinformation” that deprives the public of the best available data (Wang, 2015: A48).

Can sociologists *really* be value free—especially when they have strong feelings about many societal issues? Should they be?

If a person bursts into tears (direct observational understanding), the observer knows what the person may be feeling (anger, sorrow, and so on). An explanatory understanding goes a step further by spelling out the reason for the behavior (rejection by a loved one, frustration if you lose your smartphone, humiliation if a boss yells at you in public).

## VALUE-FREE SOCIOLOGY

One of Weber's most lasting and controversial views was the notion that sociologists must be as objective, or "value free," as possible in analyzing society. A researcher who is **value free** is one who separates her or his personal values, opinions, ideology, and beliefs from scientific research.

During Weber's time, the government and other organizations demanded that university faculty teach the "right" ideas. Weber encouraged everyone to be involved as citizens, but he maintained that educators and scholars should be as dispassionate as possible politically and ideologically. The task of the teacher, Weber argued, was to provide students with knowledge and scientific experience, not to "imprint" the teacher's personal political views and value judgments (Gerth and Mills, 1946). "Is It Possible to Be a Value-Free Sociologist?" examines this issue further.

### 1-4f Jane Addams

Jane Addams (1860–1935) was a social worker who co-founded Hull House, one of the first settlement houses in Chicago that served the neighborhood poor. An active reformer throughout her life, Jane Addams was a leader in the women's suffrage movement and, in 1931, was the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her advocacy of negotiating, rather than waging war, to settle disputes.

Sociologist Mary Jo Deegan (1986) describes Jane Addams as "the greatest woman sociologist of her day." However, she was ignored by her colleagues at the University of Chicago (the first sociology department established in the United States in 1892) because discrimination

**value free** separating one's personal values, opinions, ideology, and beliefs from scientific research.

against women sociologists was "rampant" (p. 8).

Despite such discrimination, Addams published articles in many popular



Jane Addams with a child at Hull House

and scholarly journals, as well as many books on the everyday life of urban neighborhoods, especially the effects of social disorganization and immigration. Much of her work contributed to symbolic interaction, an emerging school of thought that you'll read about shortly. One of Addams' greatest intellectual legacies was her emphasis on applying knowledge to everyday problems. Her pioneering work in criminology included ecological maps of Chicago that were later credited to men (Moyer, 2003).

### 1-4g W. E. B. Du Bois

W. E. B. Du Bois (pronounced Do-BOICE; 1868–1963) was a prominent black sociologist, writer,

editor, social reformer, and orator. The author of almost two dozen books on Africans and black Americans, Du Bois spent most of his life responding to the critics and detractors of black life. He was the first African American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard University, but once remarked, "I was in Harvard but not of it."

Du Bois helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and edited its journal, *Crisis*. The problem of the twentieth century, he wrote, is the problem of the color line. Du Bois believed that the race problem was one of ignorance, and advocated a "cure" for prejudice and discrimination. Such cures included promoting black political power and civil rights and providing blacks with a higher education rather than funneling them into technical schools.

These and other writings were unpopular at a time when Booker T. Washington, a well-known black educator, encouraged black people to be patient instead of demanding equal rights. As a result, Du Bois was dismissed as a radical by his contemporaries but was rediscovered by a new generation of black scholars during the 1970s and 1980s. Among his many contributions, Du Bois examined the oppressive effects of race and social class, advocated women's rights, and played a key role in reshaping black-white relations in America (Du Bois, 1986; Lewis, 1993).

All of these and other early thinkers agreed that people are transformed by each other's actions, social patterns, and historical changes. They and other scholars shaped contemporary sociological theories.



## CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

How one defines “contemporary sociological theory” is somewhat arbitrary. The mid-twentieth century is a good starting point because “the late 1950s and 1960s have, in historical hindsight, been regarded as significant years of momentous changes in the social and cultural life of most Western societies” (Adams and Sydnie, 2001: 479). Some of the sociological perspectives had earlier origins, but all matured during this period.

Sociologists typically use more than one theory to explain behavior. The theories view our social world somewhat differently, but all of them analyze why society is organized the way it is and why we behave as we do. Four of the most influential theoretical perspectives are functionalism, conflict theory, feminist theories, and symbolic interaction.

### 1-5a Functionalism

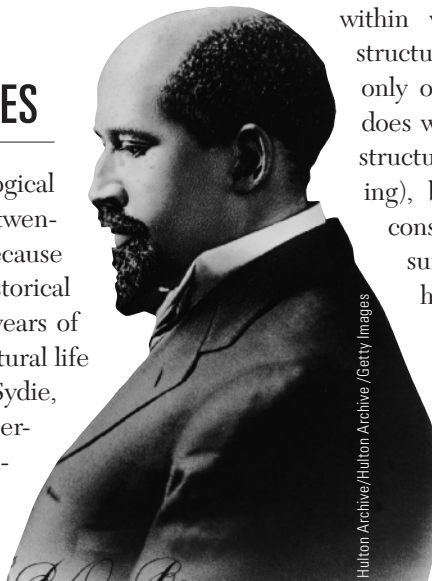
**Functionalism** (also known as *structural functionalism*) maintains that society is a complex system of interdependent parts that work together to ensure a society’s survival. Much of contemporary functionalism grew out of the work of Auguste Comte and Émile Durkheim, both of whom believed that human behavior is a result of social structures that promote order and integration in society.

One of their contemporaries, English philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), used an organic analogy to explain the evolution of societies. To survive, Spencer (1862/1901) wrote, our vital organs—like the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, and so on—must function together. Similarly, the parts of a society, like the parts of a body, work together to maintain the whole structure.

### SOCIETY IS A SOCIAL SYSTEM

Prominent American sociologists, especially Talcott Parsons (1902–1979) and Robert K. Merton (1910–2003), developed the earlier ideas of structure and function. For these and other functionalists, a society is a system that is composed of major institutions such as government, religion, the economy, education, medicine, and the family.

Each institution or other social group has *structures*, or organized units, that are connected to each other and



W. E. B. Du Bois

within which behavior occurs. Education structures like colleges, for instance, aren’t only organized internally in terms of who does what and when, but depend on other structures like government (to provide funding), business (to produce textbooks and construct buildings), and medicine (to ensure that students, staff, and faculty are healthy).

### FUNCTIONS AND DYSFUNCTIONS

Each structure fulfills certain *functions*, or purposes and activities, to meet different needs that contribute to a society’s stability and survival (Merton, 1938). The purpose of education, for instance, is to transmit knowledge to the young, to teach them

to be good citizens, and to prepare them for jobs (see Chapter 13).

**Dysfunctions** are social patterns that have a negative impact on a group or society. When one part of society isn’t working, it affects other parts, generating conflict, divisiveness, and social problems. Consider religion. In the United States, the Catholic Church’s stance on issues such as not ordaining women to be priests and denouncing abortion and homosexuality has produced a rift between those who embrace or question papal edicts. In other countries, religious intolerance has led to wars and terrorism (see Chapter 13).

### MANIFEST AND LATENT FUNCTIONS

There are two kinds of functions. **Manifest functions** are intended and recognized; they’re present and clearly evident. **Latent functions** are unintended and unrecognized; they’re present but not immediately obvious.

Consider the marriage ceremony. Its primary manifest function is to publicize the formation of a new family unit and to legitimize sexual intercourse and childbirth (even though both might occur outside of

**functionalism (structural functionalism)** maintains that society is a complex system of interdependent parts that work together to ensure a society’s survival.

**dysfunctions** social patterns that have a negative impact on a group or society.

**manifest functions** purposes and activities that are intended and recognized; they’re present and clearly evident.

**latent functions** purposes and activities that are unintended and unrecognized; they’re present but not immediately obvious.

## Sociology and Other Social Sciences: What's the Difference?



Mitchell Funk/Photographer's Choice/  
Getty Images

How would different social scientists study the same phenomenon, such as homelessness? Criminologists might examine whether crime rates are higher among homeless people than in the general population. Economists might measure the financial impact of programs for the homeless. Political scientists might study whether and how government

officials respond to homelessness. Psychologists might be interested in how homelessness affects individuals' emotional and mental health. Social workers are most likely to try to provide needed services (e.g., food, shelter, medical care, and jobs). Sociologists have been most interested in examining homelessness across gender, age, and social class, and explaining how this social problem devastates families and communities.

According to sociologist Herbert Gans (2005), sociologists “study everything.” There are currently 43 different subfields in sociology, and the number continues to increase, because sociologists' interests range across many areas.

marriage). The latent functions of a marriage ceremony include communicating a “hands-off” message to suitors, providing the new couple with household goods and products through bridal showers and wedding gifts, and redefining family boundaries to include in-laws or step-family members.

### CRITICAL EVALUATION

You'll see in later chapters that functionalism is useful in seeing the “big picture” of interrelated structures and functions. Its influence waned during the 1960s and 1970s, however, because functionalism was so focused on order and stability that it often ignored social change. For example, functionalism couldn't explain the many rapid changes sparked by the civil rights, women's, and gay movements.

A second and related criticism is that functionalism often glosses over the widespread inequality that a handful of powerful people create and maintain. Con-

flict theorists, especially, have pointed out that what's functional for some privileged groups is dysfunctional for many others.

**conflict theory** examines how and why groups disagree, struggle over power, and compete for scarce resources.

## 1-5b Conflict Theory

In contrast to functionalism—which emphasizes order, stability, cohesion, and consensus—**conflict theory** examines how and why groups disagree, struggle over power, and compete for scarce resources (like property, wealth, and prestige). Conflict theorists see disagreement and the resulting changes in society as natural, inevitable, and even desirable.

### SOURCES OF CONFLICT

The conflict perspective has a long history. As you saw earlier, Karl Marx predicted that conflict would result from widespread economic inequality, and W. E. B. Du Bois criticized U.S. society for its ongoing and divisive racial discrimination.

Since the 1960s, many sociologists—especially feminist and minority scholars—have emphasized that the key sources of economic inequity in any society include race, ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation.

Conflict theorists agree with functionalists that many societal arrangements are functional. But, conflict theorists ask, who benefits? And who loses? When corporations merge, workers in lower-end jobs are often laid off while the salaries and benefits of corporate executives soar and the value of stocks (usually held by higher

**SOCIOLOGISTS  
TYPICALLY USE MORE  
THAN ONE THEORY TO  
EXPLAIN BEHAVIOR  
AND WHY SOCIETY IS  
ORGANIZED THE WAY  
IT IS.**





Among other manifest functions, schools transmit knowledge and prepare children for adult economic roles. Among their latent functions, schools provide matchmaking opportunities. What are some other examples of education's manifest and latent functions?

social classes) rise. Thus, mergers might be functional for people at the upper end of the socioeconomic ladder, but dysfunctional for those on the lower rungs.

## SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Unlike functionalists, conflict theorists see society not as cooperative and harmonious, but as a system of widespread inequality. For conflict theorists, there's a continuous tension between the haves and the have-nots, most of whom are children, women, minorities, people with low incomes, and the poor.

Many conflict theorists focus on how those in power—typically wealthy white Anglo-Saxon Protestant males (WASPs)—dominate political and economic decision making in U.S. society. This group controls a variety of institutions—like education, criminal justice, and the media—and passes laws that benefit primarily people like themselves (see Chapters 8 and 11).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Conflict theory explains how societies create and cope with disagreements. However, some have criticized conflict theorists for overemphasizing competition and coercion at the expense of order and stability. Inequality exists and struggles over scarce resources occur, critics agree, but conflict theorists often ignore cooperation and harmony. Voters, for example, can boot dominant white males out of office and replace them with women and minority group members. Critics also point out that the have-nots can increase their power through negotiation, bargaining, lawsuits, and strikes.

### 1-5c Feminist Theories

You'll recall that influential male theorists generally overlooked or marginalized early female sociologists' contributions. Until the feminist activism of the 1960s

and 1970s, men—who dominated universities and scholarship—were largely “blind to the importance of gender” (Kramer and Beutel, 2015: 17).

Feminist scholars agree with contemporary conflict theorists that much of society is characterized by tension and struggle, but **feminist theories** go a step further by focusing on women's social, economic, and political inequality. The theories maintain that women often suffer injustice primarily because of their gender, rather than personal inadequacies like low educational levels or not caring about success. Feminist scholars assert that people should be treated fairly and equally regardless not only of their sex but also of other characteristics such as their race, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion, class, sexual orientation, or disability. They emphasize that women should be freed from traditionally oppressive expectations, constraints, roles, and behavior (see Reger, 2012).

## FOCUSING ON GENDER

Feminist scholars have documented women's historical exclusion from most sociological analyses (see, for example, Smith, 1987, and Adams and Sydnie, 2001). Before the 1960s women's movement in the United States, very few sociologists published anything about gender roles, women's sexuality, fathers, or intimate partner violence. According to sociologist Myra Ferree (2005: B10), during the 1970s, “the Harvard social-science library could fit all its books on gender inequalities onto a single half-shelf.” Because of feminist scholars, many

researchers—both women and men—now routinely include gender as an important research variable on both micro and macro levels.

Globally, except for some predominantly Muslim countries, solid majorities of both women and men support gender equality and agree that women should be able to work outside the home. When jobs are scarce, however, many women and men believe

“Sometimes  
the best  
man for the  
job isn't.”

Author Unknown

**feminist theories** examine women's social, economic, and political inequality.

that men should be given preferential treatment (“Gender Equality...,” 2010). Thus, even equal rights proponents place a higher priority on men’s economic rights.

## LISTENING TO MANY VOICES

Feminist scholars contend that gender inequality is central to *all* behavior, ranging from everyday interactions to political and economic institutions, but feminist theories encompass many perspectives. For example, *liberal feminism* endorses social and legal reform to create equal opportunities for women. *Radical feminism* sees male dominance in social institutions (e.g., as the economy and politics) as the major cause of women’s inequality. *Global feminism* focuses on how the intersection of gender with race, social class, and colonization has exploited women in the developing world (see Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 1992). Most of us are feminists because we endorse equal opportunities for women and men in the economy, politics, education, and other institutions.

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Feminist scholars have challenged employment discrimination, particularly practices that routinely exclude women who aren’t part of the “old boy network” (Wenneras and Wold, 1997). One criticism, however, is that many feminists are part of an “old girl network” that hasn’t always welcomed different points of view from black, Asian American, American Indian, Muslim, Latina, lesbian, working-class, and disabled women (Lynn and Todoroff, 1995; Jackson, 1998; Sánchez, 2013).

A second criticism is that feminist perspectives often overlook gender, social class, and generational gaps.

Shortly before the 2016 presidential election, 69 percent of women voters said that Donald Trump, the Republican nominee, didn’t respect women. However, 42 percent of

“I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is; I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat.”

Rebecca West, British journalist

those women voted for him anyway (Hartig et al., 2016). At least 90 percent of people vote for their party’s candidate, but Trump appealed to many white women, particularly those without a college degree and those living in rural areas (*Table 1.2*).

There are many reasons for a presidential candidate’s victory, but some observers have attributed Clinton’s defeat to many voters’—particularly working-class white women’s—frustrations about diminished possibilities for their husbands and sons to provide for their families, fears about downward mobility and poverty, concerns about a growing number of immigrants, and a scarcity of jobs in small towns and rural areas (Featherstone, 2016; Morin, 2016; Roberts and Ely, 2016). In contrast, Trump’s slogan to “Make America Great Again” resonated with millions of voters, especially those without college degrees, who feel economically disenfranchised.

During the 2016 presidential race, a large majority of millennials (people born after 1980) supported Bernie Sanders—a 73-year-old senator from Vermont—over Clinton or Trump. Sanders’ platform called for the most progressive and drastic changes to the U.S. political and economic structures (e.g., free tuition, changes in energy policies, and greater equality of wealth). Some analysts believe that millennial enthusiasm for Sanders is an example of a “feminist generation gap” that has increased because younger and older feminists have different values, convictions, and goals (Norman, 2016; Rosen, 2016).

Some critics, including feminists, also question whether feminist scholars have lost their bearings by concentrating on personal issues like greater sexual freedom rather than broader social issues, particularly wage inequality (Chesler, 2006; Shteir, 2013; Rosen, 2016).

### 1-5d Symbolic Interaction

**Symbolic interaction theory** (sometimes called *interactionism*) is a micro-level perspective that examines people’s everyday behavior through the communication

**symbolic interaction theory (interactionism)** examines people’s everyday behavior through the communication of knowledge, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes.



**Table 1.2** How Women Voted in the 2016 Presidential Election, by Selected Characteristics

	PERCENTAGE WHO VOTED FOR...		
	HILLARY CLINTON (DEMOCRAT)	DONALD TRUMP (REPUBLICAN)	OTHER/NO ANSWER
White women	42	53	5
Black women	94	4	2
Latinas	68	26	6
College-educated white women	51	45	4
White women without a college degree	34	62	4
Rural white women	34	62	4

Sources: Based on Huang et al., 2016; Levinson, 2016; Malone, 2016; Mohdin, 2016; Morin, 2016.

of knowledge, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes. Whereas functionalists, conflict theorists, and some feminist theories emphasize structures and large (macro) systems, symbolic interactionists focus on *process* and keep the *person* at the center of their analysis.

There have been many influential symbolic interactionists, whom we'll cover in later chapters. In brief, George Herbert Mead's (1863–1931) assertion that the human mind and self arise in the process of social communication became the foundation of the symbolic interaction schools of thought in sociology and social psychology. Herbert Blumer (1900–1987) coined the term *symbolic interactionism* in 1937, developed Mead's ideas, and proposed that people interpret or “define” each other's actions, especially through symbols, instead of merely reacting to them.

Erving Goffman (1922–1982) enriched these earlier theories by examining human interaction in everyday situations ranging from jobs to funerals. Among his other contributions, Goffman used “dramaturgical analysis” to compare everyday social interaction to a theatrical presentation (see Chapter 5).

## CONSTRUCTING MEANING

Our actions are based on **social interaction** in the sense that people take each other into account in their own behavior. Thus, we act differently in different social settings and continuously adjust our behavior, including our body language, as we interact (Goffman, 1959; Blumer, 1969). A woman's interactions with her husband differ from those with her children. And she will interact still differently when she is teaching, talking to

a colleague in the hall, or addressing an audience at a professional conference.

For symbolic interactionists, society is *socially constructed* through human interpretation (O'Brien and Kollock, 2001). That is, meanings aren't inherent but are created and modified through interaction with others. For example, a daughter who has batting practice with her dad will probably interpret her father's behavior as loving and involved. In contrast, she'll see batting practice with her baseball coach as less personal and more goal-oriented. In this sense, our interpretations of even the same behavior, such as batting practice, vary across situations and depend on the people with whom we interact.

## SYMBOLS AND SHARED MEANINGS

Symbolic interaction looks at subjective, interpersonal meanings and how we interact with and influence each other by communicating through *symbols*—words, gestures, or pictures that stand for something and that can have different meanings for different individuals.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, many Americans displayed the flag on buildings, bridges, homes, and cars to show their solidarity and pride in the United States. In contrast, some groups in the Middle East burned the U.S. flag to show their contempt for U.S. culture and policies. Thus, symbols are powerful forms of communication that show how people feel and interpret a situation.

To interact effectively, our symbols must have *shared meanings*, or agreed-on definitions. One

**social interaction** a process in which people take each other into account in their own behavior.

of the most important of these shared meanings is the *definition of the situation*, or the way we perceive reality and react to it. Relationships often end, for example, because people view emotional closeness differently (“We broke up because my partner wanted more sex. I wanted more communication.”). We typically learn our definitions of the situation through interaction with *significant others*—especially parents, friends, relatives, and teachers—who play an important role in our socialization (as you’ll see in Chapters 4 and 5).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Unlike other theorists, symbolic interactionists show how people play an active role in shaping their lives on a micro level. One of the most common criticisms is that symbolic interaction overlooks the widespread impact of macro-level factors (e.g., economic forces, social movements, and public policies) on our everyday behavior and relationships. During economic downturns, for example, unemployment and ensuing financial problems create considerable interpersonal conflict among couples and families (see Chapters 11 and 12). Symbolic interaction rarely considers such macro-level changes in explaining everyday behavior.

A related criticism is that interactionists sometimes have an optimistic and unrealistic view of people’s everyday choices. Most of us enjoy little flexibility in our daily lives because deeply embedded social

arrangements and practices benefit those in power. For instance, people are usually powerless when corporations transfer jobs overseas or cut the pension funds of retired employees.

Some also believe that interaction theory is flawed because it ignores the irrational and unconscious aspects of human behavior (LaRossa and Reitzes, 1993). People don’t always consider the meaning of their actions or behave as reflectively as interactionists assume. Instead, we often act impulsively or say hurtful things without weighing the consequences of our actions or words.

## 1-5e Other Theoretical Approaches

Table 1.3 summarizes the major sociological perspectives that you’ve just read about. However, new theoretical perspectives arise because society is always changing. For example, *postmodern theory* analyzes contemporary societies that are characterized by postindustrialization, consumerism, and global communications.

Sociology, like other social sciences, has subfields. The subfields—such as socialization, deviance, and social stratification—offer specific theories that reinforce and illustrate functionalist, conflict, feminist, and interactionist approaches. No single theory explains social life completely. Each theory, however, provides different insights that guide sociological research, the topic of Chapter 2.



Lane Oatley/Blue Jean Images/Getty Images



Jose Nicolas/Sigma/Getty Images

For many people, a diamond, especially in an engagement ring, signifies love and commitment. For others, diamonds represent Western exploitation of poor people in Africa who are paid next to nothing for their backbreaking labor in mining these stones.



**Table 1.3** Leading Contemporary Perspectives in Sociology

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	FUNCTIONALISM	CONFLICT	FEMINIST	SYMBOLIC INTERACTION
Level of Analysis	<b>Macro</b>	<b>Macro</b>	<b>Macro and Micro</b>	<b>Micro</b>
Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Society is composed of interrelated, mutually dependent parts.</li> <li>Structures and functions maintain a society's or group's stability, cohesion, and continuity.</li> <li>Dysfunctional activities that threaten a society's or group's survival are controlled or eliminated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Life is a continuous struggle between the haves and the have-nots.</li> <li>People compete for limited resources that are controlled by a small number of powerful groups.</li> <li>Society is based on inequality in terms of ethnicity, race, social class, and gender.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women experience widespread inequality in society because, as a group, they have little power.</li> <li>Gender, ethnicity, race, age, sexual orientation, and social class—rather than a person's intelligence and ability—explain many of our social interactions and lack of access to resources.</li> <li>Social change is possible only if we change our institutional structures and our day-to-day interactions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People act on the basis of the meaning they attribute to others. Meaning grows out of the social interaction that we have with others.</li> <li>People continuously reinterpret and reevaluate their knowledge and information in their everyday encounters.</li> </ul>
Key Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What holds society together? How does it work?</li> <li>What is the structure of society?</li> <li>What functions does society perform?</li> <li>How do structures and functions contribute to social stability?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How are resources distributed in a society?</li> <li>Who benefits when resources are limited? Who loses?</li> <li>How do those in power protect their privileges?</li> <li>When does conflict lead to social change?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do men and women experience social situations in the same way?</li> <li>How does our everyday behavior reflect our gender, social class, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other factors?</li> <li>How do macro structures (such as the economy and the political system) shape our opportunities?</li> <li>How can we change current structures through social activism?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does social interaction influence our behavior?</li> <li>How do social interactions change across situations and between people?</li> <li>Why does our behavior change because of our beliefs, attitudes, values, and roles?</li> <li>How is "right" and "wrong" behavior defined, interpreted, reinforced, or discouraged?</li> </ul>
Example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A college education increases one's job opportunities and income.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most low-income families can't afford to pay for a college education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender affects decisions about a major and which college to attend.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College students succeed or fail based on their degree of academic engagement.</li> </ul>

## STUDY TOOLS<sup>1</sup>

### READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you've read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.

# 2

## Examining Our Social World



### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 2-1 Compare knowledge based on tradition, authority, and research.
- 2-2 Explain why sociological research is important in our everyday lives.
- 2-3 Describe the scientific method.
- 2-4 Describe the basic steps of the research process.
- 2-5 Compare and illustrate the five most common sociological data collection methods, including their strengths and limitations.
- 2-6 Explain why ethics are important in scientific research.

After finishing  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 37** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**



Spring break is all about beer fests, wet T-shirt contests, frolicking on the beach, and hooking up, right? Maybe not. A national survey found that 70 percent of college students stay home with their parents, and 84 percent of those who throng to vacation spots report consuming alcohol in moderation (The Nielsen Company, 2008). If you suspect that these numbers are too high or too low and wonder how the survey was done, you're thinking like a researcher, the focus of this chapter.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

People can find data to support any opinion they have.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree						strongly disagree

## 2-1 HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW?

Much of our knowledge is based on *tradition*, a handing down of statements, beliefs, and customs from generation to generation (“The groom’s parents should pay for the wedding rehearsal dinner”). Another common source of knowledge is *authority*, a socially accepted source of information that includes “experts,” parents, government officials, police, judges, and religious leaders (“My mom says that . . .” or “According to the American Heart Association . . .”).

Knowledge based on tradition and authority simplifies our lives because it provides us with basic rules about socially and legally acceptable behavior. The information can be misleading or wrong, however. Suppose a 2-year-old throws a temper tantrum at a family barbecue. One adult comments, “What that kid needs is a smack on the behind.” Someone else immediately disagrees: “All kids go through this stage. Just ignore it.”

Who’s right? To answer this and other questions, sociologists rely on **research methods**, organized and systematic procedures to gain knowledge about a particular topic. Much research shows, for example, that neither ignoring a problem nor inflicting physical punishment (like spanking) stops a toddler’s bad behavior. Instead, most young children’s misbehavior can be curbed by having simple rules, being consistent in disciplining misbehavior, praising good behavior, and setting a good example (see Benokraitis, 2015).

## 2-2 WHY IS SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH IMPORTANT IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES?

In contrast to knowledge based on tradition and authority, sociological research is important in our everyday lives for several reasons:

1. **It counteracts misinformation.** Blatant dishonesty and misinformation spread rapidly through digital communication. In 2015, violent crimes were 77 percent below their 1993 level, but 70 percent of Americans believe that the rate has increased (Gramlich, 2016; Truman and Morgan, 2016). Such unfounded fears—fueled by mass shootings, the media’s focus on crime, powerful lobby groups such as the National Rifle Association, and Donald Trump’s false claim that “inner city crime is reaching record levels”—are partly responsible for the growth of gun ownership in the past 20 years (Cohn et al., 2013; see also Chapter 7).
2. **It exposes myths.** According to many newspapers and television shows, suicide rates are highest during the Christmas holidays. In fact, suicide rates are lowest in December and highest in the spring and fall (but the reasons for these peaks are unclear). Another myth is that more women are victims of domestic violence on Super Bowl Sunday than on any other day of the year, presumably because men become intoxicated and abusive. In fact, intimate partner violence rates are high, and consistent, throughout the year (Romer, 2011; “Super Bull Sunday,” 2015).
3. **It helps explain why people behave as they do.** A recent study predicted that older drivers, particularly those age 70 and older, would be more likely than younger drivers to have fatal crashes,

**research methods** organized and systematic procedures to gain knowledge about a particular topic.

## “Facebook Causes 20 Percent of Today’s Divorces.” What?!

The founder and self-described leader of the United Kingdom’s online divorce site (Divorce-Online) sent out a press release titled “Facebook Is Bad for Your Marriage—Research Finds,” and claimed that Facebook causes 20 percent of today’s divorces. News media around the world ran stories about this press release with headlines such as “Facebook to Blame for Divorce Boom.” You’ll see in Chapter 12 that there’s no divorce boom, so where did the 20 percent number come from?

In 2009, the managing director of Divorce-Online scanned its online divorce petition database

for use of the word *Facebook*, and found 989 instances in about 5,000 petitions. Divorce-Online never said that the petitions were only those filed by members of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, who comprise a very small percentage of all divorce attorneys. Two years later, many Internet sites and blogs were still spreading the fiction that “Facebook Causes Divorce” (see Bialik, 2011). In reality, as you’ll see in Chapter 12, there are a number of interrelated macro- and micro-level reasons for divorce; there’s no single “cause,” much less Facebook.

but found the opposite (Braitman et al., 2011). The researchers couldn’t explain why their prediction turned out to be false. Sociologists posit that older Americans are less likely to have fatal crashes because many avoid driving at night or during bad weather, and they’re much less likely than younger drivers to use cell phones or text while driving (Halsey, 2010).

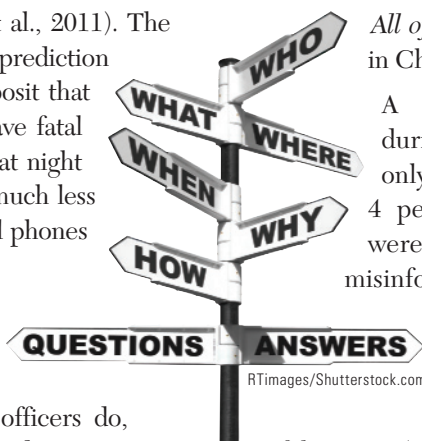
#### 4. It affects social policies.

According to the captain of a large North Carolina Police Department, “Research dictates everything that officers do, whether we realize it or not,” in reducing crime. Examples include tracking criminal activity in high-risk locations, implementing research-based policies in training patrol officers and detectives, and managing limited resources more efficiently (Nolette, 2015).

#### 5. It sharpens critical thinking skills.

Many Americans, particularly women, rely on talk shows for information on a number of topics. Oprah Winfrey has featured and applauded guests who maintained, among other things, that children contract autism from the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccinations they receive as babies; that fortune cards can help people diagnose their illnesses; and that people can wish away cancer (Kosova and Wingert, 2009; Clemmons et al., 2015; see also “Clueless,” 2014, for other recent examples of “celebrity bogus science”).

**scientific method** a body of objective and systematic techniques used to investigate phenomena, acquire knowledge, and test hypotheses and theories.



*All of these claims are false, and as you’ll see in Chapter 14, endanger our health.*

A fact-checking website found that, during the 2016 presidential campaign, only 25 percent of Hillary Clinton’s and 4 percent of Donald Trump’s statements were true (PolitiFact, 2016). *Fake news*—misinformation that deliberately misleads people for financial, political, or other gain—has been around for a long time. About 84 percent of Americans are confident that they can identify false news (Barthel et al., 2016).

Many of us, however, are susceptible to *confirmation bias*, a tendency to embrace and recall information that confirms our beliefs and ignores or downplays contrary evidence. The scientific method, which requires critical thinking skills that you read about in Chapter 1, strengthens our ability to separate fact from fiction, but do people always believe scientific findings?

2-3

## THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

Sociologists rely on the **scientific method**, a body of objective and systematic techniques used to investigate phenomena, acquire knowledge, and test hypotheses and theories. The techniques include careful data collection, exact measurement, accurate recording and analysis of the findings, thoughtful interpretation of results, and, when appropriate, generalization of the findings to a larger



group. Before collecting any data, however, social scientists must grapple with a number of research-related issues. Let's begin with concepts, variables, and hypotheses.

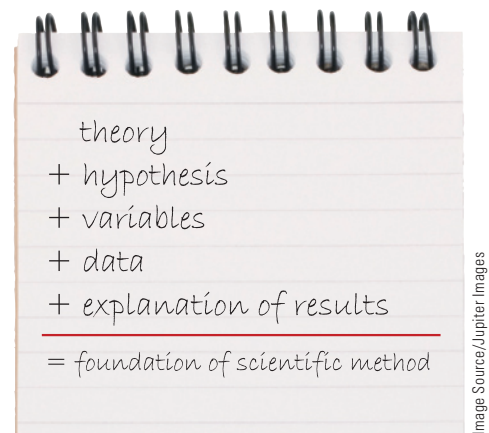
## 2-3a Concepts, Variables, and Hypotheses

A basic element of the scientific method is a **concept**—an abstract idea, mental image, or general notion that represents some aspect of the world. Some examples of concepts are “blood pressure,” “religion,” and “marriage.”

Because concepts are abstract, scientists use variables to measure (*operationalize*) concepts. A **variable** is a characteristic that can change in value or magnitude under different conditions. Variables can be attitudes, behaviors, or traits (e.g., ethnicity, age, and social class).

An **independent variable** is a characteristic that has an effect on the **dependent variable**, the outcome. A **control variable** is a characteristic that is constant and unchanged during the research process.

Scientists can simply ask a research question (“Why are people poor?”), but they usually begin with a **hypothesis**—a statement of the expected relationship



between two or more variables—such as “Unemployment increases poverty.” In this example, “unemployment” is the independent variable and “poverty” is the dependent variable.

Researchers might also use control variables, like education, to explain the relationship between unemployment and poverty. For example, people with at least a college degree generally have lower poverty rates than those with lower educational levels because the former are less likely to experience long periods of unemployment.

**concept** an abstract idea, mental image, or general notion that represents some aspect of the world.

**variable** a characteristic that can change in value or magnitude under different conditions.

**independent variable** a characteristic that has an effect on the dependent variable.

**dependent variable** the outcome that may be affected by the independent variable.

**control variable** a characteristic that is constant and unchanged during the research process.

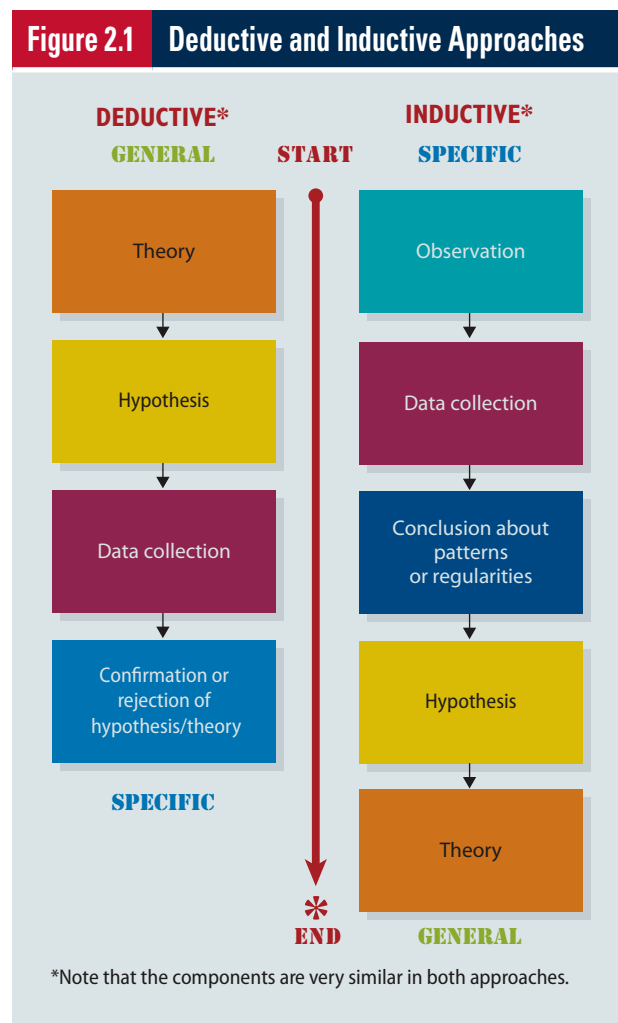
**hypothesis** a statement of the expected relationship between two or more variables.

**deductive reasoning** begins with a theory, prediction, or general principle that is then tested through data collection.

**inductive reasoning** begins with a specific observation, followed by data collection, a conclusion about patterns or regularities, and the formulation of hypotheses that can lead to theory construction.

## 2-3b Deductive and Inductive Reasoning

Deduction and induction are two different but equally valuable approaches in examining the relationship between variables. Generally, **deductive reasoning** begins with a theory, prediction, or general principle that is then tested through data collection. An alternative mode of inquiry, **inductive reasoning**, begins with specific observations, followed by data collection, a conclusion about patterns or regularities, and the formulation of hypotheses that can lead to theory construction (Figure 2.1).





Are *The Voice* voters an example of a probability or nonprobability sample of the show's fans?

Taking a deductive approach, you might decide to test a theory of academic success using the following hypothesis: “Students who study in groups perform better on exams than those who study alone.” You would collect the data, ultimately confirming or rejecting your hypothesis (or theory).

Alternatively, you might notice that your classmates who participate in study groups seem to get higher grades on exams than those who study alone. Using an inductive approach, you would collect the data systematically and formulate hypotheses (or suggest a theory) that could then be tested deductively. Most social science research involves both inductive and deductive reasoning.

**reliability** the consistency with which the same measure produces similar results time after time.

**validity** the degree to which a measure is accurate and really measures what it claims to measure.

**population** any well-defined group of people (or things) that researchers want to know something about.

**sample** a group of people (or things) that’s representative of the population researchers wish to study.

**probability sample** each person (or thing) has an equal chance of being selected because the selection is random.

**nonprobability sample** there is little or no attempt to get a representative cross section of a population.

## 2-3c Reliability and Validity

Sociologists are always concerned about reliability and validity. **Reliability** is the *consistency* with which the same measure produces similar results time after time. If, for example, you ask “How old are you?” on two subsequent days and a respondent gives two different answers, such as 25 and 30, there’s either something wrong with the

question or the respondent is lying. Respondents might lie, but scientists must make sure that their measures are as reliable as possible.

**Validity** is the degree to which a measure is accurate and *really* measures what it claims to measure. Consider student course evaluations. The measures of a “good” professor often include items like whether she or he was “interesting,” “fair,” or “knowledgeable about the course content.”

Because we don’t know what students mean by “interesting” and “fair,” and students don’t know how “knowledgeable” an instructor is, how accurate are such measures in differentiating between “good” and “bad” professors? A study at two large public universities found that a third of the students admitted being dishonest in end-of-semester course evaluations. Some fibbed to make their instructors look good, but most lied to “punish” professors they didn’t like, especially when they received lower grades than they thought they deserved (Clayson and Haley, 2011). Such research findings raise questions about the accuracy and usefulness of student course evaluations in measuring an instructor’s actual performance.

## 2-3d Sampling

Early in the research process, sociologists decide what sampling procedures to use. Ideally, researchers would like to study all the units of the population in which they’re interested—say, all adolescents who use drugs. A **population** is any well-defined group of people (or things) that researchers want to know something about. Obtaining information about and from populations is problematic, however. The population may be so large that it would be too expensive and time consuming to conduct the research. In other cases—such as all adolescents who use drugs—it’s impossible even to identify the population.

As a result, researchers typically select a **sample**, a group of people (or things) that’s representative of the population they wish to study. In obtaining a sample, researchers decide whether to use probability or nonprobability sampling. A **probability sample** is one in which each person (or thing, such as an email address) has an equal chance of being selected because the selection process is *random*. The most desirable characteristic of a probability sample is that the results can be generalized to the larger population because all the people (or things) have had an equal chance of being selected.

In a **nonprobability sample**, there’s little or no attempt to get a representative cross section of the



population. Instead, researchers use sampling criteria such as convenience or the availability of respondents or information. Nonprobability samples are especially useful when sociologists are exploring a new topic or want to get people's insights on a particular topic before launching a larger study (Babbie, 2013).

Television news programs, newsmagazines, and entertainment shows often provide a toll-free number, a texting number, or a website and encourage viewers to vote on an issue (such as whether marijuana should be legal in all states). How representative are these voters of the general population? And how many enthusiasts skew the results by voting more than once?

But, you might think, if as many as 100,000 people respond, doesn't such a large number indicate what most people think? No. Because the respondents are self-selected and don't comprise a random sample, they're not representative of a population.

A recent study that looked at data from almost 209,000 people found that drinking one to five cups of coffee a day was associated with lower mortality and lower risks of death from heart and neurological diseases. Although the sample size was huge, it was composed primarily of white medical and health professionals. Thus, the results aren't generalizable to other populations (Ding et al., 2015).

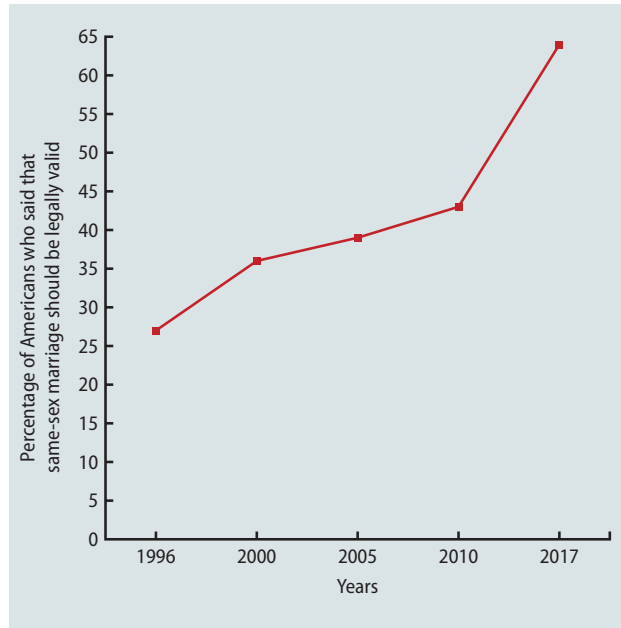
### 2-3e The Time Dimension

Researchers compare variables in two ways: cross-sectional studies and longitudinal studies. The data can be *longitudinal* (collected at two or more points in time from the same or different samples of respondents) or *cross-sectional* (collected at one point in time). Figure 2.2 shows a change over time in Americans' attitudes toward same-sex marriage; this is an example of a longitudinal study. If the researchers had collected data at only one point in time (2017, 2000, or 1996), this would have been a cross-sectional study. Cross-sectional studies provide valuable information, but longitudinal studies are especially useful in examining trends in behavior or attitudes; a researcher can compare similar populations across different years or follow a particular group of people over time.

### 2-3f Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

In **qualitative research**, sociologists examine and interpret nonnumerical material. In a study of grandfathers who were raising their grandchildren, for example, the researcher tape-recorded in-depth interviews and then analyzed the responses to

**Figure 2.2** Acceptance of Same-Sex Marriage Has Increased



Source: Based on McCarthy, 2017.

questions about financial issues and daily parenting tasks (Bullock, 2005).

In **quantitative research**, sociologists focus on a numerical analysis of people's responses or specific characteristics, studying a wide range of attitudes, behaviors, and traits (e.g., homeowners versus renters). In one national probability study, for example, the researchers surveyed almost 7,000 respondents to understand the influence of grandparents who live with their children and grandchildren (Dunifon and Kowaleski-Jones, 2007).

Which approach should a researcher use? It depends on her or his purpose. Consider college attrition. Quantitative data provide information on characteristics such as national college graduation rates. Qualitative data, in contrast, yield in-depth descriptions of why some college students drop out whereas others graduate. In many studies, sociologists use both approaches.

### 2-3g Correlation Is Not Causation

Ideally, researchers would like to determine **causation**, a relationship in which one variable is the direct consequence of another. The

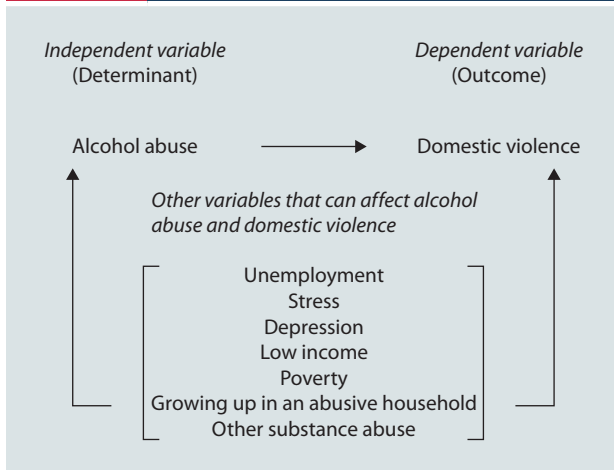
#### **qualitative research**

examines and interprets nonnumerical material.

**quantitative research** focuses on a numerical analysis of people's responses or specific characteristics.

**causation** a relationship in which one variable is the direct consequence of another.

**Figure 2.3** An Example of Correlation



media recently proclaimed that, according to a World Health Organization report, eating red meat (e.g., beef, lamb, and pork) and processed meat (e.g., bacon, hot dogs, and ham) causes cancer. The headlines triggered considerable public anxiety. In fact, the study concluded that “high consumption” of red and processed meat “may be associated with a small risk” of several types of cancer (Bouvard et al., 2015).

Because it’s difficult to determine causation, sociologists and other scientists calculate a **correlation**, the relationship between two or more variables. For example, much research shows that there’s an association between alcohol abuse and domestic violence, and the more frequent the alcohol abuse, the greater the likelihood of domestic violence (see Chapter 12).

Alcohol abuse and domestic violence often occur together, but this doesn’t mean that one *causes* the other. Domestic violence also occurs when people don’t drink, and not all people who abuse alcohol become violent or aggressive. Instead, there may be other factors that affect alcohol abuse, domestic violence, or both variables (Figure 2.3). Sociologists rarely use the term *cause* because they can’t *prove* that there’s a cause-and-effect relationship. Instead, a researcher might conclude that alcohol abuse is “associated (or correlated) with,” “contributes to,” or “increases the likelihood of” rather than “causes” domestic violence.

## 2-4 BASIC STEPS IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

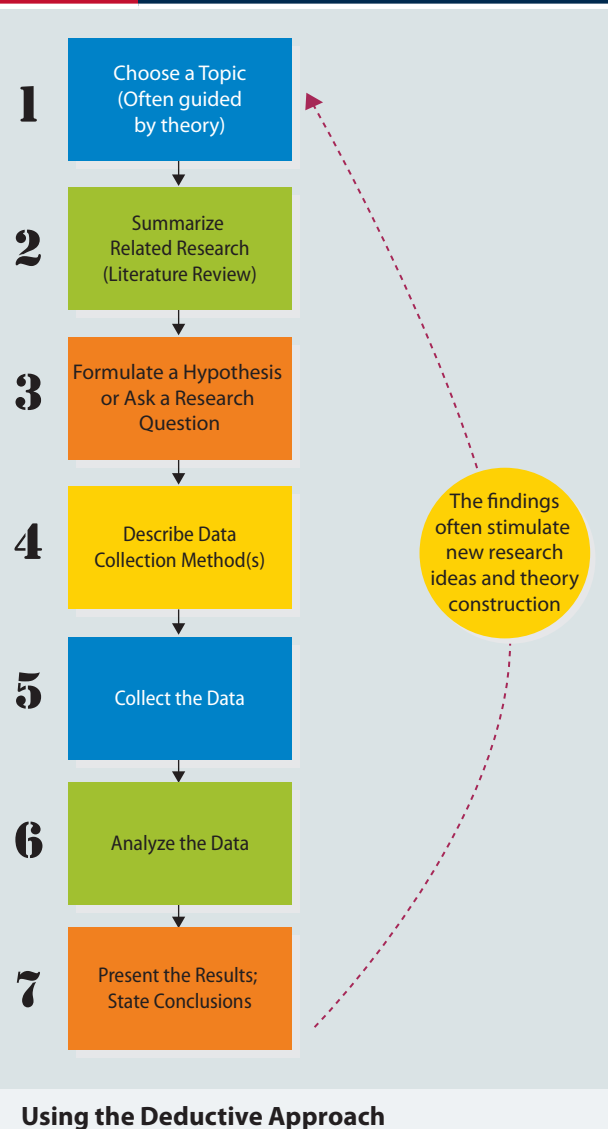
Hypotheses construction, deductive and inductive reasoning, establishing reliability and validity, and sampling are some of the preliminary and often most challenging steps in

**correlation** the relationship between two or more variables.

the research process. Figure 2.4 outlines the scientific method, using a deductive approach that begins with an idea and ends with writing up (and sometimes publishing) the results. Later in this chapter, we’ll examine some studies that use an inductive approach.

1. **Choose a topic to study.** The topic can be general or very specific. Some sociologists begin with a new question or idea; others extend or refine previous research findings. A topic can generate new information, replicate a previous study, or propose an intervention (e.g., a new substance abuse program).
2. **Summarize the related research.** In what is often called a *literature review*, a sociologist summarizes the pertinent research, shows how her or his topic

**Figure 2.4** Steps in the Scientific Method





is related to previous and current research, and indicates how the study will extend the body of knowledge. If the research is applied, a sociologist also explains how the proposed service or program will improve people's lives.

3. **Formulate a hypothesis or ask a research question.** A sociologist next states a hypothesis or asks a research question. In either case, she or he has to be sure that the measures of the variables are as reliable and valid as possible.
4. **Describe the data collection method(s).** A sociologist describes which method or combination of methods (sometimes called *methodology*, *procedure*, or *research design*) is best for testing a hypothesis or answering a research question. This step also describes sampling, the sample size, and the respondents' characteristics.
5. **Collect the data.** The actual data collection might rely on fieldwork, surveys, experiments, or existing sources of information like Census Bureau statistics.
6. **Analyze the data.** After coding (tabulating the results) and running statistical tests, a sociologist presents the findings as clearly as possible.
7. **Present and explain the results.** After analyzing the data, a sociologist explains why the findings are important. This can be done in many ways. She or he might show how the results provide new information, enrich our understanding of behavior or attitudes that researchers have examined previously, or refine existing theories or research approaches.

In drawing conclusions about the study, sociologists typically discuss its implications. For instance, does a study of juvenile arrests suggest that new policies should be implemented, that existing ones should be changed, or that current police practices may be affecting the arrest rates? That is, the researcher answers the question "So what?" by showing the importance and usefulness of the study.

2-5

## SOME MAJOR DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Sociologists typically use one or more of the following major data collection methods: surveys, field research, content analysis, experiments, and secondary analysis of existing data. Because each method has strengths and weaknesses, researchers must decide which will provide



Farris, Joseph/Cartoonstock.com

"How long have you been dead? Do you have any complaints about your treatment here? Do you have any suggestions?"

the most accurate information, given time and budget constraints.

### 2-5a Surveys

Many sociologists use **surveys** that include questionnaires, face-to-face or telephone interviews, or a combination of these techniques. Two important elements in survey research are sampling and constructing a series of questions for *respondents*, the people who answer the questions.

#### SELECTING A SAMPLE

*Random sample surveys* are preferred because the results can be generalized to a larger population. Researchers can obtain representative samples through *random digit dialing*, which involves selecting area codes and exchanges (the next three numbers) followed by four random digits. In the procedure called *computer-assisted telephone interviewing* (CATI), the interviewer uses a computer to select random telephone numbers, reads the questions to the respondent from a computer screen, and then enters the answers in precoded spaces, saving time and expense by not having to reenter the data after the interview.

#### QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEWS

A survey must have a specific plan for asking questions and recording answers. The most common way to do this is to give respondents a **questionnaire**, a series of written questions that ask for

**survey** a data collection method that includes questionnaires, face-to-face or telephone interviews, or a combination.

**questionnaire** a series of written questions that ask for information.

information. The questions can be *closed-ended* (the researcher provides a list of answers that a respondent chooses), *open-ended* (the researcher asks respondents to answer questions in their own words) (Table 2.1), or a combination. Questionnaires can be mailed, used during an interview, or self-administered (e.g., student course evaluations, Web surveys).

The **interview**, in which a researcher directly asks respondents a series of questions, is another way to collect survey data. Interviews can be conducted face-to-face or by telephone. *Structured interviews* use closed-ended questions, whereas *unstructured interviews* use open-ended questions that allow respondents to answer as they wish.

**Table 2.1** One Question–Two Formats

**Open-Ended Version**

How would you describe your current financial situation?

**Closed-Ended Version**

How would you describe your current financial situation?

☐ Excellent ☐ Fair ☐ Terrible

☐ Very good ☐ Poor ☐ Not sure

☐ Good

Suppose that you're the researcher on an income study. Do you think that you'd use the open- or closed-ended version? Why?

Now, suppose that you're the respondent. Do you think that you'd be more likely to answer the open- or closed-ended version? Why?

## ONLINE SURVEYS

Two types of online surveys are becoming increasingly popular. One is sent via email, either as text in the body of the message or as an attachment. The second type is the more familiar survey that's posted on a website. Like the more traditional surveys that use self-administered questionnaires, telephones, and face-to-face interviews, online surveys have strengths and weaknesses.

## STRENGTHS

Surveys are usually inexpensive, simple to administer, and have a fast turnaround. Self-administered questionnaires can be mailed to thousands of respondents. Having a large number of cases is important in describing, analyzing, and explaining many variables simultaneously.

Telephone interviews are popular because they're a relatively cost-effective way to collect data. Face-to-face interviews have high response rates (often up to 85 percent) because they involve personal contact. People are more likely to discuss sensitive issues (e.g., drug use, sexual behavior) in an interview than via a mailed questionnaire, a phone survey, or an electronic survey. If respondents don't understand a question, are reluctant to answer, or give incomplete answers, interviewers can clarify, keep respondents from digressing, or *probe* by asking respondents to elaborate on an answer (Babbie, 2013).

With the innovation of "robo-polls," the entire interview is conducted by a programmed

recording that interprets the respondent's spoken answers, records them, and determines how to continue the interview. This method cuts out the cost of hiring people, but it's unclear whether respondents are more reluctant or more willing to express socially unacceptable views to a machine than to a person (Barrow, 2015).

Online surveys, like mail surveys, are relatively inexpensive to administer, and the responses can be tabulated quickly. Online surveys are particularly appropriate for certain targeted groups (e.g., people who access health sites), and can increase the pool of people who are increasingly difficult to reach by phone. Online surveys can also provide respondents with visual material, including videos, to look at and respond to (Keeter, 2010; DeSilver, 2014).

## LIMITATIONS

Unlike questionnaires and telephone surveys, face-to-face interviews can be very expensive. A major limitation of surveys that use mailed questionnaires is a low response rate, often only about 10 percent (Higgins, 2015). If the questions are unclear, complicated, or seen as offensive, respondents may simply throw the questionnaire away or give answers on subjects they know nothing about (Babbie, 2013).

A survey's wording can also substantially affect people's answers. According to a recent Gallup poll, for instance, 51 percent of Americans agreed that doctors should be allowed to "assist the patient to commit suicide," but a whopping 70 percent said that doctors should be allowed to "end the patient's life by some painless means." Thus, not using the word *suicide* was much

**interview** a researcher directly asks respondents a series of questions.

more acceptable even though the patient's outcome was the same (Saad, 2013).

Another concern is *social desirability bias*—the tendency of respondents to give the answer that they think they “should” give or that will cast them in a favorable light. For example, the proportion of Americans who say they voted in a given election is always much higher than the actual number of votes cast (Taylor and Lopez, 2013).

People also underreport (or lie about) socially undesirable behaviors and traits (e.g., using illicit drugs or mental health problems), but exaggerate attendance at religious services, donating to charity, and washing their hands after using a restroom. In a recent survey, 28 percent of the respondents admitted that they had lied to their doctors about smoking, drinking alcohol, using illicit drugs, not exercising, having unsafe sex with multiple partners, and other risky behavior (Reddy, 2013; Bharadwaj et al., 2015; Keeter et al., 2015).

Because most online surveys are based on non-probability samples, they underrepresent groups such as blacks, Latinos, and older, poorer, and less-educated people who don't use the Internet. During the 2016 election, polls underestimated Donald Trump's level of support because, among other reasons, less-educated voters—who comprised a strong pro-Trump segment of the population—refused to respond to online surveys (Kennedy et al., 2016; Mercer et al., 2016).

Because the survey is the research approach you'll encounter most often in sociology and many other disciplines, it's important to be an informed consumer. You can't simply assume that a survey, including a public opinion poll, is accurate or representative of a larger population. Asking a few basic questions about a survey, such as those in *Table 2.2*, will help you assess its credibility.

## 2-5b Field Research

In **field research**, sociologists collect data by systematically observing people in their natural surroundings. In *participant observation*, researchers interact with the people they're studying; they may or may not reveal their identities as researchers. If you recorded interaction patterns between students and professors during your classes, you would be engaging in participant observation. In *nonparticipant observation*, researchers study phenomena without being part of the situation (observing young children in classrooms through one-way mirrors). Researchers sometimes combine participant and nonparticipant observation.

**Table 2.2 Can I Trust These Numbers?**

To determine a survey's credibility, ask:

- Who sponsored the survey? A government agency, a political organization, a business, or a group that's lobbying for change?
- What's the purpose of the survey? To provide objective information, to promote an idea or a political candidate, or to get attention through sensationalism?
- How was the sample drawn? Randomly? Or was it a “self-selected opinion poll” (a SLOP, according to Tanur, 1994)?
- How were the questions worded? Were they clear and objective, or biased? If the survey questions aren't provided, why not?
- How did the researchers report their findings? Were they objective, or did they make value judgments?

Some field research studies are short term (e.g., observing, over a few weeks or months, whether and how parents discipline their unruly children in grocery stores). Others, called *ethnographies*, require a considerable amount of time in the field. Sudhir Venkatesh (2008), while a graduate student at the University of Chicago, spent more than 6 years studying the culture and members of the Black Kings, a crack-selling gang in Chicago's inner city.

Observational studies are usually highly structured and carefully designed projects in which data are recorded and then converted to quantitative summaries. These studies may examine complex communication patterns, measure the frequency of acts (e.g., the number of head nods or angry statements), or note the duration of a particular behavior (e.g., the length of eye contact) (Stillars, 1991). Thus, observational studies are much more complex and sophisticated than they appear to the general public.

## STRENGTHS

Unlike other data collection methods, field research provides rich detail in describing and understanding attitudes and behavior in the “real world.” The researcher can explore new topics from the respondents' viewpoint using observation or in-depth interviews. Because observation usually doesn't disrupt the natural surroundings, the researcher doesn't directly influence the subjects. Field research is also more flexible than some other methods. The researcher can

**field research** data collected by observing people in their natural surroundings.





Field researchers study a variety of topics, including how customers, cocktail waitresses, bouncers, and paid consultants help people hook up at a nightclub (see Grazian, 2008, for a description of this study).

modify the research design, for example, by deciding to interview (rather than just observe) key people after the research has started.

Validity is usually a strength of field research because researchers can determine how participants define and interpret concepts such as “success,” “inequality,” or “marital infidelity.” Compared with other data collection methods, field research is also more flexible if a situation changes. Studying crime in poor neighborhoods, for example, may require shifting the focus of the analysis if the key participants are killed or imprisoned (see Goffman, 2014). Finally, field research is a powerful data collection method

Counting the homeless is an ongoing research problem. Communities must provide accurate numbers to qualify for federal funds, but census takers have difficulty getting such counts because safety rules prohibit them from entering private property (such as warehouses) or dark alleys. In one approach, the YWCA in Trenton, New Jersey, gave free haircuts at a fair for the homeless to attract the city’s homeless people to a place where they could be counted (Jonsson, 2007). Is such field research unethical because it violates people’s privacy? Or innovative in helping a community get more federal funding for the homeless?

because it describes a phenomenon using the subjects’ own words.

## LIMITATIONS

Observation can be expensive if a researcher needs elaborate recording equipment, must travel far or often, or has to live in a different society or community for an extended period. Researchers who study other cultures must often learn a new language, a time-consuming task.

A second limitation is the problem of *reactivity*: If people know they’re being observed, they might behave differently. A study of 392 restaurants from five different chains (e.g., the Olive Garden) found that employee theft decreased by 22 percent after management installed surveillance cameras (Pierce et al., 2013). In the case of participant observation, anything that the researcher does or doesn’t do can affect what’s being observed because the researcher’s presence changes a group’s dynamics, behavior, and outcomes (see Chapter 6 on the Hawthorne effect).

A field researcher may encounter other data collection challenges. Homeless and battered women’s shelters, for example, are usually—and understandably—wary of researchers intruding on their residents’ privacy. Even if the researcher has access to such groups, it’s often difficult to be objective while collecting and interpreting the data because poverty and domestic violence can evoke strong emotional reactions (e.g., anxiety, anger against perpetrators, sympathy for victims). Finally, the findings can’t be generalized because the data come from non-probability samples.



## 2-5c Content Analysis

**Content analysis** systematically examines some form of communication. Researchers can apply this unobtrusive data collection method to almost any form of written or oral communication: speeches, TV programs, online blogs, advertisements, office emails, songs, tweets, advice columns, poems, or Facebook chatter, to name just a few.

The researcher develops categories for coding the material, sorts and analyzes the data in terms of frequency, intensity, or other characteristics, and draws conclusions about the results. Look at the two baby cards in *Figure 2.5*. What messages do they send about gender roles? These are only two cards, but we could do a content analysis of all birth congratulations at a particular store or from a number of stores or online sites to determine whether such cards reinforce stereotypical gender role expectations.

Sociologists have used content analysis to examine a number of topics. A few examples are images of women and men in video games and music videos, changes in child-rearing advice in popular parenting magazines, gender and ethnic differences in yearbook photographs, and gender biases in job advertisements (Downs and Smith, 2010; Zhang et al., 2010; Wallis, 2011; Lindner, 2012; Wondergem and Friedlmeier, 2012).

**Figure 2.5** How Do Views of Female and Male Babies Differ?



As these cards illustrate, girls and boys are viewed differently from the time they're born. In these and other baby cards, girls, but not boys, are typically described as "sweet" or "precious." Also, the images usually show boys as active but girls as passive.

## STRENGTHS

Content analysis is usually inexpensive and often less time consuming than other data collection methods, particularly field research. If, for example, you wanted to examine the content of television commercials during football games, you wouldn't need fancy equipment, a travel budget, or a research staff.

A second advantage is that researchers can recode errors fairly easily. This isn't the case with surveys. If you mail a questionnaire with poorly constructed items, it's too late to change anything.

Third, content analysis is unobtrusive. Because researchers aren't interacting with human subjects, they don't need permission to do the research, and don't have to worry about influencing the respondents' attitudes or behavior.

Finally, researchers can use content analysis in both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. In one study, the researchers analyzed gender portrayals in the 101 top-grossing G-rated films in the United States and Canada between 1990 and 2005 (Smith et al., 2010; see also Joshi et al., 2011). It would be very difficult, using most other data collection methods, to analyze such material over a 15-year period.

## LIMITATIONS

Content analysis can be very labor intensive, especially if a project is ambitious. In one study, the researchers examined the amount and intensity of violence in children's animated movies that were released between 1938 and 1999 (Yokota and Thompson, 2000). It took several years to code one or more of the major characters' words, expressions, and actions.

A second disadvantage is that the coding may be subjective. Having several researchers on a project can increase coding objectivity, but only one researcher often codes the content.

A third limitation is that content analysis often reflects social class bias. Because most books, articles, speeches, films, and so forth are produced by people in upper socioeconomic levels, content analysis rarely captures the behavior or attitudes of working-class people and the poor. Even when documents created by lower-class individuals or groups are available, it's difficult to determine whether the coding reflects a researcher's social class prejudices.

Finally, content analyses can't always tell us *why* people behave as they do. We'd have to turn to studies that use different data

**content analysis** a data collection method that systematically examines some form of communication.

## An Experiment That Went Awry

In a well-known 1971 experiment, psychologist Philip Zimbardo created a mock prison, using 24 undergraduate volunteers as prisoners and guards. He stopped the experiment after 6 days because some of the participants experienced intense negative reactions. For more information, see Stanford Prison Experiment, [prisonexp.org](http://prisonexp.org). We'll examine this study, including the ethical issues it raised, in more detail in Chapter 6.



Gary Friedman/Los Angeles Times/Getty Images

collection methods—like surveys and field research—to understand why, for example, people buy stereotypically feminine or masculine baby cards or produce video games that portray men, but not women, as competitive and aggressive (see Lindner, 2012).

### 2-5d Experiments

An **experiment** is a controlled artificial situation that allows researchers to manipulate variables and measure the effects. The classic experimental design includes two equal-sized groups that are similar on characteristics such as gender age, ethnicity, race, and education.

Suppose our hypothesis is “Watching a film on race discrimination reduces prejudice.” In the **experimental group**, the participants are exposed to the independent variable (they watch the film on race discrimination). In the **control group**, participants don’t watch the film because they’re not exposed to the independent variable. Before the experiment, we’ll measure the dependent variable (prejudice) in both groups using a *pretest* (a prejudice scale). After the experimental group watches

the film, we’ll measure both groups again using a *posttest* (the same prejudice scale). If we find a difference in the scores of the dependent variable (prejudice), we might conclude that the independent variable affects the dependent variable (e.g., watching the film on race discrimination

reduced or increased prejudice). *Figure 2.6* illustrates this basic experimental design.

### STRENGTHS

Experiments come closer than other data collection methods in suggesting a possible cause-and-effect relationship. They’re also usually less expensive and time consuming than other data collection techniques (especially large surveys and multiyear field research), and there’s often no need to purchase special equipment. A second and related strength is that because researchers recruit students or other volunteers (as in medical studies), participants are usually readily available and don’t expect much, if any, monetary compensation.

A third advantage is that experiments can be *replicated* (repeated) many times with different participants. Replication strengthens the researchers’ confidence in the validity and reliability of the measures and the study’s results. For example, doctors stopped prescribing hormone pills for menopausal women because better-designed experiments that replicated earlier studies found that the pills increased the risk for breast cancer and strokes (Ioannidis, 2005).

### LIMITATIONS

One disadvantage of laboratory experiments is their reliance on student volunteers or paid respondents. Students often feel obligated to participate as part of their grade, or they may fear antagonizing an instructor who’s conducting a study. Participants might also give the answers that they think the researcher expects (the social desirability bias described earlier). In the case of paid subjects, those who are the busiest, don’t need the cash, move, or get sick may not participate fully or drop out of the study.

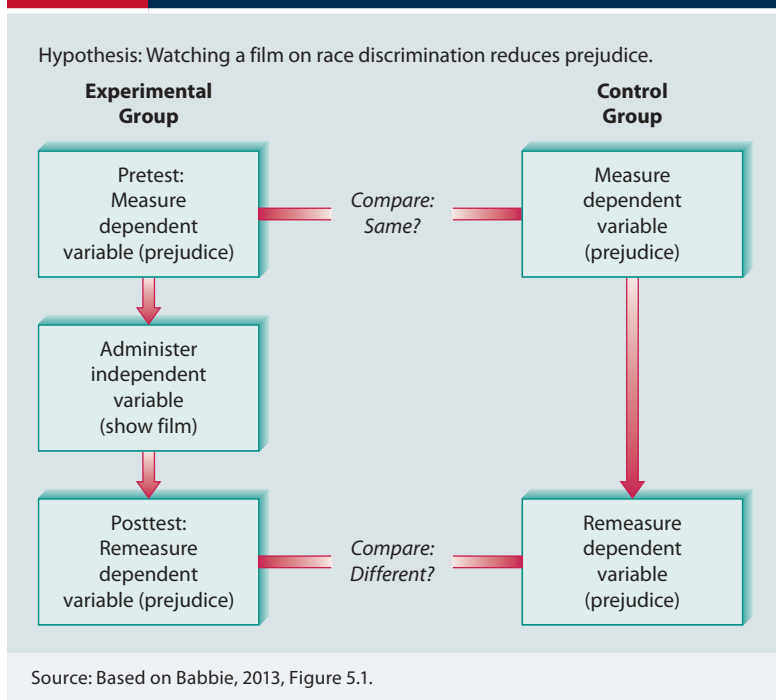
**experiment** a controlled artificial situation that allows researchers to manipulate variables and measure the effects.

**experimental group** the participants who are exposed to the independent variable.

**control group** the participants who aren’t exposed to the independent variable.



**Figure 2.6 Basic Experimental Design**



Another limitation is that experiments, especially those conducted in laboratories, are artificial. People *know* that they're being observed and may behave very differently than they would in a natural setting (Gray et al., 2007; see also Chapter 6 on the Hawthorne effect).

Third, the results of experimental studies can't be generalized to a larger population because they come from small, nonrepresentative, or self-selected samples. For example, college students who participate in experiments aren't necessarily representative of other college students, much less of people who aren't in college.

Fourth, experiments aren't suitable for studying large groups of people, a major focus in sociology. As you saw in Chapter 1, many sociologists examine macro-level issues (like employment trends) that can't be observed in a laboratory or other experimental setting.

Finally, even if a researcher finds an association between variables (e.g., watching a film reduces prejudice), it doesn't mean that the former "causes" the latter. The control group's responses in the posttest may have been influenced by other factors, including communicating with the members of the experimental group (Cook and Campbell, 1979) or living in a racially mixed neighborhood, which tends to diminish racial and ethnic prejudice (see Chapter 10). That is, experiments have few control variables that might be explaining the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.



Because of such limitations, consumers are often confused and frustrated by conflicting advice. Recently, different experiments have concluded that caffeine can relieve *or* lead to chronic headaches, inhibit *or* improve memory, increase *or* reduce depression, and that some high-fat foods are healthier than low-fat foods (Bartlett, 2011; Mozzafarian and Ludwig, 2015).

## 2-5e Secondary Analysis

Sociologists rely heavily on **secondary analysis**, an unobtrusive data collection method that examines information collected by someone else. The data may be historical materials (e.g., court proceedings), personal documents (e.g., letters and diaries), public records (e.g., state archives on births, marriages, and deaths), or official statistics (e.g., U.S. Bureau of Labor reports). Researchers with slightly different interests could analyze or reanalyze the data or examine only specific

variables. For instance, the federal government compiles information on a large number of variables—including population, age, and education—that social scientists, marketing analysts, health practitioners, and other researchers analyze for their own purposes.

### STRENGTHS

Secondary analysis is usually accessible, convenient, and inexpensive. A staggering amount of data on topics like income and employment—for the United States and worldwide—are readily available at libraries, colleges, and online.

Second, there's a huge savings in time. Because many of the data sets are stored electronically, researchers can spend most of their time analyzing, rather than collecting, the data.

A third advantage of secondary analysis is the data's high quality. The federal government and nationally known survey organizations have budgets and well-trained staff equipped to address any data collection problems. Because the samples are representative of national populations, researchers can be more confident about generalizing the findings.

Fourth, data sets often contain hundreds of variables. Thus, researchers can access national, international, and historical

**secondary analysis**  
examination of data that have been collected by someone else.

**Table 2.3** Some Data Collection Methods in Sociological Research

Method	Example	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Surveys</b>	Sending questionnaires and/or interviewing students on why they succeeded in college or dropped out	Questionnaires are fairly inexpensive and simple to administer; interviews have high response rates; findings are often generalizable	Mailed questionnaires may have low response rates; respondents tend to be self-selected; interviews are usually expensive
<b>Secondary analysis</b>	Using data from the National Center for Education Statistics (or similar organizations) to examine why students drop out of college	Usually accessible, convenient, and inexpensive; often longitudinal and historical	Information may be incomplete; some documents may be inaccessible; some data can't be collected over time
<b>Field research</b>	Observing classroom participation and other activities of first-year college students with high and low grade-point averages (GPAs)	Flexible; offers deeper understanding of social behavior; usually inexpensive	Difficult to quantify and to maintain observer/subject boundaries; the observer may be biased or judgmental; findings are not generalizable
<b>Content analysis</b>	Comparing the transcripts of college graduates and dropouts on variables such as gender, race/ethnicity, and social class	Usually inexpensive; can recode errors easily; unobtrusive; permits comparisons over time	Can be labor intensive; coding is often subjective (and may be distorted); may reflect social class bias
<b>Experiments</b>	Providing tutors to some students with low GPAs to find out if such resources increase college graduation rates	Usually inexpensive; plentiful supply of subjects; can be replicated	Subjects aren't representative of a larger population; the laboratory setting is artificial; findings can't be generalized

information that they themselves can't collect (Boslough, 2007). Finally, because many of the data sets are longitudinal, researchers can look at trends and changes over time.

## LIMITATIONS

Secondary analysis has several drawbacks. First, it may be challenging to access historical materials because the documents are deteriorating, housed in only a few libraries in the country, or part of private collections. It may also be difficult to determine the accuracy and authenticity of historical data.

Second, existing sources may not have the exact data a researcher needs. In 2000, the Census Bureau changed how it counted race and ethnicity to include the growing numbers of recent immigrants and mixed-race Americans. Doing so increased the accuracy of gauging racial and ethnic diversity, but created 63 possible racial-ethnic combinations. As a result, today's numbers are different from those before 2000, making comparisons on race and ethnicity across time problematic (Saulny, 2011; see also Pratt et al., 2015).

A third and related limitation is that even the same source may modify its measures of variables because of legal

and social changes. Regarding marital and family status, for example, the Census Bureau added "separated" only in 1950, "unmarried

partner" in 1990, and started categorizing same-sex married couples as families only in 2013 (Bates and DeMaio, 2013; Morello, 2014). Such changes are necessary. They can be frustrating, however, if, for instance, you wanted to compare the number of separated Americans between 1940 and 2015 or to determine the number of same-sex married couples since 2004, when Massachusetts became the first state to legalize same-sex marriage.

Finally, because the researcher didn't collect the data, she or he has no control over the specific variables used or how they were measured, and may not know how seriously problems such as low response rates, validity, and reliability affect the data. Most federal and other established data sets provide such information, but researchers can't simply assume that all data sets are problem-free.

Table 2.3 summarizes the data collection methods described in this chapter. Often, researchers use a combination of methods because "the social world is a multifaceted and multi-layered reality that reveals itself only in part with any single method" (Jacobs, 2005: 4). You should also be familiar with evaluation research, an increasingly important research tool.

## 2-5f Evaluation Research: Pulling It All Together

**Evaluation research** examines whether a social intervention has produced the intended result. *Social*

**evaluation research** examines whether a social intervention has produced the intended result.

*interventions* are typically programs and strategies that seek to prevent or change negative outcomes (e.g., teenage pregnancy, substance abuse).

Evaluation research “refers to a research purpose rather than a specific method” (Babbie, 2013: 192). Thus, sociologists use a variety of data collection methods, such as secondary analysis and content analysis to examine an organization’s records, surveys to gauge employee and client satisfaction, and interviews with the staff and program recipients for in-depth information on an organization’s processes.

Evaluation research is *applied* because it’s intended to have some real-world effect (Weiss, 1998). Examples include *needs assessment studies* (e.g., to improve or initiate a new service like an after-school program), *cost-benefit studies* (e.g., to determine whether funding teen abstinence programs reduces pregnancies), and *monitoring studies* (e.g., to examine the effect of new policing policies on crime rates). The findings are generally used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of a particular policy or group.

## STRENGTHS

Evaluation research is important for several reasons. First, because local and state governments have been cutting their budgets, social service agencies often rely on evaluation research to streamline their programs, and to achieve the best results at the lowest possible cost (Kettner et al., 1999).

Second, evaluation research is versatile because it includes qualitative and quantitative approaches. It can address almost any topic such as the effectiveness of driver education programs, foreign aid policies, job training programs, and premarital counseling, to name just a few. The research costs can also be low if, for example, researchers can use secondary analysis rather than collect new data.

Third, evaluation research addresses real-life problems that confront many families and communities. Because state and local resources are shrinking and there are hundreds of intervention strategies, evaluation research can be invaluable to program directors or agency heads in deciding which programs to keep, improve, or cut (Peterson et al., 1994).

## LIMITATIONS

Evaluations can usually address only one or a few of the many factors that affect behavior. For instance, adolescent substance abuse is not only due to individual high-risk decisions, but also to multiple interrelated variables that include peers, school policies, and cultural values (Bandy, 2012).

Another limitation is that the social context affects evaluation research because of politics, vested interests,



Kristopher Skimmer/ZUMA Press/Newscom

DARE programs have been popular with schools, police departments, parents, and politicians across the country even though evaluation research has found that the curriculum doesn’t reduce students’ drug use.

and conflicts of interest. Groups that fund the evaluation may pressure researchers to present only positive findings. Also, the results may not be well received if they contradict deeply held beliefs, challenge politicians’ pet projects, or conflict with official points of view (Olson, 2010; Babbie, 2013).

Consider the popular DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program, introduced in 1983, to teach elementary school children about the dangers of drug use. Social scientists evaluated DARE in 1994, 1998, and 1999, and found no significant difference in the incidence of drug use among students who had and hadn’t completed the DARE curriculum. When DARE funding was threatened, its promoters dismissed the research as “voodoo science” (Miller, 2001).

## 2-6

## ETHICS AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

Researchers today operate under much stricter guidelines than they did in the past. In conducting their research, what ethical and political dilemmas do sociologists (and other social scientists) encounter?

### 2-6a What Is Ethical Research?

Any agency (such as a university or hospital) wishing to receive federal research support must establish an institutional review board (IRB)—a panel of faculty (and sometimes others) who review all proposals involving human subjects. The chief responsibility of an IRB is to ensure that the subjects’ rights will be protected (Office for Human Research Protections, 2016).



Because so much research relies on human participants, the federal government, IRBs, and many professional organizations have formulated codes of ethics to protect participants. Regardless of the discipline or the research methods used, all ethical standards have at least three golden rules:

- ▶ First, *do no harm* by causing participants physical, psychological, or emotional pain.
- ▶ Second, the researcher must get the participant's *informed consent* to be in a study. This includes the participant's knowing what the study is about and how the results will be used.
- ▶ Third, researchers must always protect a participant's *confidentiality* even if the participant has broken a law that she or he discloses to the researcher. *Table 2.4* lists some of the basic ethical principles in sociological research.

## 2-6b Scientific Misconduct

Ethics violations are most common when the research is funded by for-profit companies and organizations. Medical researchers, particularly, have been accused of considerable scientific dishonesty. Some of the alleged violations have included the following: changing research results to please the corporation (usually tobacco or pharmaceutical companies) that sponsored the

**Table 2.4** Some Basic Principles of Ethical Sociological Research

In its most recent update, the American Sociological Association (1999) has reinforced its previous ethical codes and guidelines for researchers. Researchers must:

- Obtain all subjects' consent to participate in the research and their permission to quote from their responses and comments.
- Not exploit subjects or research assistants involved in the research for personal gain.
- Never harm, humiliate, abuse, or coerce the participants in their studies, either physically or psychologically.
- Honor all guarantees to participants of privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality.
- Use the highest methodological standards and be as accurate as possible.
- Describe the limitations and shortcomings of the research in their published reports.
- Identify the sponsors who funded the research.
- Acknowledge the contributions of research assistants (usually underpaid and overworked graduate students) who participate in the research project.

research; being paid by companies to deliver speeches to health practitioners that endorse specific drugs, even if the medications don't reduce health problems; allowing drug manufacturers to ghostwrite articles that are published in prestigious medical journals (and even draft textbooks); and falsifying data. A study of more than 2,000 articles that were published in some of the most prestigious medical journals found that almost 68 percent were withdrawn because of misconduct and fraud rather than errors (Project on Government Oversight, 2010; Fang et al., 2012; McNeill, 2012).

In the social sciences, some data collection methods are more prone to ethical breaches than others. Surveys, secondary analysis, and content analysis are less vulnerable than field research and experiments because the researchers typically don't interact directly with or affect participants. In contrast, experiments and field research can raise ethical questions because of deception or influencing the participants' feelings, attitudes, or behavior.

## 2-6c External Pressures on Researchers

Social science research is likely to be challenged when it focuses on sensitive or controversial issues. Federal agencies have avoided funding nearly all research on gun violence partly in response to powerful lobbyists, like the National Rifle Association, that pressure Congress to prevent any studies that deal with firearms (Kelderman, 2016).

Some religious groups and school administrators have successfully derailed research on adolescent sexual behavior because it undermines "traditional family values" and might make a school district look bad (e.g., if a study reports a high incidence of drug use or sexual activity) (Kempner et al., 2005).

In the first days of the Trump administration in 2017, the White House "stifled" federal scientists who were working on projects (e.g., pollution, food safety, climate) that some of the most powerful corporations oppose (Jackson, 2017; Mann, 2017). The CEO of a powerful energy company wanted the University of Oklahoma to dismiss scientists who found a possible link between fracking for oil and gas and earthquakes, and offered to sit on a search committee to fill the vacancies. The CEO is like many other politicians and corporate leaders "who embrace science when it's convenient but work to undermine, discredit, and inhibit science when it conflicts with their narrow self-interests" (Ganem, 2016: 25).

## 2-6d Do People Believe Scientific Findings?

Not always. For example, 98 percent of scientists, compared with 33 percent of U.S. adults, say that humans



Rzucamokiem/Shutterstock.com



Wong Sze Yuen/Shutterstock.com

Fisher-Price and other toy companies claim that, based on their research, their iPhone and iPad apps can teach infants as young as 9 months old to read and count (Singer, 2013). In fact, studies have found that such products do more harm than good because infants who watch the apps learn fewer words than those whose parents talk or read to them (see Chapter 12).

and other living things have evolved over time. And although there has been no scientific evidence of paranormal events, 60 percent of Americans believe that people have seen or been in the presence of ghosts (Speigel, 2013; Masci, 2017).

Why do many people reject scientific findings? One reason may be that when social media publicizes unscientific polls and falsehoods that people already believe, they're unlikely to change their minds about an issue, even after being presented with scientific data (Taub and Nyhan, 2017).

Second, research findings often challenge personal attitudes and beliefs that people cherish. For example, a number of conservative Christians believe that global warming

is a myth because only God, not humans, can affect the climate (Sheppard, 2011; Smith and Leiserowitz, 2013).

Third, an explosion of information can create confusion, especially when online searches oversimplify complex phenomena or present misleading or unreliable content. Average users “don’t know how to work through all the information [and misinformation] that’s thrown at them on a daily basis” (Dreid, 2016: A24).

Finally, many scientists, including social scientists, spend little or no time engaging in policy debates or explaining their research to the public and journalists (Basken, 2016). As a result, “lobbyists and activists can promote their ideological agendas . . . over those of good science and public policy” (Lynas, 2015).

## STUDY TOOLS<sup>2</sup>

### READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you’ve read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.



# 3

## Culture



Bruce Yuan/lyte B/Lonely Planet Images/Getty Images

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 3-1 Describe and illustrate a culture's characteristics.
- 3-2 Explain the significance of symbols, language, values, and norms.
- 3-3 Discuss and illustrate cultural similarities.
- 3-4 Discuss and illustrate cultural variations.
- 3-5 Differentiate between high culture and popular culture.
- 3-6 Explain how and why technology affects cultural change.
- 3-7 Compare and evaluate the theoretical explanations of culture.

After finishing  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 59** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**



Once when I returned a set of exams, a student who was unhappy with his grade blurted out an obscenity. A voice from the back of the classroom snapped, “You ain’t got no culture, man!” Is it true that people who use vulgar language “ain’t got no culture”?

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I shape my culture; my culture doesn't shape me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree						strongly disagree

### 3-1

## CULTURE AND SOCIETY

As popularly used, *culture* often means an appreciation of the finer things in life, such as Shakespeare’s sonnets, the opera, and using civil language. In contrast, sociologists use the term in a much broader sense: **Culture** refers to the learned and shared behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, values, and material objects that characterize a particular group or society. Thus, culture shapes a people’s total way of life.

Most human behavior isn’t random or haphazard. Among other things, culture influences what you eat; how you were raised and will raise your own children; if, when, and whom you will marry; how you make and spend money; and what you read. Even people who pride themselves on their individualism conform to most cultural rules. The next time you’re in class, for example, count how many students are *not* wearing jeans, T-shirts, sweatshirts, or sneakers—clothes that are the prevalent uniform of adolescents, college students, and many adults.

A **society** is a group of people who share a culture and a defined territory. Society and culture go hand in hand; neither can exist without the other. Because of this interdependence, social scientists sometimes use the terms *culture* and *society* interchangeably.

### 3-1a Some Characteristics of Culture

All societies, despite their diversity, share some cultural characteristics and functions (Murdock, 1940; see also Aguilar and Stokes, 1995). We don’t see culture directly, but it shapes our attitudes and behaviors.

**1. Culture is learned.** Culture isn’t innate but learned, and affects how we think, feel, and behave. If a child is born in one region of the world but raised in another, she or he will learn the customs, attitudes, and beliefs of the host culture.

**2. Culture is transmitted from one generation to the next.** We learn many customs, habits, and attitudes informally through parents, relatives, friends, and the media. We also learn culture formally in such settings as schools, workplaces, and community organizations. Whether our learning is formal or informal, culture is cumulative because each generation transmits cultural information to the next one.

**3. Culture is shared.** Culture brings members of a society together. We have a sense of belonging because we share similar beliefs, values, and attitudes about what’s right and wrong. Imagine the chaos if we did what we wanted (as physically assaulting an annoying neighbor) or if we couldn’t make numerous daily assumptions about other people’s behavior (as stopping at red traffic lights).

**4. Culture is adaptive and always changing.** Culture changes over time. New generations discard technological aspects of culture that are no longer practical, such as replacing typewriters with personal computers, and landlines with cell phones. Attitudes can also change over time. Compared with several generations ago, for example, many Americans now say that nonmarital sex is acceptable (Figure 3.1).

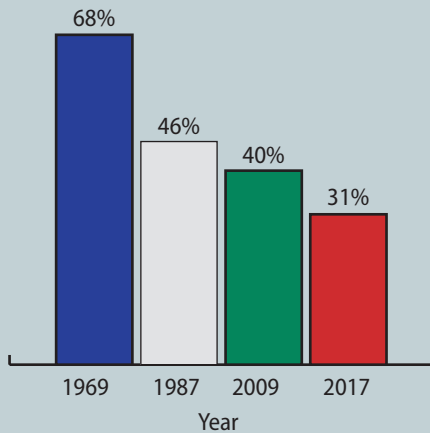
Culture shapes who we are, but remember that it’s people who create culture. As a result, culture changes as people adapt to their surroundings. Since the attacks on September 11, 2001, most people worldwide, including Americans, don’t complain at airports when we have to pass through a metal detector, when our baggage is X-rayed or searched, when items are confiscated, and when

**culture** the learned and shared behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, values, and material objects that characterize a particular group or society.

**society** a group of people who share a culture and defined territory.

**Figure 3.1** Is Nonmarital Sex Wrong?

Percentage of U.S. adults who said that nonmarital sex is “morally wrong”



Sources: Based on Saad, 2001, and Jones, 2017.

airports use full-body scanners. Thus, as the dangers in society have grown, people have passed laws or implemented rules that have increased their security but decreased their privacy.

### 3-1b Material and Nonmaterial Culture

Cultures that people construct are both material and nonmaterial (Ogburn, 1922). **Material culture** consists of the physical objects that people make, use, and share. These objects include buildings, furniture, music, weapons, jewelry, hairstyles, and the Internet. **Nonmaterial culture** consists of the ideas that people create to interpret and understand the world. Beliefs about the supernatural, customs, and rules of behavior are examples of nonmaterial culture.

Because material and nonmaterial culture are created by people, physical objects and ideas can vary considerably across societies (e.g., the farming

**material culture** the physical objects that people make, use, and share.

**nonmaterial culture** the ideas that people create to interpret and understand the world.

**symbol** anything that stands for something else and has a particular meaning for people who share a culture.

tools people create, how they form governments, or raise their children). Frequently, as you'll see shortly, there's a “cultural lag” because material culture (invention of the automobile and the cell phone) changes faster than nonmaterial culture (laws about pollution and texting while driving).

World History Archive/Alamy Stock Photo



iStock.com/Duckycards

Communication symbols vary across societies and change over time. The earliest known map of the world (700–500 B.C.E.) used cuneiform script; modern tablets are loaded with icons that provide a variety of information, including maps.

## 3-2

## THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF CULTURE

Recently, 74-year-old James Davis granted his dying wife's wish to be buried in their front yard. The Alabama Supreme Court agreed with a lower court judge that family members can't bury people anywhere they like. Davis refused to budge because the town doesn't have an ordinance governing burials, and his family members and neighbors supported his decision. After four years of court hearings and appeals, a city crew exhumed the body (Reeves, 2013).

Who's right—Davis, his family and neighbors, or the judges? To answer such questions, we must understand the building blocks of culture, particularly symbols, language, values, norms, and rituals.

### 3-2a Symbols

A **symbol** is anything that stands for something else and has a particular meaning for people who share a culture. In most societies, for example, a handshake communicates friendship or courtesy, a wedding ring signals that a person isn't a potential dating partner, and a siren denotes an emergency. People influence each other through the use of symbols. A smile and a frown communicate different information and elicit different responses. Through symbols, we engage in *symbolic interaction* (see Chapter 1).

## SYMBOLS TAKE MANY FORMS

Written words are the most common symbols, but we also communicate by tattooing our bodies or not, celebrating or disregarding wedding anniversaries, and purchasing or avoiding goods and services that indicate our social status. Gestures (e.g., raised fists, hugs, and stares) convey important messages about people's feelings and attitudes.

## SYMBOLS DISTINGUISH ONE CULTURE FROM ANOTHER

Every nation's flag, including its colors and emblems, is an important symbol of national identity. A third of the world's flags have religious symbols (Theodorou, 2014). Countries usually create or change their flags after becoming independent to create and reinforce national consciousness and pride.

In Islamic societies, many women wear a head scarf (*hijab* or *hejab*) that covers their hair and neck, a veil that hides part of the face from just below the eyes (*nijab*), or a garment that covers the entire body (*chador* or *burqa*). Whatever form it takes, the veil is just a piece of cloth, but it means different things to people across and within cultures.

## SYMBOLS CAN UNIFY OR DIVIDE A SOCIETY

Symbols unify people. About 75 percent of Americans say that they display the nation's flag in their home, workplace, car, or clothing ("75%—A Nation of Flag Wavers," 2011). Every Fourth of July, many Americans celebrate independence from Britain with parades, firecrackers, barbecues, and speeches by local and national politicians. Because such behavior signifies freedom and democracy, some immigrants purposely choose July 4th to be naturalized.

Naturalization ceremonies themselves teem with symbolic objects and behavior—flags, national anthems, oaths and pledges of allegiance, uniformed military members, and photographs of past immigrants. Such images and rituals "work together to elicit an emotional sense of belonging, pride, and patriotism" that reinforce a sense of community (Aptekar, 2016: 49).



Tim Macpherson/Stone/Getty Images

The U.S. Flag Code describes the flag as a "living thing" and forbids its display on clothing, bedding, drapery, or in advertising (Luckey, 2008). Is this man disrespecting a cherished symbol? Or showing his patriotism?

Symbols can also be divisive. Recently, South Carolina's governor, with the legislature's approval, decided to stop flying the Confederate flag on statehouse grounds because it represents slavery and white domination of African Americans. Protesters denounced the flag's removal because they see it as a proud emblem of their Southern heritage.

## SYMBOLS CAN CHANGE OVER TIME

Societies create new symbols all the time. We now have recycling symbols on many everyday items, restroom symbols that include transgender people, red ribbons that communicate support for people with HIV and AIDS, ever-changing emoticons that express a person's feelings or mood, and

hundreds of text and online chat abbreviations (e.g., afk, "as far as I know") that vary across groups depending on the user's age, occupation, and other characteristics.

Symbols communicate information that varies across societies and may change over time. In 1986, the International Red Cross changed its name to the International Red Cross and the Red Crescent Movement to encompass a number of Arab branches, and adopted a crescent emblem in addition to the well-known cross. Israel wanted to use a red Star of David, rejecting the cross as a Christian symbol and the crescent as Islamic.



AP Images/Keystone/Salvatore Di Nolfi; Fabrice Coffrini/AFP/Getty Images

Left: The two emblems of the International Movement of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent. Right: The proposed red diamond emblem.



Red Cross officials offered a red diamond as the new shape, but some countries rejected the diamond because it represents bloody conflicts in many African countries that mine diamonds (Whitelaw, 2000). The red cross and crescent continue to be the organization's emblems because the issue hasn't been resolved.

The meaning of even simple symbols varies across groups and can change over time. The # is commonly called the pound and number sign (#2 pencil). For musicians, # denotes a note that's sharp. For proofreaders, # means "insert a space." We're used to seeing # on telephone pads, but since the ascent of social media, # is a hashtag used to mark keywords or topics in a tweet (#culture).



Source: Hallmark Cards, Inc.

Every year, Hallmark produces "Keepsake" Christmas ornaments and apparel, many of which are collectibles. In 2013, one of the new pieces paid tribute to "Deck the Halls," a traditional Christmas carol. Hallmark changed the lyrics from "Don we now our gay apparel" to "Don we now our fun apparel" because the meaning of gay has changed since the song's publication in the 1800s (Wong, 2013). Because of some negative reactions, Hallmark apologized for the change (Murphy, 2013). Why do you think one word generated so much controversy?

### 3-2b Language

Perhaps the most powerful of all human symbols is **language**, a system of shared symbols that enables people to communicate with one another. Language is a human invention that communities of people have endowed with meaning. In every society, children begin to grasp the essential structure of their language at a very early age and without any instruction. Babbling rapidly leads to uttering words and combinations of words that represent an idea, feeling, or physical object.

Anthropologists Edward Sapir (1929) and Benjamin Whorf (1956) theorized that thoughts and behavior are determined by language. Their theory, known as the *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis*, posited that language provides people with a framework for interpreting social reality and the world around them. Thus, as languages vary, so do interpretations of social reality.

Subsequent research found little support for the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Some critics maintained that language affects but does not "determine" culture. Others argued that language influences some thinking processes, but not all (e.g., Berlin and Kay, 1969; Heider and Olivier, 1972; Schlesinger, 1991). Still, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has generated considerable research across several disciplines, including sociology, in exploring the relationship between language, thought, and culture.

transmits information, and influences people's attitudes and behavior. Language also directs our thinking, controls our actions, and shapes our expression of emotions. The meaning of words change over time, but some changes are more controversial than others. Both birds and humans now tweet. Spam is a canned meat product, but also an unsolicited electronic message. Hallmark generated considerable controversy, however, when it changed "gay" to "fun" on a line of Christmas decorations and accessories, including a sweater (see photo).

In a recent survey of 14 developed countries, including the United States, large majorities of people said that speaking the country's language is very important in being "one of us." Language was far more important in being "part of the nation" than birthplace, religious affiliation, education, clothing preferences, and celebrating the host country's holidays (Stokes, 2017). For many nations, then, language is the cornerstone of acceptance into a group.

### LANGUAGE AND GENDER

Many professors routinely use phrases such as "Okay, guys, in class today..." and no one objects. One of my colleagues illustrates the linkage between language and gender, and how it affects our thinking, by saying "Okay, gals, in class today..." "I always get a reaction of gaping mouths, laughs, and bewildered looks," he says. The students react differently to "guys" and "gals" because we've internalized male terms (e.g., *guys*, *policeman*, and *maintenance man*) as normal and acceptable.

Language has a profound influence on how we think about and act toward people. Those who adhere to traditional language contend that nouns such as *fireman*, *chairman*, *mailman*, and *mankind* and pronouns like *he* refer to both women and men, and that women who object to such

### WHY LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT

Language makes us human: It conveys our ideas,

**language** a system of shared symbols that enables people to communicate with one another.

## Wanted: Someone Who Can Translate Federal Gibberish into Plain English

It's almost impossible to find a U.S. government document that people can understand. In 2010, President Obama signed the Plain Writing Act, which requires federal documents to be rewritten in plain English. Here's a "before" and "after" example from the Department of Health and Human Services Handbook that assures health care for low-income HIV/AIDS patients:

**BEFORE:** Title I of the CARE Act creates a program of formula and supplemental competitive grants to help metropolitan areas with 2,000 or more reported AIDS cases meet emergency care needs of low-income HIV patients. Title II of the Ryan White Act provides formula grants to States and territories for operation of HIV service consortia in the localities most affected by the epidemic, provision of home and community-based care, continuation of insurance coverage for persons with HIV infection, and treatments that prolong

life and prevent serious deterioration of health. Up to 10 percent of the funds for this program can be used to support Special Projects of National Significance.

**AFTER:** Low income people living with HIV/AIDS gain, literally, years, through the advanced drug treatments and ongoing care supported by HRSA's Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act.

Language is supposed to help people communicate. However, the Plain Writing Act isn't enforced, and many federal agencies, including the Internal Revenue Service, are exempted. Does a government have more control if people don't understand its rules and regulations?

Sources: Based on Health Resources and Services Administration (2010), and "Government Resolves..." (2011).

usage are too sensitive. Suppose, however, that all of your professors used only *she*, *her*, and *women* when referring to all people. Would the men in the class feel excluded? One solution is to use sentences with plural, gender-neutral pronouns (e.g., *they*, *them*) and gender-neutral nouns (e.g., *firefighter*, *police officer*, and *mail carrier*).

### LANGUAGE, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

Words—written and spoken—create and reinforce both positive and negative images about race and ethnicity. Someone might receive a *black mark*, and a *white lie* isn't "really" a lie. We *blackball* someone, *blacken* someone's reputation, denounce *blackguards* (villains), and prosecute people in the *black market*. In contrast, a *white knight* rescues people in distress, the *white hope* brings glory to a group, and the good guys wear *white hats*.

Racist or ethnic slurs, labels, and stereotypes demean and stigmatize people. Derogatory ethnic words abound: *honky*, *hebe*, *kike*, *spic*, *chink*, *jap*, *polack*, *wet-back*, and many others. Self-ascribed racial epithets are as harmful as those imposed by outsiders. When Italians refer to themselves as *dagos* or African Americans call each other *nigger*, they tacitly accept stereotypes about themselves and legitimize the general usage of such derogatory labels (Attinasi, 1994).

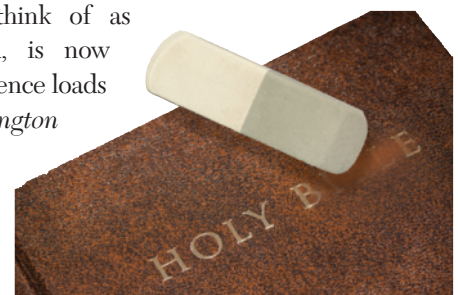
Through language, children learn about their cultural heritage and develop a sense of group identity.

Spanish is the fastest-growing and most spoken non-English language in the United States today. Some demographers predict, however, that about 34 percent of Latinos will speak only English at home by 2020, up from 25 percent in 2010 (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013). In many Latino and other immigrant families, the native language begins to disappear after just one generation. Assimilation has positive effects, but can also lead to communication problems between Americanized children and their non-English-speaking neighbors and kin in the homeland (Tobar, 2009; see also Chapter 10).

### LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Language is dynamic and changes over time. The most recent edition of the New American Bible, an annual best seller, has changed the word "booty," which now has a sexual connotation, to "spoils of war." "Cereal," which many think of as breakfast food, is now "grain" to reference loads of wheat (*Huffington Post*, 2011).

U.S. English is composed of hundreds of



Jiri Hera/Shutterstock.com; iSpace/Shutterstock.com

**Table 3.1 U.S. English Is a Mixed Salad**

Here are a few examples of English words borrowed from other languages, showing our mixture of heritages. What words would you add to the list?

<input type="checkbox"/> Africa: apartheid, Kwanzaa, safari	<input type="checkbox"/> Spain: anchovy, bizarre
<input type="checkbox"/> Alaska and Siberia: husky, igloo, kayak	<input type="checkbox"/> Thailand: Siamese
<input type="checkbox"/> Bangladesh: bungalow, dinghy	<input type="checkbox"/> Turkey: baklava, caviar, kebab
<input type="checkbox"/> Hungary: coach, goulash, paprika	<input type="checkbox"/> France: bacon, police, ballet
<input type="checkbox"/> India: bandanna, cheetah, shampoo	<input type="checkbox"/> Japan: geisha, judo, sushi
<input type="checkbox"/> Iran and Afghanistan: bazaar, caravan, tiger	<input type="checkbox"/> Norway: iceberg, rig, walrus
<input type="checkbox"/> Israel: kosher, rabbi, Sabbath	<input type="checkbox"/> Mexico: avocado, chocolate, coyote
<input type="checkbox"/> Italy: fresco, spaghetti, piano	<input type="checkbox"/> Germany: strudel, vitamin, sauerkraut, kindergarten

thousands of words borrowed from many countries and groups that were in the Americas before the colonists arrived (Carney, 1997). *Table 3.1* provides a few examples of English words borrowed from other languages.

In response to cultural and technological changes, our vocabulary now includes *sexting*, *ebook*, *tweet*, *staycation*, *facetime*, *unfriend*, and *selfie*, among other new words. And to some people's dismay and others' delight, some writers are now substituting *partner* for the traditional *spouse*, *wife*, or *husband*.

### 3-2c Values

**Values** are the standards by which people define what is good or bad, moral or immoral, proper or improper, desirable or undesirable, beautiful or ugly. These widely shared standards provide *general guidelines* for everyday behavior rather than concrete rules for specific situations. Honesty, for example, is an important but abstract U.S. value. Thus, faculty typically define in course syllabi what they mean by cheating, such as using material from the Internet or other sources without proper acknowledgment, signing an attendance sheet for another student, or getting help on an assignment.

### MAJOR U.S. VALUES

Sociologist Robin Williams (1970: 452–500) has identified a number of core U.S. values. All are central to the American way of life: They're widespread, have endured over time, and indicate what we believe is important in life.

**values** the standards by which people define what is good or bad, moral or immoral, proper or improper, desirable or undesirable, beautiful or ugly.

**1. Achievement and success.** U.S. culture stresses personal achievement, especially occupational success.

Many Americans believe that if they work hard, apply themselves, and save their money, they'll be successful in the future.

### 2. Activity and Work.

Americans want to “make things happen.” They respect people who are focused and disciplined, and assume that hard work will be rewarded. Journalists and others often praise those who work past their retirement age.

**3. Humanitarianism.** U.S. society emphasizes concern for others, helpfulness, kindness, and support. During natural disasters—like earthquakes, floods, fires, and tornadoes—at home and abroad, many Americans are enormously generous (see Chapter 5).

**4. Efficiency and practicality.** Americans emphasize technological innovation, up-to-dateness, practicality, and getting things done. Many American colleges now tout their programs or courses as being practical instead of emphasizing knowledge and intellectual growth.

**5. Progress.** Americans focus on the future rather than the present or the past. The next time you walk down the aisle of a grocery store, note how many products are “new,” “improved,” and “better than ever.”

**6. Material possessions.** Americans “have more stuff now than any society in history” (even if they can't afford the products). When the stuff accumulates, we buy stuff to stuff it into. Consequently, an entire industry, self-storage, has emerged to house our extra belongings (Sanburn, 2015: 46).

**7. Freedom and equality.** Countless U.S. documents affirm freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of worship. U.S. laws also tell Americans that they're “created equal” and have the same legal rights regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, age, or social class.

**8. Conformity.** Most people don't want to be labeled as “strange,” “peculiar,” or “different.” They conform because they want to be accepted, liked, hired, and promoted. As a result, we “toe the line,” “go along to get along,” and try to “fit in.”

**9. Democracy.** Democracy promises the average citizen equal political rights. It emphasizes equality, freedom,



and faith in the people rather than giving power to a monarch, dictator, or emperor.

- 10. Individualism.** U.S. culture values each person's development. Thus, we often encourage children to be independent, creative, and self-motivated.

## VALUES SOMETIMES CONFLICT

Williams acknowledged that these core American values are sometimes contradictory and even hypocritical. For example,

- ▶ We believe in religious freedom, but 82 percent of Americans say that it's important that Christians be able to worship freely, compared with 61 percent who say the same for Muslims (Zoll and Swanson, 2015).
- ▶ We cherish freedom of speech, but protesters physically attacked political candidates' supporters during the 2016 presidential campaign. At many colleges, campus speakers have been shouted down or disinvited because a small number of vocal students "demand the right to be free from speech that they find offensive or upsetting" (Stone, 2016: B10; see also Kueppers, 2016).
- ▶ We prize individualism, but reward people who conform to a group's expectations (see Chapter 6).
- ▶ We encourage responsibility, but often blame popular culture rather than parenting for children's bad behavior (see Chapter 12).
- ▶ We rail against waste, rising food prices, and the growing number of landfills, but throw away up to 40 percent of food every year (Gunders, 2012).

## VALUES VARY ACROSS CULTURES AND CHANGE OVER TIME

Cultural values can change because of technological advances, immigration, and contact with outsiders. For example, the Japanese parliament passed a law making love of country a compulsory part of school curricula. The lawmakers and their numerous supporters hope that teaching patriotism will counteract the American-style emphasis on individualism and self-expression that they believe has undermined Japanese values of cooperation, self-discipline, responsibility, and respect for others (Wallace, 2006).

In the United States, surveys of first-year college students show a shift in values. Between 1968 and 2013, for example, "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" plummeted in importance whereas "being very well off financially" surged (Eagan et al., 2014). Consistent with our humanitarian values, however, a sizeable majority (63 percent) of the students said that "helping others



Every year, Americans throw out more food than plastic, paper, metal, and glass. The French government fines large supermarkets up to \$82,000 for throwing away food that's considered edible (Ferdman, 2015).

who are in difficulty" is very important, but women were more likely to feel this way (Figure 3.2).

The share of U.S. adults ages 25 and older who have never been married is at an historic high—20 percent in 2016 compared with only 9 percent in 1960. You'll see in Chapter 12 that marriage rates vary by social class, among other factors, but values also affect marital status. For example, 50 percent of Americans, another historic high, say society is just as well off if people have priorities other than marriage and children (Wang and Parker, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau News, 2016).

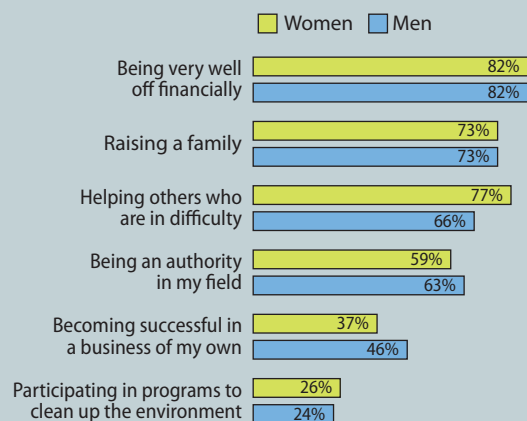
### 3-2d Norms

Values are general standards, whereas **norms** are a society's specific rules of

**norms** specific rules of right and wrong behavior.

**Figure 3.2** What Really Matters in Life?

Percentage of women and men saying that each objective is "essential" or "very important."



**These objectives of first-year college students reflect U.S. values. How are women and men similar? How do they differ? How might you explain the differences?**

Source: Based on Eagan et al., 2014: 66, 92.

right and wrong behavior. Norms tell us what we *should*, *ought*, and *must* do, as well as what we *should not*, *ought not*, and *must not* do: don't talk in church, stand in line, and so on. We may not like many of the rules, but they make our everyday lives more orderly and predictable. Here are some general characteristics of norms:

- ▶ Most are *unwritten*, passed down orally from generation to generation (use the good dishes and tablecloth on special occasions).
- ▶ They're *instrumental* because they serve a specific purpose (get rid of garbage because it attracts roaches and rats).
- ▶ Some are *explicit* (save your money "for a rainy day"), whereas others are *implicit* (be respectful at a wake or funeral).
- ▶ They *change* over time (it's now more acceptable to have a child out of wedlock but much less acceptable to smoke or drink alcohol while pregnant).
- ▶ Most are *conditional* because they apply in specific situations (slipping out of your smelly shoes may be fine at home, but not on an airplane).
- ▶ Because they're situational, norms can be *rigid* ("You *must* turn in your term paper at the beginning of class on May 5") or *flexible* ("Turn in your term papers by the end of the semester").

**folkways** norms that involve everyday customs, practices, and interaction.

Norms regulate our behavior, but can differ because of characteristics such as age, social class,

race, and gender. For example, a female professor's students sometimes comment on her clothes in their course evaluations and want her to "dress like a professor." In contrast, her husband, also a professor, "has yet to hear a single student comment about his wardrobe." So she changes her businesslike outfits every day while her husband usually wears khaki pants (or jeans) and a polo shirt day in and day out (Johnston, 2005). Thus, "her" and "his" norms differ.

Sociologists differentiate three types of norms—folkways, mores, and laws—that vary because some rules are more important than others. As a result, a society punishes some wrongdoers more severely than others.

## FOLKWAYS

**Folkways** are norms that involve everyday customs, practices, and interaction. Etiquette rules are good examples of folkways: Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze, say "please" and "thank you," knock before entering someone's office, and don't pick your ear wax or toenails in public.

We automatically practice numerous folkways because we've internalized them since birth. We often don't realize that we conform to folkways until someone violates one, such as picking one's nose or popping pimples in public, or talking loudly on a cell phone.

Folkways vary from one country to another. Punctuality is more important in Western countries than in parts of Latin America and the Mediterranean. Tipping is practically nonexistent in Australia, China, and Japan, but expected in the United States. Austrians, Germans, and the Swiss consider chewing gum in public vulgar. There are also many differences in table manners: Europeans keep their hands above the table at all times, not in their laps; "cleaning your plate" may be insulting in the Philippines, North Africa, and some regions of China because an empty plate suggests that the host didn't serve enough; and in some countries, like India, it's customary to eat with one's hands instead of using knives and forks (Becker, 2015; Louie, 2015; eDiplomat, 2016).

South Korea's national media criticized Microsoft founder Bill Gates for his "rude" handshake when meeting President Park Geun-Hye in 2013. As one person tweeted, "How can he put his hand in his pocket when meeting a leader of a state?!" A one-hand shake is disrespectful in South Korea and other parts of Asia, and is usually reserved for someone younger or a good friend (Agence France-Presse, 2013; Evans, 2013). Which types of norms did Gates violate—folkways, mores, or laws?



Yonhap/AFP/Getty Images/Newscom

Folkways can change in response to macro-level changes. The growth of technology has altered many campus folkways. In the past, a syllabus was typically a few pages long, outlining basic course requirements and deadlines. Now, many syllabi—some as long as 10 pages—look more like legal documents. They describe, often in great detail, a variety of rules ranging from attendance to laptop and cell phone use during class, even forbidding videos of professors that may appear on YouTube (Wasley, 2008).

## MORES

**Mores** (pronounced “MORE-ayz”) are norms that people consider very important because they maintain moral and ethical behavior. According to U.S. cultural mores, people must be sexually faithful to their spouse or partner, loyal to their country, and must not kill another person (except during war or in self-defense).

Folkways emphasize *ought* to behavior whereas mores define *must* behavior. The Ten Commandments are a good example of both civil and religious mores. Other mores include ethical guidelines (don’t cheat, don’t lie), expectations about behavior (don’t use illicit drugs), and rules about sexual partners (don’t have sexual intercourse with children or family members).

Mores, like folkways, can change. Until about the late 1960s, 80 percent of U.S. nonmarital babies were given up for adoption. This rate has dropped to about 1 percent because most unwed mothers, who are no longer stigmatized for having nonmarital babies, keep their infants (Benokraitis, 2015).

The strictest mores are *taboos*, which forbid acts that violate social customs, religious or moral beliefs, or laws. Cannibalism, incest, and infanticide (killing infants) are examples of tabooed behavior.

Taboos define and reinforce mores, but there are many violations. For instance, 92 percent of Americans say that having an extramarital affair is morally wrong. Over a lifetime, however, 21 percent of husbands and 15 percent of wives admit to having had extramarital sex (“Adultery in New England . . .,” 2014; Dugan, 2015).

China’s new “Elderly Rights Law” allows aging parents to sue children who don’t visit them “often.” The judge ordered the daughter of this 77-year-old woman to visit her mother every two months and on at least two of the country’s major holidays (Makinen, 2013).

## LAWS

**Laws** are formally defined norms about what is legal or illegal. Unlike folkways and most mores, laws are deliberate, formal, “precisely specified in written texts,” and “enforced by a specialized bureaucracy,” usually police and courts, which have the power to punish violators (Hechter and Opp, 2001: xi).

Laws change over time. Every year, states pass thousands of bills, ranging from drones to school sports. So far, 29 states and the District of Columbia have legalized medical marijuana, and 8 states and the District of Columbia have legalized marijuana for recreational use. Every state now permits gambling (e.g., lotteries, casinos, racetrack betting). Some people believe that legalizing marijuana and gambling violates mores, but taxing both of these activities has greatly augmented state coffers.

Laws also vary across societies. You’ll see shortly and throughout this textbook that countries’ laws differ considerably regarding, for example, alcohol, adultery, elections, health care, religious worship, freedom of speech, and adoption.

## SANCTIONS

Most people conform to norms because of **sanctions**, rewards for good or appropriate behavior and/or penalties for bad or inappropriate behavior. Children learn norms through both *positive* sanctions (praise, hugs, smiles, new toys) and *negative*

**mores** norms that people consider very important because they maintain moral and ethical behavior.

**laws** formally defined norms about what is legal or illegal.

**sanctions** rewards for good or appropriate behavior and/or penalties for bad or inappropriate behavior.



AFP/Getty Images



sanctions (frowning, scolding, spanking, withdrawing love) (see Chapter 4).

Negative sanctions vary in the degree of punishment. When we violate folkways, the sanctions are relatively mild (e.g., gossip, raised eyebrows, ridicule) because folkways aren't critical for a society's survival. If you don't bathe or brush your teeth, you may not be invited to parties because others will see you as crude, but not sinful or evil.

The sanctions for violating mores and some laws can be severe: loss of employment, expulsion from college, whipping, torture, banishment, imprisonment, and even execution. The punishment is usually harsh because the behavior threatens a society's moral foundations. For Hindus, who make up more than 80 percent of India's 1.2 billion population, the cow is a revered religious symbol. Much of India bans its slaughter, sale, and consumption. Hindu mobs have beaten to death Muslims that they suspected of killing, stealing, or smuggling cows. In one case, and as the family had maintained, a forensic test found that the murdered victim had eaten goat meat (Raj, 2015).

Sanctions aren't always consistent, despite universally held norms. Someone who can hire a good attorney often receives no penalty or a light one for a serious crime. In some cultures, young girls and women may be lashed for engaging in premarital sex, but men aren't punished at all for the same behavior, even though it violates Islamic law (Peter, 2012). Also, laws are sometimes enforced selectively or not at all. In the United States and elsewhere, only a fraction of offenders who violate rape, sexual harassment, and domestic violence laws are prosecuted (Jewkes et al., 2013; see also Chapters 7 and 12).

### 3-2e Rituals

**Rituals** are formal and repeated behaviors that unite people. They include giving gifts during Christmas, oaths of allegiance, wedding and funeral ceremonies, worship rites, wearing Halloween costumes, graduations, veterans' parades, and even shaking hands. What all rituals have in common is the transmission and reinforcement of norms that unite us and strengthen relationships (Rossano, 2012).

Rituals are also outward symbols of values. During the playing of our national anthem, for example, everyone stands and faces the flag. Many people place their hands

over their hearts, and men remove their caps and hats. Such ritualistic behavior demonstrates respect and reinforces shared values about patriotism and democracy.

**rituals** formal and repeated behaviors that unite people.

**cultural universals** customs and practices that are common to all societies.



Noah Seelam/Getty Images

In some Indian states, violators who possess or sell beef can be punished by up to five years in prison (Bagri and Najar, 2015).

## 3-3

## SOME CULTURAL SIMILARITIES

You've seen that there's considerable diversity across societies in symbols, language, values, and norms. There are also some striking similarities because of cultural universals, ideal versus real culture, ethnocentrism, and cultural relativism.

### 3-3a Cultural Universals

**Cultural universals** are customs and practices that are common to all societies. Anthropologist George Murdock and his associates studied hundreds of societies and compiled a list of 88 activities that they found among all cultures (*Table 3.2* provides some examples).

There are many cultural universals, but specific behaviors vary across cultures, from one group to another in the same society, and over time. For example, all societies have food taboos, but they differ across societies. For about 75 percent of the world's people, locusts, crickets, silkworms, grasshoppers, ants, and other insects are a big part of the diet (Huis et al., 2013). Vietnamese restaurants offer cat on the menu, and many poor people in rural China eat dog meat because they can't afford poultry, pork, and beef. Increasingly, however, urban, middle-class Chinese households "have learned to love dogs at the end of a leash rather than on a skewer" ("Dog-lovers . . ." 2015: 46; see also Wan, 2011).

**Table 3.2** Some Cultural Universals

Athletics	Food taboos	Housing	Medicine
Cooking	Funeral rites	Inheritance rules	Music
Courtship	Games	Kin terminology	Property rights
Dancing	Gift giving	Language	Religious rituals
Division of labor	Greetings	Magic	Sexual restrictions
Etiquette	Hairstyles	Marriage	Status differentiation

Source: Based on Murdock, 1940.

### 3-3b Ideal versus Real Culture

The **ideal culture** comprises the beliefs, values, and norms that people say they hold or follow. In every society, however, ideal culture differs from **real culture**, or people's actual everyday behavior.

Consider parent-child relationships. Americans say that they love and cherish their children, but every year hundreds of thousands of children experience abuse and neglect on a daily basis. Indeed, 92 percent of the offenders are parents (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017; see also Chapter 12).

In China, the 2,500-year-old Confucian ideal of *filial piety* (respecting and taking care of one's parents) still



Kevin Foy/Alamy Stock Photo

About 75 percent of the world's people consume insects, which are high in protein, vitamins, and fiber, and usually low in fat. More than two out of every three American adults are overweight or obese, the highest percentage on the planet (see Chapter 14). Would we be healthier if we ate insects instead of gulping down hamburgers and french fries?

runs deep. However, nearly half of the country's older people now live apart from their children, most of whom live and work in urban areas—"a phenomenon unheard of a generation ago"—leaving elders to fend for themselves (Mencher, 2013). Thus, ideal culture and actual behavior are often inconsistent.

### 3-3c Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

**Ethnocentrism** is the belief that one's culture, society, or group is inherently superior to others. Thus, "*our* customs, *our* laws, *our* food, *our* traditions, *our* music, *our* religion, *our* beliefs and values, and so forth, are somehow better than those of other societies" (Smedley, 2007: 32). Because people internalize their culture and tend to see their way of life as the best and the most natural, they often disparage those with differing attitudes and behavior as inferior, wrong, or backward. How many of you, for example, are repelled at the thought of eating insects, cats, or dogs?

Some of my black students argue that it's impossible for African Americans to be ethnocentric because they experience much prejudice and discrimination. *Any* group can be ethnocentric, however (Rose, 1997). An immigrant from Nigeria who believes that native-born African Americans are lazy and criminal is just as ethnocentric as a native-born African American who describes Nigerians as arrogant and "uppity."

Ethnocentrism can be functional. Appreciating one's own country and heritage promotes loyalty and cultural unity, reinforces conformity, and maintains stability. Members of a society become committed to their particular values and customs, and transmit them to the next generation. As a result, life is (generally) orderly and predictable.

Ethnocentrism is also dysfunctional because viewing others as inferior generates hatred, discrimination, and conflict. Many current wars and battles—as those in some African nations and between Israelis and Palestinians—are due to religious, ethnic, or political intolerance (see Chapter 13). Thus, ethnocentrism thwarts intergroup understanding and cooperation.

**ideal culture** the beliefs, values, and norms that people say they hold or follow.

**real culture** people's actual everyday behavior.

**ethnocentrism** the belief that one's own culture, society, or group is inherently superior to others.

The opposite of ethnocentrism is **cultural relativism**, the belief that no culture is better than another and should be judged by its own standards. Most Japanese mothers stay home with their children, whereas many American mothers work outside the home. Is one practice better than another? No. Because Japanese fathers are expected to be the breadwinners, it's common for many Japanese women to be homemakers. In the United States, some mothers choose to stay home, but economic recessions and the loss of many high-paying jobs have catapulted many married women into the labor force to help support their families (see Chapters 10, 11, and 12). Thus, Japanese and American parenting may differ, but one culture isn't better or worse than the other.

## 3-4 SOME CULTURAL VARIATIONS

There's considerable cultural variation not only *across* societies but also *within* the same society. *Subcultures* and *countercultures* account for some of the complexity within a society.

### 3-4a Subcultures

A **subculture** is a group within society that has distinctive norms, values, beliefs, lifestyle, or language. A subculture is part of the larger, dominant culture but has its own particular ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. U.S. society contains thousands of subcultures based on a variety of characteristics, interests, or activities:

- ▶ **Ethnicity** (Irish, Mexican, Vietnamese)
- ▶ **Religion** (evangelical Christians, atheists, Mormons)
- ▶ **Politics** (Maine Republicans, Southern Democrats, independents)
- ▶ **Sex and gender** (heterosexual, lesbian, transgender)
- ▶ **Age** (older widows, middle schoolers, college students)
- ▶ **Occupation** (surgeons, prostitutes, truck drivers)

**cultural relativism** the belief that no culture is better than another and should be judged by its own standards.

**subculture** a group within society that has distinctive norms, values, beliefs, lifestyle, or language.

**counterculture** a group within society that openly opposes and/or rejects some of the dominant culture's norms, values, or laws.

- ▶ **Music and art** (jazz aficionados, country music buffs, art lovers)
- ▶ **Social class** (billionaires, working poor, middle class)
- ▶ **Recreation** (mountain bikers, poker players, dancers)

As you read this list, you'll realize that most of



Vatican Pool-Corbis/Corbis News/Getty Images

Dozens of rules and customs govern what an American first lady should and shouldn't wear while visiting other countries. In keeping with Vatican protocol, Melania Trump wore long sleeves, formal black clothing, and a black veil in a meeting with Pope Francis.

us are members of numerous subcultures. We usually participate in subcultures without having much commitment to any of them (e.g., basketball fans, guitar players, collectors of ceramic frogs). On the other hand, members of racial or ethnic subcultures may intentionally live in the same neighborhoods, associate with each other, have close personal relationships, and marry others who are similar to themselves.

To fit in, members of most subcultures adapt to the larger society, but they may also maintain some of their traditional customs. Among Ghanaian immigrants, for instance, funerals are lavish celebrations rather than sad gatherings. The funerals are "all-night affairs with open bars and window-rattling music." As in Ghana, the guests need not know the deceased or even the family. Many people attend simply to meet other Ghanaians and to "cut loose on the dance floor" (Dolnick, 2011: A1; see also Bax, 2013).

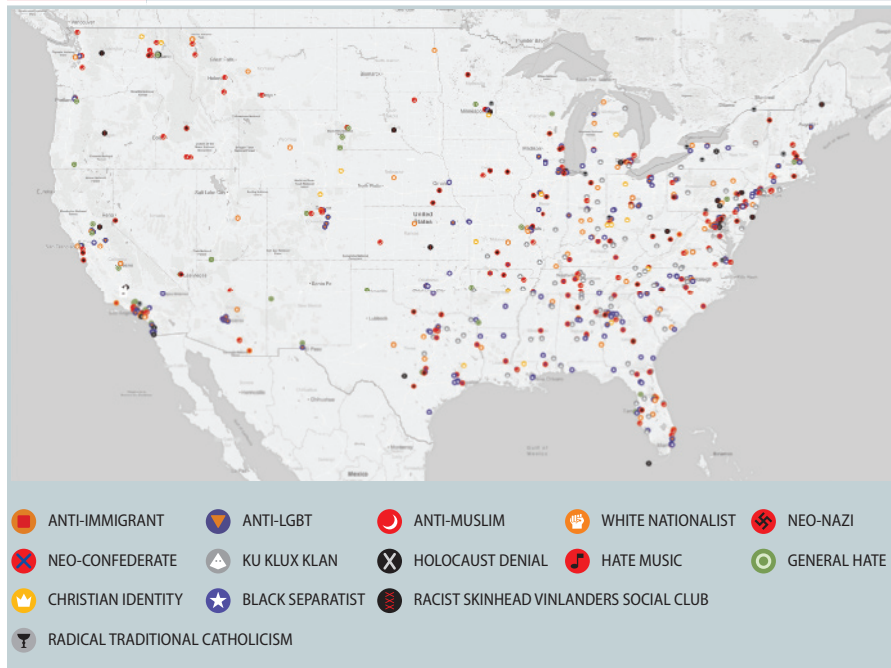
In many instances, subcultures arise because of technological or other societal changes. After the Internet emerged, subcultures appeared that identified themselves as hackers, techies, and computer geeks.

### 3-4b Countercultures

A **counterculture** is a group within society that openly opposes and/or rejects some of the dominant culture's norms, values, or laws. Countercultures usually emerge when people believe they can't achieve their goals within the existing society. As a result, the groups develop values and practices that run counter to those of the



**Figure 3.3** Active U.S. Hate Groups, 2016



Source: Based on Potok, 2017.

dominant society. Some countercultures are small and informal, but others have millions of members and are highly organized.

Most countercultures are law-abiding. Some, however, are violent and extremist. There are active hate groups in every state (Figure 3.3), but their number has increased from 784 in 2014 to 917 in 2016. Hate groups include antigovernment militia, white supremacists, abortion foes, domestic Islamist radicals, neo-Nazis, and a small but growing number of black separatists. The groups target people because of their race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation (Potok, 2017).

The most dramatic change has been the growth of anti-Muslim organizations—from 34 in 2015 to 101 in 2016. Some analysts have attributed the near-tripling of these groups to international terrorism, a growing fear of domestic attacks, and President Trump’s campaign rhetoric that characterized refugees and immigrants from predominantly Muslim nations as terrorists (Johnson, 2016; Eversley, 2017; Potok, 2017). The FBI is particularly concerned about violence carried out by individuals who aren’t affiliated with any countercultural movement and are, therefore, hard to detect (Kurzman and Schanzer, 2015).

### 3-4c Multiculturalism

**Multiculturalism** (sometimes called *cultural pluralism*) refers to the coexistence of several cultures in the same geographic area, without one culture dominating another.

Many applaud multiculturalism because it encourages intercultural dialogue (e.g., schools offering programs in African American, Latino, Arabic, and Asian studies). Supporters hope that emphasizing multiculturalism—especially in schools and the workplace—will decrease ethnocentrism, racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination.

Despite its benefits, not everyone is enthusiastic about multiculturalism. Not learning the language or following the customs of the country where one lives and works can spur tension and conflict. European political leaders in Germany, Great Britain, and France have described multiculturalism, particularly integrating Muslims, as a “failed policy” and a “nightmare” that’s had “disas-

trous results.” Instead of adopting the dominant culture’s values and beliefs, according to critics, some ethnic and religious subcultures “build tiny nations” within the host nation, thereby jeopardizing the host country’s national identity (Marquand, 2011; Kymlicka, 2012; Tharoor, 2015; see also Chapter 13).

### 3-4d Culture Shock

People who travel to other countries often experience **culture shock**—confusion, disorientation, or anxiety that accompanies exposure to an unfamiliar way of life. Conventional cues about how to behave are missing or have a different meaning. Culture shock affects some people more than others, but the most stressful changes involve differences in food, clothes, etiquette, values, language, the general pace of life, and a lack of privacy (Spradley and Phillips, 1972; Pedersen, 1995).

To some degree, everyone is *culture bound* because we’ve internalized cultural norms and values. During a recent tour to North Korea, an American college student stole a political poster as a souvenir. North Korea’s Supreme Court sentenced him to

**multiculturalism** (sometimes called *cultural pluralism*) the coexistence of several cultures in the same geographic area, without one culture dominating another.

**culture shock** confusion, disorientation, or anxiety that accompanies exposure to an unfamiliar way of life.

## Does Pop Culture Make Kids Fat?

The prevalence of obesity among American children ages 2 to 19 years has more than tripled, increasing from 5 percent in the 1960s to 17 percent in 2014 (Fryar et al., 2016). There are many reasons for the increase, but physicians and researchers lay much of the blame on popular culture, especially the advertising industry. The advertising, particularly on television, uses cartoon characters like SpongeBob SquarePants and Scooby-Doo to sell sugary cereals, cookies, candy, and other high-calorie



iStock.com/Juanmonino

snacks. In contrast, many European countries forbid advertising on children's television programs. After considerable pressure from the federal government, the nation's largest food companies agreed to curb advertising, but children are watching more fast-food ads on TV than ever before. Only six companies are responsible for more than

70 percent of all TV fast-food ads viewed by children age 18 and younger ("Food Companies Propose...", 2011; Harris et al., 2013).

15 years of prison and hard labor. Many Americans were outraged: They dismissed the theft as a small and harmless college-style prank, and attributed the harsh punishment to the escalating tensions with the United States over nuclear weapons. But in North Korea, where the leader is treated as a deity, "political slogans are sacrosanct," harming slogans bearing leaders' names is "one of the most serious crimes" and is considered an "act of hostility against the state" (Sang-Hun, 2016: A4; Dawson, 2017).

### 3-5 HIGH CULTURE AND POPULAR CULTURE

**High culture** refers to the cultural expression of a society's highest social classes. Examples include opera, ballet, theatre, and classical music.

**high culture** the cultural expression of a society's highest social classes.

**popular culture** the beliefs, practices, activities, and products that are widespread among a population.

**cultural capital** resources and assets that give a group advantages.

In contrast, **popular culture** refers to the beliefs, practices, activities, and products that are widespread among a population. Examples include television, music, social media, advertising, sports, hobbies, fads, fashions,

movies, the food we eat, the gossip we share, and the jokes we tell (Levine, 1998; Gans, 1999).

Social class affects our participation in high and popular culture. Members of the upper class can pursue the fine arts and similar activities because they have **cultural capital**—resources such as knowledge, verbal and social skills, education, and other assets that give a group advantages (Bourdieu, 1986). Resources alone, however, don't determine our cultural tastes and interests. For example, in Baltimore (as in many other cities), tickets for the symphony, opera, or ballet are usually much less expensive than those for a Ravens football game or rock concert.

Cultural capital sets up boundaries between social classes, but our cultural expressions and products often contain elements of both popular and high culture. For instance, African American jazz players have inspired European classical music composers and themselves perform classical music (Salamone, 2005; Lawn, 2013).

The Queen of England has conferred knighthood—one of the highest honors given to an individual in the United Kingdom—on pop singers like Elton John and Paul McCartney. Since 1998, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., has presented an annual Mark Twain Prize for American Humor to popular culture comedians like Richard Pryor, Tina Fey, and Bill Murray.

American fast-food restaurants are popular in many Asian countries. Because of greater competition from local fast-food chains, U.S. companies now offer a large number of items geared specifically to Asian tastes. At one of China's Pizza Huts, the menu includes shrimp pizza, fried squid, and green tea ice cream. In Latin America, McDonald's sells "McMollettes," English muffins filled with refried beans, cheese, and salsa. In India, McDonald's offers an entirely meat-free menu.

Millions of Americans who think of themselves as "cultured" watch "trashy TV" like *Hoarders*, *The Bachelor/The Bachelorette*, *The Real Wives of . . .*, and *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. Doing so allows them to feel superior to the shows' conventional "low-brow" viewers ("Thank God I'm not like that!") (McCoy and Scarborough, 2015). Thus, the divide between popular and high culture isn't as rigid as we might think.

### 3-5a The Influence of Mass Media

People don't always believe everything they read or see on television or online. Nonetheless, many are highly influenced by a popular culture that's largely controlled and manipulated by newspapers and magazines, television, movies, music, and ads (see Chapter 4). These **mass media**, or forms of communication designed to reach large numbers of people, have enormous power in shaping public attitudes and behavior.

Many of my students who claim that they "don't pay any attention to ads" come to class wearing branded apparel: Budweiser caps, Old Navy t-shirts, and Nike footwear. Advertising affects our self-image and self-esteem. As you'll see in later chapters, many people spend considerable time and money to meet ideal standards of femininity and masculinity—generated by ads—that are unrealistic and impossible to attain. (We'll examine fashion and fads, two important components of popular culture, in Chapter 16.)

Because companies are driven by the pursuit of profit, considerable mass media content is basically marketing. Many television shows and MTV have become "a kind of sophisticated infomercial" (O'Donnell, 2007: 30). A third of the content on morning shows is essentially selling something (a book, music, a movie, or another television

program) that the corporation owns. The *Dr. Phil Show* is crowded with infomercials that promote the host's numerous products, including his diet and relationship books, his wife's skin care line, and his and his son's TV show, publishing company, and "Doctor on Demand" app. U.S. mass media also exert a powerful influence abroad.

### 3-5b The Globalization of Popular Culture

Because the United States is the biggest producer of popular culture, many countries have become inundated with America's movies, music, television shows, satellite broadcasts, fast food, clothing, and other consumer goods. Overseas corporations contribute to the spread of U.S. popular culture because they profit by distributing the products of popular musicians, authors, and filmmakers (The Levin Institute, 2013).

Some observers have described the spread of U.S. popular culture as **cultural imperialism**, a process by which the cultural values and products

**mass media** forms of communication designed to reach large numbers of people.

**cultural imperialism** the cultural values and products of one society influence or dominate those of another.





of one society influence or dominate those of another. A great deal of cultural imperialism is voluntary. For example, much of England's population has embraced American pop music, films, television programs, architecture, and is now experiencing an "obesity epidemic" because of the "bread-potatoes-and-lard-based fast food on which America nourishes itself" (Heffer, 2010).

Other countries complain that U.S. cultural imperialism displaces authentic local culture and results in cultural loss. Iran's government has denounced Batman, Spider-Man, and Harry Potter toys as a "cultural invasion" that challenges the country's conservative and religious values. The curvaceous and often scantily clad Barbie dolls with peroxide-blond hair have been especially singled out as "destructive culturally and a social danger" (Peterson, 2008: 4).

Only 42 percent of Americans, compared with 79 percent in 2002, believe that the world at large sees the United States favorably. This belief may be a major reason for many Americans' wariness of U.S. global involvement. A large majority (70 percent) say that the president should focus on domestic rather than foreign policy, 57 percent believe that other countries should deal with their own problems, and 43 percent think that the United States should "mind its own business" internationally ("Public Uncertain...", 2016; Swift, 2017).

3-6

## CULTURAL CHANGE AND TECHNOLOGY

Why do cultures persist? How and why do they change? And what happens when technology changes faster than cultural norms, values, and laws?

### 3-6a Cultural Persistence: Why Cultures Are Stable

In many ways, culture is a conservative force. As you saw earlier, values, norms, and language are transmitted from generation to generation. Such **cultural integration**, or the consistency of various aspects of society, promotes order and stability. Even when new behaviors and beliefs emerge, they commonly adapt to existing ones. Recent immigrants may speak their native language at home and celebrate their own holy days, but they're expected to gradually absorb the host country's values, to obey its civil and criminal laws, and to adopt its national language. Life would be chaotic and unpredictable without such cultural integration.

**cultural integration** the consistency of various aspects of society that promotes order and stability.

### 3-6b Cultural Dynamics: Why Cultures Change

Cultural stability is important, but all societies change over time. Some of the major reasons for cultural change include diffusion, invention and innovation, discovery, and external pressures.

#### DIFFUSION

A society may change because of *diffusion*, the spread of cultural beliefs and activities from one group to another. The influences may have occurred so long ago that the members of a society consider their culture to be entirely their own creation. However, anthropologist Ralph Linton (1964) has estimated that 90 percent of the elements of any culture are a result of diffusion (Figure 3.4).

Diffusion can be direct and interpersonal, occurring through trade, tourism, immigration, intermarriage, or the invasion of one country by another. Diffusion can also be indirect and largely impersonal, as in the Internet transmissions that zip around the world.

#### INVENTION AND INNOVATION

Cultures change because people are continually finding new ways of doing things. *Invention*, the process of creating new things, brought about products such as toothpaste (invented in 3000 B.C.E.), eyeglasses (262 C.E.), flushable toilets (the sixteenth century), fax machines (1843—that's right, invented in 1843!), credit cards (1920s), computer mice (1964), Post-it™ notes (1980), and DVDs (1995).

*Innovation*—turning inventions into mass-market products—also sparks cultural changes. An innovator is someone who markets an invention, even if it's someone else's idea. For example, Henry Ford invented nothing new but "assembled into a car the discoveries of other men behind whom were centuries of work," an innovation that changed people's lives (Evans et al., 2006: 465).

Inventors and innovators are rarely isolated geniuses who work alone. Instead, they depend on collaborative relationships and social networks for ideas and help. Thomas Edison's laboratory, which had a staff of 35 inventors, produced the light bulb. The Human Genome Project involved 110 scientists around the world from 20 universities, research centers, institutes, and hospitals. Even Michelangelo used 12 assistants to paint the renowned Sistine Chapel in Rome (Dahlin, 2011).

#### DISCOVERY

Like invention, *discovery* involves exploration and investigation, and results in new products, insights, ideas,

## Figure 3.4 The 100 Percent American

Joe Smith started the day early, having set his alarm clock (MADE IN JAPAN) for 6 a.m.



Ryan McVay/Photodisc/Getty Images

While his coffee (GROWN IN BRAZIL) was perking, he shaved with his electric razor (MADE IN TAIWAN).



John A. Rizzo/Photodisc/Getty Images



Hugh Threlfall/Alamy Stock Photo



Andersen Ross/Blend Images/Brand X Pictures/Jupiter Images

He put on a shirt (MADE IN SRI LANKA), designer jeans (MADE IN SINGAPORE), and tennis shoes (MADE IN MEXICO).



iStock.com/ZargonDesign

After heating his pancakes in his microwave (MADE IN MALAYSIA), he checked his email on his smartphone (MADE IN CHINA).



Maksim Kabakov/Shutterstock.com

After work, he got in his car (MADE IN GERMANY), and bought a doll (MADE IN CHINA) for his niece, a bracelet (MADE IN INDIA) for his girlfriend, and some frozen dinners (MADE IN CANADA).



Keattikorn/Shutterstock.com

At the end of the day, Joe put on his leather slippers (MADE IN ITALY), poured himself a glass of wine (MADE IN AUSTRALIA), turned on his TV (MADE IN INDONESIA), and settled into his favorite armchair (MADE IN SWEDEN).



C-Squared Studios/Photodisc/Getty Images



Ryan McVay/Photodisc/Getty Images

or behavior. The discovery of penicillin prolonged lives, which, in turn, means that more grandparents (as well as great-grandparents) and grandchildren get to know each other. However, longer life spans also mean that many adult children and grandchildren now care for older family members over many years (see Chapter 12).

Discovery usually requires dedicated work and years of commitment, but some discoveries occur by chance, called the *serendipity effect*. George de Mestral, a Swiss electrical engineer, was hiking through the woods and was annoyed by burrs that clung to his clothing. Why were they so difficult to remove? A closer examination showed that the burrs had hooklike arms that locked into the open weave

of his clothes. The discovery led de Mestral to invent a hook-and-loop fastener. His invention, Velcro—derived from the French words *velour* (velvet) and *crochet* (hooks)—can now be found on everything from wallets to spacecraft.

## EXTERNAL PRESSURES

External pressure for cultural change can take various forms. In its most direct form—war, conquest, or colonization—the dominant group uses force or the threat of force to change an existing culture. When the Soviet Union invaded and occupied many small countries (e.g., Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, and Armenia) after World War II, it forbade citizens to speak their native languages, banned traditions and customs, and turned churches into warehouses.

Pressures for change can also be indirect. Some countries (e.g., Thailand, Vietnam, China, and Russia) have reduced their prostitution and international sex trafficking because of widespread criticism by the United Nations and some European countries. The United Nations has no power to intervene in a country's internal affairs but can embarrass nations by publicizing human rights violations (Farley, 2001).

### 3-6c Technology and Cultural Lag

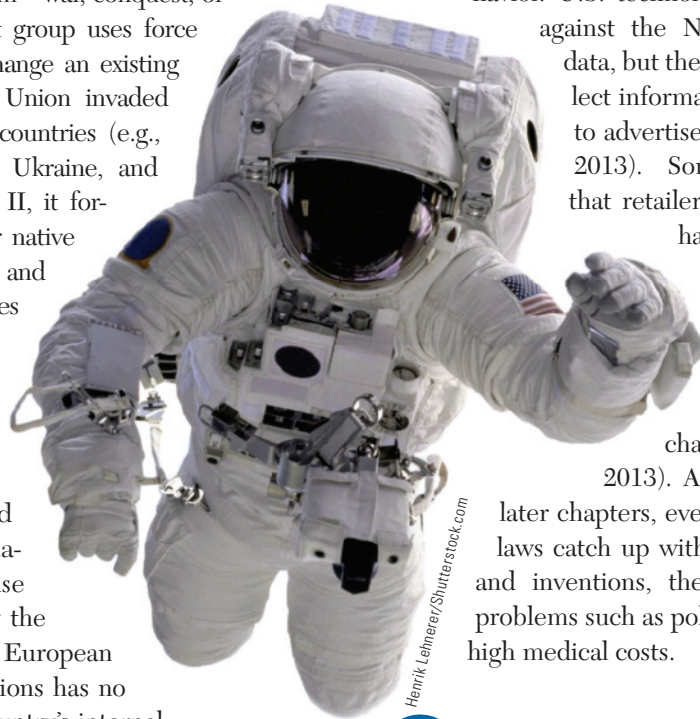
Some parts of culture change more rapidly than others. **Cultural lag** refers to the gap that occurs when material culture changes faster than nonmaterial culture.

There are numerous examples of cultural lag in modern society because our nonmaterial culture (e.g., norms, values, and laws) hasn't kept up with material culture (e.g., technological advances). Texting while driving has resulted in thousands of fatal car crashes (see Chapters 1 and 2), but many states have neither banned this practice nor enforced the laws they've passed.

Because technology is moving faster than laws to regulate and ensure Internet-based communication privacy, there are many breaches. The National Security Agency (NSA), one of the largest U.S.

intelligence organizations, has secretly collected phone records of millions of Americans, and spied on leading U.S. technology companies (e.g., Facebook, Google, Apple, Yahoo) as well as European political heads of state who are allies (Timberg and Nakashima, 2013).

Cultural lags can create confusion, ambiguity about what's right and wrong, conflict, and a feeling of helplessness. They also expose contradictory values and behavior. U.S. technology executives have railed against the NSA's mass compilation of data, but the companies themselves collect information on users that they sell to advertisers (Miller, 2013; Sengupta, 2013). Some consumers complain that retailers track their behavior, but have no problem with cookies, profiles, apps, and other online tools that let e-commerce sites know who they are, how they shop, and what they purchase (Clifford and Hardy, 2013). And as you'll see in several later chapters, even when mores, values, and laws catch up with technological innovations and inventions, they can create unexpected problems such as pollution, drug shortages, and high medical costs.



Henrik Lehner/Shutterstock.com

## 3-7 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURE

What is the role of culture in modern society? And how does culture help us understand ourselves and the world around us? Functionalist, conflict, feminist, and symbolic interaction scholars offer important insights in answering these and other questions. *Table 3.3* summarizes the perspectives.

### 3-7a Functionalism

Functionalists focus on society as a system of interrelated parts (see Chapter 1). Similarly, in their analysis of culture, functionalists emphasize the social bonds that attach people to society.

#### KEY POINTS

For functionalists, culture is the cement that binds people together. As you saw earlier, norms and values shape our lives, provide guideposts for our everyday behavior,

**cultural lag** the gap that occurs when material culture changes faster than nonmaterial culture.



**Table 3.3 Sociological Perspectives of Culture**

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	FUNCTIONALIST	CONFLICT	FEMINIST	SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST
Level of Analysis	Macro	Macro	Macro and Micro	Micro
Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar beliefs bind people together and create stability.</li> <li>• Sharing core values unifies a society and promotes cultural solidarity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture benefits some groups at the expense of others.</li> <li>• As powerful economic monopolies increase worldwide, the rich get richer and the rest of us get poorer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women and men often experience culture differently.</li> <li>• Cultural values and norms can increase inequality because of sex, race/ethnicity, and social class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural symbols forge identities (that change over time).</li> <li>• Culture (like norms and values) helps people merge into a society despite their differences.</li> </ul>
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking the same language (English in the United States) binds people together because they can communicate with one another, express their feelings, and influence one another's attitudes and behaviors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Much of the English language reinforces negative images about gender ("slut"), race ("honky"), ethnicity ("jap"), and age ("old geezer") that create inequality and foster ethnocentrism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using male language (e.g., "congressman," "fireman," and "chairman") conveys the idea that men are superior to and dominant over women, even when women have the same jobs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People can change the language they create as they interact with others. Many Americans now use "police officer" instead of "policeman," and "single person" instead of "bachelor" or "old maid."</li> </ul>

and promote cultural integration and societal stability. Especially in developed countries like the United States that have high immigration rates, cultural norms and values help newcomers adjust to the host society.

All societies have similar strategies for meeting human needs. Cultural universals, like religious rituals, may play out differently in different countries, but all known societies have religious rituals. Critics often blame popular culture for societal problems, including violence and crime, but popular culture also unites people with similar interests and produces new technologies (e.g., LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram).

Functionalists also note that culture can be dysfunctional. Some countercultures, particularly right-wing extremist groups, can create chaos by bombing federal buildings and killing or injuring hundreds of people.

### CRITICAL EVALUATION

In emphasizing culture's role in meeting people's daily needs, functionalism often overlooks diversity and social change. A number of influential functionalists have proposed, for instance, that immigration should be restricted because it dilutes shared U.S. values. Such proposals overlook the many contributions that newcomers make to society (see Chapter 10).

Another issue is how much culture really binds people together. Only 52 percent of adults say that they're "extremely proud" to be Americans, down from 70 percent in 2003. Some of the reasons for the declining

patriotism include frustration with political leaders, a belief that moral values have deteriorated, and pessimism about the economy (McCarthy, 2015; Jones, 2016).

### 3-7b Conflict Theory

Unlike functionalists, conflict theorists argue that culture can generate considerable inequality instead of unifying society. Because the rich and powerful determine economic, political, educational, and legal policies for their own benefit and control the mass media, the average American has little power to change the culture—whether it's low wages, unpopular wars, or corporate corruption (see Chapters 8 and 11).

### KEY POINTS

Conflict theorists maintain that many cultural values and norms benefit some members of society more than others. We're taught to work hard, for example, but who profits from the average worker's efforts? U.S. taxpayers paid billions of dollars to bail out financial industries that collapsed because of greedy top executives. The executives then used the money to give themselves and their staff higher salaries and bonuses than ever before. Very rarely, moreover, are wealthy people incarcerated for crime (see Chapters 7 and 8). Thus, those at the top of the socioeconomic ladder can violate laws and mores, including honesty, that other Americans are expected to observe.



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Anne-Marie Palmer/Alamy Stock Photo

India's high-income families usually have lavish weddings that follow centuries-long traditions. For functionalists, the customs and rituals reinforce cultural identity and bind people. For conflict theorists, India's inequality also creates a large population of poor people who are excluded from the traditions and ceremonies that reinforce social bonds.

Conflict theorists also point out that technology serves primarily the rich. Desperate low-income women use online sites to sell their hair, breast milk, and ovarian eggs. Selling kidneys is illegal in the United States, but one kidney sells for more than \$100,000 on the Internet black market (Weller, 2015).

### CRITICAL EVALUATION

According to some critics, conflict theorists place too much emphasis on societal discord and downplay a culture's benefits. For instance, cultural values integrate members of a society and decrease divisiveness.

Conflict theorists maintain that mass media conglomerates control popular culture and promote goods and services that most people don't need and/or can't afford (e.g., big screen TVs, the most recent smartphones, and designer clothes). Critics counter that people aren't mindless puppets but can make choices, including not living on credit. Thus, according to some conflict theory critics, conglomerates shouldn't be blamed for people's irrational behavior.

### 3-7c Feminist Theories

Feminist scholars agree with conflict theorists that culture creates considerable inequality, but they focus on gender differences. Feminists are also more likely than other theorists to examine multicultural variations across groups.

### KEY POINTS

Culture affects gender roles. When media portrayals of women are absent or stereotypical, we get a distorted view of reality (Neuhaus,



ANIMATED HEALTHCARE LTD/Science Photo Library/Getty Images

2010). Feminist scholars also emphasize that subcultures (e.g., female students or single mothers) may experience culture differently than their male counterparts do because women typically have fewer resources, particularly income and power (see Chapters 9 and 11).

Unequal access to resources often results in women having fewer choices than men, and living under laws and customs that subordinate women. In the United States, a nonmarital birth typically impoverishes women but not men. Only 10 states or jurisdictions have specific laws that prevent or punish forced marriages of girls under age 16 (Reiss, 2015). In most Islamic societies, men dictate women's attire and behavior (Heath, 2008; Zahedi, 2008). In many Latin American countries, violence against women is not only "firmly entrenched" but has recently spiked (Llana and Brodzinsky, 2012).

In India, gang rapes are a "routine and a largely invisible crime." Young women who move to a city are policed by a network of males. If the women violate village moral codes, including owning a cell phone, they disappear or are quickly married to village men of their parents' choosing (Barry, 2013; Barry and Choksi, 2013; Srivastava and Mehrotra, 2013).

### CRITICAL EVALUATION

Feminist analyses expand our understanding of cultural components that other theoretical perspectives ignore or gloss over. Like conflict theorists, however, feminist theorists often emphasize discord rather than how culture integrates women and men into society. Another weakness is that



Which sociological perspectives help explain how children's birthday parties reproduce culture?

feminist scholars tend to focus on the cultural experiences of low-income and minority women but not of their male counterparts.

### 3-7d **Symbolic Interaction**

Interactionists examine culture through micro lenses. They're most interested in understanding how individuals—in contrast to groups, organizations, or societies—create, maintain, and modify culture.

#### **KEY POINTS**

Interactionists study how culture influences our everyday lives. Language, you'll recall, shapes our views and behavior. People within and across societies create a variety of symbols that may change over time. Technology has also changed many people's communication patterns. Some complain that texting dominates our lives. A much viewed YouTube clip shows the bride pulling out her cell phone from under her veil and texting with one hand as she walks

down the aisle with her father (Pflaumer, 2011). On the other hand, students become more engaged when they're required to use technology, like tweeting weekly observations that illustrate their reading assignments (Lang, 2013).

For interactionists, many cultural components are socially constructed. Consider food consumption. Americans may think it's odd to eat insects, but cultural factors affect what we define as good to eat and how food is prepared. Thus, some visitors consider many U.S. foods strange or "nasty" (e.g., Cheez Whiz, Velveeta, corn dogs, supermarket white bread and rolls, super-sweet iced tea, grits). According to some international travelers, many of our sugary breakfast cereals, particularly those with different colors and marshmallows, are "disgusting" (Martin, 2013; Govender, 2014).

Symbolic interactionists also note that our values and norms, like other components of culture, aren't superimposed by some unknown external force. Instead, as people construct their perception of reality, they create, change, and reinterpret values and norms through interaction with others. Peer pressure, for example, can either encourage or discourage inappropriate language or behavior.

#### **CRITICAL EVALUATION**

Micro approaches help us understand what culture means to people and how these meanings differ across societies. However, symbolic interactionists don't offer a systematic framework that explains *how* people create and shape culture or develop shared meanings of reality. Why, for instance, are some of us less polite than others even though we share the same cultural values and norms? Another weakness is that interactionists don't address the linkages between culture and subcultures. Language bonds people, but interactionists say little about how organized groups (like the English-only movement) try to maintain control over language to promote their own beliefs.

## STUDY TOOLS 3

### **READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:**

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you've read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### **ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:**

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.



# 4

## Socialization



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### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 4-1 Define and illustrate socialization and explain its importance.
- 4-2 Describe the nature versus nurture debate.
- 4-3 Compare social learning and symbolic interaction theories of socialization.
- 4-4 Describe and illustrate five socialization agents.
- 4-5 Explain how socialization changes throughout life.
- 4-6 Explain when and how resocialization occurs.

After finishing  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 81** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**

16 and Pregnant, a popular reality show that aired between 2009 and 2014, spawned three equally popular *Teen Mom* series. The producers say that the goal of the programs is to decrease teen pregnancy by showing the harmful effects of not using protection or birth control, and the resulting struggles in raising a baby. Critics argue that the shows glamorize teen pregnancy, make the teen moms instant celebrities, and ignore the long-term negative impact on the mothers' and children's healthy social development (Thompson, 2010). Both sides are talking about **socialization**, the lifelong process through which people learn culture and become functioning members of society.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I'm always the same person, no matter where I am or who's around.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree					strongly disagree	

## 4-1 SOCIALIZATION: ITS PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE

Socialization is critical in all societies. To understand why, let's begin by looking at the purpose of socialization.

### 4-1a What Is the Purpose of Socialization?

Socialization—from childhood to old age—can be relatively smooth or bumpy, depending on factors such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, and social class. Generally, however, socialization has four key functions that range from providing us with a social identity to transmitting culture to the next generation.

#### SOCIALIZATION ESTABLISHES OUR SOCIAL IDENTITY

Have you ever thought about how you became the person you are today? Sociology professors sometimes ask their students to give 20 answers to the question “Who am I?” (Kuhn and McPartland, 1954). How would you respond? You would probably include a variety of descriptions like college student, single or married, female or male, and son or daughter. Your answers would show a sense of your *self* (a concept we'll

examine shortly). You are who you are largely because of socialization.

#### SOCIALIZATION TEACHES US ROLE TAKING

Why do you act differently in class than with your friends? Because we play different roles in different settings. A *role* is the behavior expected of a person in a particular social position (see Chapter 5). The way we interact with a parent is typically very different from the way we talk to an employer, a child, or a professor. We all learn appropriate roles through socialization.

#### SOCIALIZATION CONTROLS OUR BEHAVIOR

In learning appropriate roles, we absorb values and a variety of rules about how we should (and shouldn't) interact in everyday situations. If we follow the rules, we're usually rewarded. If we break the rules, we may be punished. Socialization maintains social order and controls our behavior by teaching us to conform to social expectations.

We conform because we've internalized societal norms and values. **Internalization** is the process of learning cultural behaviors and expectations so deeply that we accept them without question. Obeying laws, paying bills on time, and respecting teachers are examples of internalized behaviors.

#### SOCIALIZATION TRANSMITS CULTURE TO THE NEXT GENERATION

Each generation passes its culture on to the next generation. The culture that is transmitted, as you saw in Chapter 3, includes language, beliefs, values, norms, and symbols.

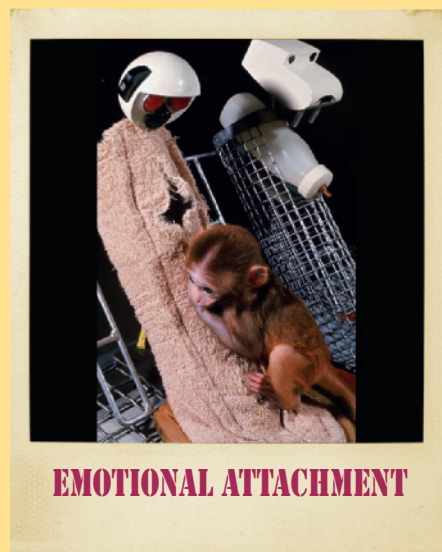
**socialization** the lifelong process through which people learn culture and become functioning members of society.

**internalization** the process of learning cultural behaviors and expectations so deeply that we accept them without question.

## The Harlow Studies and Emotional Attachment

In the early 1960s, psychologists Margaret and Harry Harlow (1962) conducted several studies on infant monkeys. In one group, a “mother” made of terry cloth provided no food, while a “mother” made of wire did so through an attached baby bottle containing milk. In another group, the cloth mother provided food but the wire mother didn’t. Regardless of which mother provided milk, when both groups of monkeys were frightened, they clung to the cloth mother. The Harlows concluded that physical contact and comfort were more important to the infant monkeys than nourishment.

Since then, some sociologists have cited the Harlow studies to argue that emotional attachment may be even more critical than food for human infants. Do you see any problems with sociologists’ generalizing the results of animal studies to humans?



Nina Leen/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

### 4-1b Why Is Socialization Important?

Social isolation can be devastating. An example of its negative effects is Genie. When Genie was 20 months old, her father decided she was “retarded,” put her in a wire mesh cage, and locked her away in a back room with the curtains drawn and the door shut. Genie’s father frequently beat her with a wooden stick and no one in the house was allowed to speak to her. When she was discovered in 1970 at age 13, a psychiatrist described Genie as “unsocialized, primitive, and hardly human.” Except for high-pitched whimpers, she never spoke. Genie had little bowel control, experienced rages, and tried to hurt herself. After living in a rehabilitation ward and a foster home, she learned to eat normally, was toilet-trained, and gradually developed a vocabulary, but her language use never progressed beyond that of a 3- or 4-year-old (Curtiss, 1977).

The research on children who are isolated (Genie) or institutionalized (orphans) demonstrates that socialization is critical to our development. Behaviors such as talking, eating with utensils, and controlling our bowel movements don’t come naturally. Instead, we learn to do all of these things beginning in infancy. When children are deprived of social interaction, they don’t develop the characteristics that most of us see as normal and human.

4-2

## NATURE AND NURTURE

Biologists focus on the role of heredity (or genetics) in human development. In contrast, most social scientists, including sociologists, underscore the importance of learning, socialization, and culture. This difference of opinion is often called the *nature–nurture debate* (Table 4.1).

### 4-2a How Important Is Nature?

Those who argue that nature (biology) shapes behavior point to two kinds of evidence—developmental and health differences between males and females, and unsuccessful sex reassignment cases.

#### DEVELOPMENTAL AND HEALTH DIFFERENCES

Boys mature more slowly than girls, get sick more often, and are less likely to have mastered the self-control and fine-motor skills necessary for a successful start in school. Boys are also at greater risk than girls for most of the major learning and developmental disorders—as much as four times more likely to suffer from autism, attention deficit disorder, and dyslexia. Girls, however, are at least twice as likely as boys to suffer from depression, anxiety, and eating disorders (Eliot, 2012).



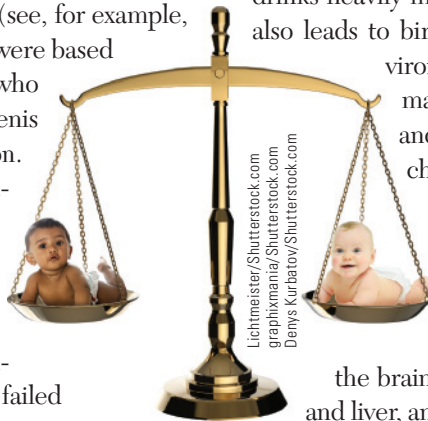
**Table 4.1 The Nature–Nurture Debate**

Nature	Nurture
Human development is . . .	Human development is . . .
Innate	Learned
Biological, physiological	Psychological, social, cultural
Due largely to heredity	Due largely to environment
Fairly fixed	Fairly changeable

Among adults, the senses of smell and taste are more acute in women than in men, and hearing is better and lasts longer in women than in men. Women, however, have a higher risk of developing diabetes. Some conditions (migraine headaches and breast cancer) are more common in women, whereas others (hemophilia and skin cancer) are more common in men (McDonald, 1999; Kreeger, 2002).

### UNSUCCESSFUL SEX REASSIGNMENT

Scientists who believe that nature (not nurture) molds behavior also point to unsuccessful sex reassignment attempts. In the 1960s, John Money, a highly respected psychologist, published numerous articles and books in which he maintained that gender identity is determined as much by culture and nurture as by hormones (see, for example, Money and Ehrhardt, 1972). His views were based on the case of David Reimer, a child who underwent sex reassignment after his penis was mutilated in a botched circumcision. His parents, upon Money's recommendation, raised David as a girl (Brenda). Money maintained that Brenda was happy and healthy. A biologist and a psychiatrist who followed up on David/Brenda's case in the 1990s, however, concluded that the sex reassignment had failed (Diamond and Sigmundson, 1997).



### Nature or nurture?

#### 4-2b How Important Is Nurture?

Most sociologists maintain that nurture is more significant than nature because socialization and culture shape human behavior. They point to successful sex reassignment cases (see Vitello, 2006) and two types of data to support their argument: cross-cultural variations in male violence, and the environment's effect on biology.

### CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATIONS IN MALE VIOLENCE

We often hear that males are “naturally” more aggressive than females because their glands produce more testosterone, the dominant male hormone. If men were

innately aggressive due to biology, they would be equally violent across all societies. This isn't the case. The proportion of women who have ever suffered physical violence by a male partner varies considerably: 16 percent in East Asia, 21 percent in North America, 41 percent in western Latin America, and 66 percent in central sub-Saharan Africa (World Health Organization, 2013). All mass murderers (those who have killed a large number of people during one incident) have been men, but most such murders have occurred in the United States (Christakis, 2012; Kluger, 2014). Such variations reflect cultural laws and practices and other environmental factors (nurture) rather than biology or genetics (nature) (Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2004).

### HOW ENVIRONMENT AFFECTS BIOLOGY

Much research shows that environment (nurture) influences children's genetic makeup (nature). For example, birth defects associated with prenatal alcohol exposure can occur in the first 3 to 8 weeks of pregnancy, before a woman even knows she's pregnant. A woman's single drinking “binge”—lasting four hours or more—can permanently damage an unborn child's brain. A man who drinks heavily may have genetically damaged sperm that also leads to birth defects. Thus, alcohol abuse (an environmental factor) by either a woman or a man can have a devastating, irreversible, and lifelong negative biological impact on a child (Denny et al., 2009; Warren, 2012).

In a growing field known as “fetal origins,” scientists are finding that the nine months of pregnancy constitute the most consequential period of our lives, permanently influencing the wiring of the brain, the functioning of organs like the heart and liver, and behavior. That is, the kind and quantity of nutrition you received in the womb; the pollutants, drugs, and infections you were exposed to during gestation; your parents' health and eating habits; and your mother's stress level during pregnancy—all these factors have lasting effects in infancy, childhood, and adulthood (Begley, 2010; Paul, 2010).

Adult behavior can influence a child's biological makeup in other ways. Physical, psychological, or sexual abuse can blunt a child's biological development and lead to behavioral and emotional problems throughout life (see Chapter 12). Siblings share much genetic makeup, but the quality of the schools they attend and the teachers they have affect their interests, social skills, academic outcomes, and earnings in adulthood (Whitehurst, 2016).



Fotoluminate/Shutterstock.com

Is children's obesity due to nature, nurture, or both?

## 4-2c What Can We Conclude About the Nature–Nurture Debate?

Humans have hundreds of traits—like height, metabolism, aggression, leadership traits, and cognitive ability—that are partly inherited (Freese, 2008). A team of researchers analyzed 50 years of twin studies and more than 300 characteristics. They found that, on average, 49 percent of the individual differences were genetic and 51 percent were environmental, but some traits (e.g., a cleft lip) were more likely to be inherited than others (e.g., antisocial behavior) (Polderman et al., 2015).

Our social environment can enhance or dampen biological characteristics. Children who are genetically predisposed to obesity don't always become overweight if parents discourage overeating and encourage physical recreational activities (Martin, 2008).

## The Case of Brenda/David

In 1963, twin boys were being circumcised when the penis of one of the infants, David Reimer, was accidentally burned off. Encouraged by John Money, a highly respected psychologist, the parents agreed to raise David as “Brenda.” The child's testicles were removed, and surgery to construct a vagina was planned. Money reported that the twins were growing into happy, well-adjusted children, setting a precedent for sex reassignment as the standard treatment for 15,000 newborns with similarly injured genitals (Colapinto, 1997, 2001).

In the mid-1990s, a biologist and a psychiatrist followed up on Brenda's progress and concluded that the sex reassignment had failed. Almost from the beginning, Brenda refused to be treated like a girl. When her mother dressed her in frilly clothes as a toddler, Brenda tried to rip them off. She preferred to play with boys and stereotypical boys' toys such as machine guns (Diamond and Sigmundson, 1997).

At age 14, Brenda rebelled and stopped living as a girl: She refused to wear dresses, urinated standing up, refused vaginal surgery, and decided she would either commit suicide or live as a male. When his father finally told David the true story of his birth and sex change, David recalls that “all of a sudden everything clicked. For the first time things made sense and I understood who and what I was” (Diamond and Sigmundson, 1997: 300).

David had a mastectomy (breast removal surgery) at age 14 and underwent several operations to reconstruct a penis. At age 25, he married an older woman and adopted her three children. At age 38, he committed suicide. Most suicides have multiple reasons, but some speculated that David committed suicide because of the “physical and mental torments he suffered in childhood that haunted him the rest of his life” (Colapinto, 2004: 96). David's experience suggests to some scientists that nature outweighs nurture in shaping a person's gender identity.



Str 016/REUTERS

David Reimer was raised as a girl, Brenda, until he was 14.

Genetic intelligence thrives in an enriching environment but is stifled in poor and disadvantaged conditions. Children of average intelligence who are adopted by rich parents tend to grow up to be rich adults; genetically talented children raised by biological parents who are poor are much less likely to enjoy economic success as adults (Bryant, 2014; Black et al., 2015; Tucker-Drob and Bates, 2016; see also Chapters 8 and 13). Biological factors play an important role in human behavior, but sociology's larger concern is how socialization affects people's development, even overriding some genetic predispositions and influences.

## 4-3 SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF SOCIALIZATION

Functionalism provides a foundation for understanding the purposes of socialization described at the beginning of this chapter, but doesn't tell us *how* socialization works. There are well-known psychological and psychosocial theories of human development (e.g., Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, and Lawrence Kohlberg). In sociology, two influential micro approaches that explain socialization are *social learning theories* and *symbolic interaction theories* (Table 4.2 summarizes these perspectives).

### 4-3a Social Learning Theories

The central notion of **social learning theories** is that people learn new attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors through social interaction, especially during childhood. The learning is direct and indirect, and a result of observation, reinforcement, and imitation (Bandura and Walters, 1963; Mischel, 1966; Lynn, 1969).

#### DIRECT AND INDIRECT LEARNING

*Reinforcement* refers to direct or indirect rewards or punishments for particular behaviors. Consider gender roles. A little girl who puts on her mother's makeup may be told that she's cute, but her brother will be scolded ("boys don't wear makeup"). Children also learn through indirect reinforcement. If a little boy's male friends are punished for crying, he'll learn that "boys don't cry."

Children also learn through *observation* and *imitation*. Even when children aren't directly rewarded or punished for "behaving like a boy" or "behaving like a girl," they learn about gender by watching who does what in their families. A father who is rarely at home because he's always working sends the message that men are supposed to earn money. A mother who always complains about being overweight or old sends the message that women are supposed to be thin and young.



SelectStock/Vetta/Getty Images

Because parents are emotionally important to their children, they're typically a child's most powerful **role models**, people we admire and whose behavior we imitate. Other role models, as you'll see shortly, include siblings, grandparents, teachers, friends, and even celebrities.

Parents and other role models reinforce particular behaviors, but much of our learning is informal and occurs in a variety of social contexts. A recent study analyzed nearly 6,000 children's picture books published from 1900 to 2000. Females were central characters in no more than 33 percent of the books published in any given year (McCabe et al., 2011). Such underrepresentation teaches children, though informally, that males occupy more important roles in society than do women.

#### LEARNING AND PERFORMING

Social learning theorists also distinguish between *learning* and *performing* behavior. Children and adults learn norms and roles through observation, but they don't always imitate the behavior. For example, children may see their friends cheat in school but don't do so themselves. Adults, similarly, may see their coworkers steal office supplies but buy their own. We behave as we do, then, because our society teaches us what's appropriate and inappropriate.

#### CRITICAL EVALUATION

Social learning theories help us understand why we behave as we do, but much of the emphasis is on early socialization rather than what occurs throughout life. Social learning theories don't explain why reinforcement and modeling affect some children more than others, especially those in the same family. There may be personality

**social learning theories**  
people learn new attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors through social interaction.

**role models** people we admire and whose behavior we imitate.



**Table 4.2** Key Elements of Socialization Theories

Social Learning Theories	Symbolic Interaction Theories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social interaction is important in learning appropriate and inappropriate behavior.</li> <li>Socialization relies on direct and indirect reinforcement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The self emerges through social interaction with significant others.</li> <li>Socialization includes role taking and controlling the impression we give to others.</li> </ul>
<i>Example:</i> Children learn how to behave when they are scolded or praised for specific behaviors.	<i>Example:</i> Children who are praised are more likely to develop a strong self-image than those who are always criticized.

differences, but if learning is as effective as social learning theorists maintain, siblings' attitudes and behavior should be more similar than different. This is often not the case, even with identical twins.

Social learning theories often ignore factors such as birth order, which brings different advantages and disadvantages. Except for affluent families, larger families have fewer resources for the second, third, and later children. The first child may be disciplined and monitored more, but also has higher grades than her or his younger siblings, and is more likely to attend college. In contrast, later-born children often have fewer rules, less parental supervision, lower grades, and are less likely to receive financial support to attend college (Conley, 2004; Hotz and Pantano, 2013).

Another limitation is that social learning theories disregard the interconnections between social structures and socialization. As family forms become more complex, children's socialization becomes more intricate. In the last 50 years or so, children have experienced greater family instability due to a biological parent's divorce, remarriage, cohabitations, and having children with more than one partner. One outcome is that by age 9, children who have undergone such disruptions are more likely to demonstrate behavioral problems that include delinquency (e.g., stealing, vandalizing property) and classroom disruptions (e.g., fighting, bullying, having temper tantrums) (Fomby and Osborne, 2017).

**self** an awareness of one's social identity.

**looking-glass self** a self-image based on how we think others see us.



Pat Byrnes The New Yorker Collection/The Cartoon Bank

## 4-3b Symbolic Interaction Theories

Symbolic interaction theories have had a major impact in explaining social development. Sociologists Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929), George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), and Erving Goffman (1922–1982) were especially influential in showing how social interaction shapes socialization.

### CHARLES HORTON COOLEY: EMERGENCE OF THE SELF AND THE LOOKING-GLASS SELF

Newborn infants lack a sense of **self**, an awareness of their social identity. Gradually, they begin to differentiate themselves from their environment and to develop a sense of self.

After carefully observing the development of his young daughter, Charles Horton Cooley (1909/1983) concluded that children acquire a sense of who they are through their interactions with others, especially by imagining how others view them. The sense of self, then, isn't innate but emerges out of social relationships. Cooley called this social self the *reflected self*, or the **looking-glass self**, a self-image based on how we think others see us. He proposed that the looking-glass self develops in an ongoing process of three phases:

- ▶ **Phase 1: Perception.** We imagine how we appear to other people and how they *perceive* us (“She thinks I’m attractive” or “I bet he thinks I’m fat”).
- ▶ **Phase 2: Interpretation of the perception.** We imagine how others *judge* us (“She’s impressed with me” or “He’s disgusted with the way I look”).
- ▶ **Phase 3: Response.** We experience *self-feelings* based on how we think other people judge us. If we think they see us in a favorable light, we may feel proud, happy, or self-confident (“I’m terrific”). If we think others see us in a negative light, we may feel angry, embarrassed, or insecure (“I’m pathetic”).

Our interpretation of others' perceptions (phase 2) may be totally wrong. The looking-glass self, remember, refers to how we *think* others see us rather than how they *actually* see us. Our perceptions of other people's views—whether we're right or wrong—affect our self-image, which then affects our behavior.

Cooley focused on how children acquire a sense of who they are through their interactions with others, but he noted that the process of forming a looking-glass self doesn't end in childhood. Instead, our self-concept may change over time because we reimagine ourselves as we think others see us—attractive or ugly, interesting or boring, intelligent or stupid, graceful or awkward, and so on.

### GEORGE HERBERT MEAD: DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF AND ROLE TAKING

Cooley described how an individual's sense of self emerges, but not how it develops. George Herbert Mead, one of Cooley's colleagues, took up this task. For Mead (1934), the most critical social interaction occurs in the family, the foundation of socialization.

Our self develops, according to Mead, when we learn to differentiate the *me* from the *I*—two parts of the self. The *I* is creative, imaginative, impulsive, spontaneous, self-centered, and sometimes unpredictable. The

*me* that has been successfully socialized is aware of other people's attitudes, has self-control, and has internalized social roles. Instead of impulsively and selfishly grabbing another child's toys, for example, as the *I* would do, the *me* asks for permission to use someone's toys and shares them with others.

For Mead, the *me* forms as children engage in **role taking**, learning to take the perspective of others. Children gradually acquire this ability early in the socialization process through three sequential stages:

**1. Preparatory stage (roughly birth to 2 years).** An infant doesn't distinguish between the self and others. The *I* is dominant, while the *me* is forming in the background. In this stage, children learn through imitation. They may mimic daddy's shaving or mommy's angry tone of voice without really understanding the parent's behavior. In this exploratory stage, children engage in behavior that they rarely associate with words or symbols, but they begin to understand cause and effect (e.g., crying leads to being picked up). Gradually, as the child begins to recognize others' reactions and forms a looking-glass self, he or she develops a self.

**2. Play stage (roughly 2 to 6 years).** The child begins to use language and to understand that words (like *dog* and *cat*) have a shared cultural meaning. Through play, children begin to learn role taking in two ways. First, they emulate significant others. A **significant other** is someone whose opinions we value and who influences our thinking, especially about ourselves. A significant other can be anyone: usually a parent, grandparent, or sibling in early childhood; a teacher, girlfriend/boyfriend, spouse, best friend, or employer in later childhood and adulthood. The child learns that he or she has a self that's distinct from others, that others behave in many different ways, and that others expect her or him to behave in specific ways. In other words, the child learns social norms (see Chapter 3).

In the play stage, the child moves beyond imitation and acts out imagined roles ("I'll be the mommy and you be the daddy"). The play stage involves relatively simple role taking because the child plays one role at a time but doesn't yet understand the relationships between roles. This stage is crucial, according to Mead, because the child is *learning to take the role of the other*. For the first time, the child tries to imagine how others behave or feel. The *me* grows stronger because the child is concerned about the judgments of significant others.

**role taking** learning to take the perspective of others.

**significant other** someone whose opinions we value and who influences our thinking, especially about ourselves.



Parents who encourage their children to express themselves help them develop a positive self-image.

Also in the play stage, children experience **anticipatory socialization**, learning how to perform a role that they'll occupy in the future. By playing "mommy" or "daddy," children prepare themselves for eventually becoming parents. Anticipatory socialization continues in later years when, for instance, expectant parents attend childbirth classes, job seekers practice their skills in mock interviews, and high school students visit campuses and attend orientation meetings to prepare for college life.

**3. Game stage (roughly 6 years and older).** This stage involves acquiring the ability to understand connections between roles. The child must "not only take the role of the other . . . but must assume the various roles of all participants in the game, and govern his action accordingly" (Mead, 1964: 285).

Mead used baseball to illustrate this stage. In baseball (or other organized games and activities), the child plays one role at a time (batter) but understands and anticipates the actions of other players (pitcher, short-stop, runners on bases) on both teams. To successfully participate in a game of baseball, the individual must be able to anticipate the roles of others. The same is true of participating in society. Thus, as children grow older and interact with a wider range of people, they learn to anticipate, respond to, and fulfill a variety of social roles.

At the game stage, children connect to societal roles through the **generalized other**, the norms, values, and expectations of society that affect a person's behavior.

This concept suggests that when an individual acts, she or he takes into account people in general. For example,

**anticipatory socialization**  
learning how to perform a role that a person will occupy in the future.

**generalized other** the norms, values, and expectations of society that affect a person's behavior.

**impression management**  
providing information and cues to others to present oneself in a favorable light while downplaying or concealing one's less appealing characteristics.

a child is honest not merely to please a particular parent, but because parents, teachers, and others endorse honesty as an important social value. For sociologists, the development of the generalized other is a central feature of socialization because the *me* becomes an integral part of the self (Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1** Mead's Three Stages in Developing a Sense of Self



After the generalized other has developed, the *me* never fully controls the *I*, even in adulthood. We sometimes break rules or act impulsively, even though we know better. When we're frustrated, sick, tired, or angry, we may lash out against other people even though they haven't done anything wrong.

## ERVING GOFFMAN: STAGING THE SELF IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Cooley and Mead described how the self and role taking emerge and develop during early socialization. Erving Goffman (1959, 1969) extended these analyses by showing that we interact differently in different settings throughout adulthood. Goffman proposed that social life mirrors the theater because we're like actors: We engage in "role performances," want to influence an "audience," and can have considerable control over the image that we project while we're "on stage." (We'll explore these concepts in greater detail in Chapter 5.)

In a process that Goffman called **impression management**, we provide information and cues to others to present ourselves in a favorable light while downplaying or concealing our less appealing characteristics. Being successful in this presentation of the self requires managing three types of expressive resources. First, we try to control the *setting*—the physical space, or "scene," where the interaction takes place. In the classroom, "a professor may use items such as chalk, lecture notes, computers, videos, and desks to facilitate a class and show that he or she is an excellent teacher" (Sandstrom et al., 2006: 105).





AndreyPopov/Stock/Getty Images

Who's engaging in impression management?  
How? Why?

A second expressive resource is controlling *appearance*, such as clothing and titles that convey information about our social status. When physicians or professors use the title “Doctor,” for example, they’re telling the “audience” that they expect respect.

The third expressive resource is *manner*—the mood or style of behavior we display that sends important messages to the audience. Faculty members regularly manage their manner when interacting with students. When you email or text a professor a question about your course paper, the response is usually encouraging (“Have you also thought about . . .”) even though the professor may actually be annoyed (“You haven’t thought about this very much; stop wasting my time”).

As we move from one situation to another, according to Goffman, we maintain self-control, for example, by avoiding emotional outbursts and altering our facial expressions and verbal tones. Thus, all of us engage in impression management practically every day.

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Symbolic interactionists have provided major insights about socialization, particularly of young children, and have shown that fitting into our social world is a complex process that continues through adulthood. Like other theories, however, symbolic interaction has its limitations.

First, it’s not clear why some children have a positive looking-glass self and are successful later in life even when the cues are consistently negative. Over the years, some of my best students have included those who grew up in abusive households or attended low-quality schools.

Second, essential concepts such as *self*, *me*, and *I* are vague. Because the concepts are imprecise, it’s difficult, if not impossible, to measure them.

Third, stage theories, like Mead’s, maintain that children automatically pass through play and game stages as

they get older. Some critics argue that the stages aren’t as rigid as symbolic interactionists claim. The stages may overlap or vary, for example, depending on whether parents and other primary caregivers are actively involved in the child’s upbringing and provide enriching interaction. Even then, some children never develop the role of the generalized other (see Ritzer, 1992).

Fourth, some have questioned the value of the concept of the generalized other in understanding early socialization processes. Because children interact in many social contexts (home, preschool, play groups), they don’t simply assume the role of one generalized other, but many. That is, as children get older, they may have several **reference groups**—people who shape an individual’s self-image, behavior, values, and attitudes in different contexts (Merton and Rossi, 1950; Shibutani, 1986).

Fifth, interactionists credit people with more free will than they have. Individuals don’t always have the power or ability to affect others’ reactions or their own lives. For example, impression management is less common among lower than higher socioeconomic groups, whose members have internalized such skills to be successful in jobs. Also, how people react to us may be due to characteristics (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity) that we can’t change (Powers, 2004).

Finally, a major criticism of Cooley, Mead, Goffman, and other interactionists is that they tend to downplay or ignore macro-level factors that affect people’s development. As the next two sections show, institutions such as the family, education, economy, and popular culture have a major impact on socialization. Let’s begin by looking at socialization agents who play important roles in our lives.

4-4

## PRIMARY SOCIALIZATION AGENTS

By fretting, crying, and whining, infants teach adults when to feed, change, and pick them up. Babies are actively engaged in the socialization process, but family, friends, peer groups, teachers, and the media are some of the primary **socialization agents**—the individuals, groups, or institutions that teach us how to participate effectively in society.

**reference groups** people who shape an individual’s self-image, behavior, values, and attitudes in different contexts.

**socialization agents** the individuals, groups, or institutions that teach us how to participate effectively in society.

## 4-4a Family

Parents, siblings, grandparents, and other family members play a critical role in our socialization. Parents, however, are the first and most influential socialization agents.

### HOW PARENTS SOCIALIZER CHILDREN

The purpose of socialization is to enable children to regulate their behavior and to make responsible decisions. In teaching their children social rules and roles, parents rely on several learning techniques, such as reinforcement, that you've just read about. Parents also manage many aspects of the environment that influence a child's social development: They choose the neighborhood (which then determines what school a child attends), decorate the child's room in a masculine or feminine style, provide her or him with particular toys and books, and arrange enriching social activities (e.g., sports, art, music).



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### PARENTING STYLES

Four common parenting styles affect socialization (Table 4.3). In *authoritarian parenting*, parents tend to be harsh, unresponsive, and rigid, using their power to control a child's behavior. *Authoritative parenting* is warm, responsive, and involved, but parents set limits and expect appropriately mature behavior from their children. *Permissive parenting* is lax: Parents set few rules but are usually warm and responsive. *Uninvolved parenting* is indifferent and neglectful: Parents focus on their own needs, spend little time interacting with the children, and know little about their interests or whereabouts (Baumrind, 1968, 1989; Maccoby and Martin, 1983; Aunola and Nurmi, 2005).

Healthy child development is most likely in authoritative homes because parents are consistent in combining warmth, monitoring, and discipline. Authoritative parenting tends to produce children who are self-reliant, achievement-oriented, and successful in school. Adolescents in households with authoritarian, permissive, or uninvolved parents tend to have poorer psychosocial development, lower school grades, lower self-reliance, higher levels of delinquent behavior, and are more likely to be swayed by harmful peer pressure (e.g., to use drugs and alcohol) (Hillaker et al., 2008; Meteyer and Perry-Jenkins, 2009).

Such findings vary by social class and race/ethnicity, however. For many Latino and Asian immigrants, authoritarian parenting produces positive outcomes, like respectful behavior and academic success. This parenting style is also effective in safeguarding children who are growing up in low-income neighborhoods with high crime rates and drug peddling (Pong et al., 2005).

Across all social classes, black parents—particularly mothers—engage in *racial socialization*, a process that teaches children to be proud of their race and how to recognize and diminish the negative effects of discrimination. For example, many middle- and upper-middle-class black parents spend considerable time teaching their sons how to navigate the “thug” image. Some of the strategies include suppressing their anger, frustration, or excitement when interacting with authority figures, like teachers and police officers, and monitoring how they dress (Dow, 2016).

### SIBLINGS

Siblings, like parents, are important socialization agents. Older siblings may transmit beliefs that having sex at an early age, smoking, drinking, and marijuana use “aren’t a big deal” (Altonji et al., 2010). On the other hand, older siblings are positive role models when they encourage their younger brothers and sisters to do well in school, to stay away from friends who get in trouble, and to get along with people. Siblings can also have a positive impact by helping their younger brothers and sisters with homework and protecting them from neighborhood bullies, as well as reducing

**Table 4.3** Parenting Styles

Parenting Style	Characteristics	Example
Authoritarian	Very demanding, controlling, punitive	“You can’t borrow the car because I said so.”
Authoritative	Demanding, controlling, warm, supportive	“You can borrow the car, but be home by curfew.”
Permissive	Not demanding, warm, indulgent, set few rules	“Borrow the car whenever you want.”
Uninvolved	Neither supportive nor controlling	“I don’t care what you do; I’m busy.”



AP Images/Yonhap/Shin Young-Kyun

During the last decade, numerous summer camps have sprung up in South Korea where children ages 7 to 19 live in military-style barracks, undergo drills and exercise from dawn to dusk, eat very simple meals, and have no access to computers, television, or cell phones. Most are sent by parents “who realize that their pampered offspring need more discipline to become better students and grow into conscientious adults” (Glionna, 2009: A1). Some of the kids’ offenses have included getting low grades, accidentally breaking a window, and, most commonly, talking back to their parents.

the chances of risky sexual behavior and teen pregnancy. During adulthood, siblings often act as confidantes and offer financial and emotional assistance during stressful times (McHale et al., 2012; Killoren et al., 2014; Killoren and Roach, 2014).

## GRANDPARENTS

In many ways, grandparents are the glue that keeps a family close. Some grandparents and grandchildren live far apart and rarely see each other, but the majority see their grandchildren often, frequently do things with them, and offer them emotional and instrumental support (e.g., listening and giving them money). Many recent Asian immigrants live in extended families and are more likely to do so than any other group, including Latinos. In such co-residence, grandparents are often “historians” who transmit values and cultural traditions to their grandchildren even if there are language barriers (Benokratis, 2015; see also Chapter 12).

Grandparents are sometimes *surrogates* because they provide regular care or raise the grandchildren. Whether custody is legal or informal, about 10 percent

of all U.S. children live with a grandparent, up from 5 percent in 1990. About 2.6 million grandparents are raising their grandchildren; 33 percent of these households have no parent present (Ellis and Simmons, 2014; “National Grandparents Day . . .,” 2016).

The most common pattern is *living-with* grandparents who have the grandchild in their own home or, less often, live in the home of a grandchild’s parents. Living-with grandparents take on child-rearing responsibilities either because their children haven’t moved out of the house or because teenage or adult parents can’t afford to live on their own. These living arrangements have increased the number of **multigenerational households**, homes in which three or more generations live together. In effect, then, grandparents are important socialization agents.

## 4-4b Play, Peer Groups, and Friends

As you saw earlier, Mead believed that play and games are important in children’s development. They help us become more skilled in using language and symbols, learn role playing, and internalize roles that we don’t necessarily enact (the generalized other). A **peer group** consists of people who are similar in age, social status, and interests. All of us are members of peer groups, but such groups are especially influential until about our mid-20s. After that, coworkers, spouses, children, and close friends are usually more important than peer groups in our everyday lives.

## PLAY

Play serves several important functions. First, it promotes cognitive development. Whether it’s doing simple five-piece puzzles or tackling complex video games like *SimCity* and *RollerCoaster Tycoon*, play encourages children to think, formulate strategies, and budget and manage resources. From an early age, however, play is generally gender typed. Girls’ sections of online and toy stores are swamped with cosmetics, dolls and accessories, arts and crafts kits, and housekeeping toys. Boys’ sections feature sports supplies, building sets, workbenches, construction equipment, and toy guns. Such gender stereotyping sends girls the message that their most important goals should be looking pretty, nurturing others, and developing cooking and housework skills, often to the exclusion of exploration and invention. Boys are getting the message that they should be adventurous,

**multigenerational households** homes in which three or more generations live together.

**peer group** people who are similar in age, social status, and interests.





Grandparents often provide stability in family relationships and a continuity of family rituals and values. When a teacher asked her class of 8-year-olds what they liked best about a grandparent, the essays included comments like “They don’t say ‘Hurry up’” and “When they take us for a walk, they slow down for things like pretty leaves and caterpillars.”

aggressive, competitive, and athletic, and that “caring for a baby or the home is girly and ... undesirable” (Filipovic, 2016: 51).

About 92 percent of American girls ages 3 to 12 own at least one Barbie doll. After Barbie sales plummeted 20 percent because of greater competition by other toy manufacturers, in 2016 Mattel introduced three new Barbie body types—tall, short, and curvy—in a greater number of skin tones, eye colors, and hairstyles (Abrams, 2016; Dockterman, 2016). A year later, popular doll



AP Images/Nick Ut

When Target announced that it would stop labeling girls’ and boys’ toys in their stores, hundreds of parents flocked to its website to complain because “Boys will always be boys and girls will always be girls!” (Steinmetz, 2015: 25). Others argue that toys are more gender typed than in the past (see Tabuchi, 2015, and Chapter 9). What do you think?

company American Girl released Logan Everett, its first-ever boy doll.

Some toymakers have responded to parents’ demands for more gender-neutral toys. For example, GoldieBlox and Roominate, created by female engineers, offer construction toys aimed at girls that encourage interest in math, science, and engineering, and Amazon has stopped using gender-based categories for children’s toys (Li, 2015; Tabuchi, 2015).

The second function of play—especially when it’s structured—is to enhance children’s social development. Children who spend more of their free time in structured and supervised activities—like hobbies and sports—rather than just hanging out with their friends, perform better academically, are emotionally better adjusted, and have fewer problems at school and at home. In effect, sports and hobbies provide children with constructive ways to channel their energy and intelligence (McHale, 2001).

Third, play can strengthen peer relationships. Beginning in elementary school, few things are more important to most children than being accepted by their peers. Even if children aren’t popular, belonging to a friendship group enhances their psychological well-being and ability to cope with stress (Rubin et al., 1998; Scarlett et al., 2005).

## PEERS AND FRIENDS

Peer influence usually increases as young children get older. Especially during the early teen years, friends often reinforce desirable behavior or skills that enhance a child’s self-image (“Wow, you’re really good in math!”). Thus, to apply Cooley’s concept, peers can help each other develop a positive looking-glass self.

Peers also serve as good role models. Children acquire a wide array of information and knowledge



Godong/BSIP SA/Alamy Stock Photo

by observing their peers. Even during the first days of school, children learn to imitate their peers at standing in line, raising their hands in class, and being quiet while the teacher is speaking.

Among teens and young adults who are lesbian or gay, heterosexual friends can be especially supportive in accepting one's homosexuality and disclosing it to family. Peers can also have a significant impact in teen dating violence by encouraging their friends to leave a relationship, to report the abuse, and to seek protection orders (Shilo and Savaya, 2011; Oudekerk et al., 2014). In college, close friends often offer academic support and motivation to succeed: They study together, quiz each other before exams, and proof-read each other's papers. Close college friends can also provide social support, a sense of belonging, and relationships that last beyond college (McCabe, 2016).

Not all peer or friend influence is positive, however. Among seventh- to twelfth-graders, having a best friend who engages in sexual intercourse, is truant, joins a gang, and uses tobacco and marijuana increases the probability of imitating such behavior. If close college friends are low achievers and unmotivated, they can interfere in studying, discourage class attendance, and offer little, if any, emotional or academic support (Haas and Schaefer, 2014; McCabe, 2016).

#### 4-4c Teachers and Schools

Oprah Winfrey often praised her fourth-grade teacher, who recognized her abilities, encouraged her to read, and inspired her to excel academically. Like family and peer groups, teachers and schools are important socialization agents.

### THE SCHOOL'S ROLE IN SOCIALIZATION

By the time children are 4 or 5, school fills an increasingly large portion of their lives. The school's primary purpose is to instruct children and enhance their cognitive development. Schools don't simply transmit knowledge; they also teach children to think about the world in different ways. Because of the emphasis on multiculturalism, for example, children often learn about other societies and customs. Even outside of classes, schools affect children's daily activities through homework assignments and participation in clubs and other extra-curricular activities.

Because many parents are employed, schools have had to devote more time and resources to topics—such as sex

education, abusive adolescent relationships, and drug abuse prevention—that were once the sole responsibility of families (Miller et al., 2015). In many ways, then, schools play an increasingly important role in socialization.

### TEACHERS' IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Teachers are among the most important socialization agents. From kindergarten through high school, teachers play numerous roles in the classroom—instructor, role model, evaluator, moral guide, and disciplinarian, to name just a few. Well-trained teachers can motivate students and increase their academic achievement regardless of their innate ability, talents, behaviors, or home circumstances (Gershenson, 2015; see also Chapter 13).

Many educators have criticized students' increasing disrespect toward adults and each other, bad manners, and bullying. Instead of complaining, some Maryland elementary school teachers and guidance counselors have started after-school clubs called “Guys with Ties, Girls with Pearls.” Once a week, the students dress up and learn etiquette (e.g., being polite, not talking with a mouth full), how to write thank-you notes, and what not to say on Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat (Bowie, 2016). According to some critics, teachers are wasting valuable time and resources on behavior that should be taught at home, but such programs are growing in popularity across the country.

#### 4-4d Popular Culture and the Media

Because of tablets, smartphones, YouTube, and social networking sites, young people are constantly connected to electronic media (see Chapter 5). How does such technology affect socialization?

### ELECTRONIC MEDIA

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advises parents to avoid use of screen media, other than video-chatting, for children younger than 18 months. It also recommends limiting screen use for children ages 2 to 5 to 1 hour per day, and only of high-quality programs. The controls would encourage more interactive activities such as talking, playing, singing, and reading together “that will promote proper brain development” (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2016). Despite the AAP's advice, 97 percent of children







Moodboard-Mike Watson Images/Getty Images

Class field trips enhance children's socialization. Among other benefits, the field trips expand learning beyond the classroom, enrich students' understanding of subject matter, and encourage them to think about occupational choices and careers that they haven't considered.

under age 4—regardless of family income—use mobile devices like smartphones and tablets. Parents are especially likely to let their youngsters use mobile devices when the adults are doing house chores (70 percent), keeping a child calm in public places (65 percent), running errands (58 percent), and putting children to sleep (28 percent) (Kabali et al., 2015).

The average young American now spends more time with electronic media than in school. The typical 8- to 10-year-old spends nearly 8 hours a day using some type of electronic media (which is more time than many adults spend in a full-time job), and 13- to 18-year-olds spend almost 9 hours a day (Rideout, 2015). Too much time on the Internet has been linked with violence, cyberbullying, trouble in school, obesity, lack of sleep, and lower

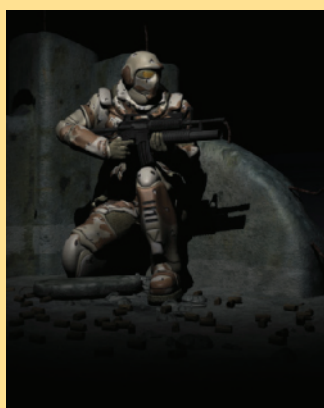
grades (Strasburger and Hogan, 2013). Screen media usage itself isn't necessarily harmful, but it typically involves "passive consumption," such as watching and listening to content produced by someone else, rather than writing and creating one's own art and music or interacting face-to-face with family and friends (Rideout, 2015).

There's also a growing concern that violent video games make violence seem normal. Playing violent video games (e.g., *Grand Theft Auto*, *Call of Duty*, and *Halo*) can increase a person's aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behavior both in laboratory settings and in real life. Violent video games also encourage male-to-female aggression because much of the violence is directed at women (Carnagey and Anderson, 2005; Brody, 2015).

Still, it's not clear why violent video games affect people differently. Many young males who enjoy playing such games aren't any more aggressive, vicious, or destructive than those who aren't violent video game enthusiasts (Ferguson and Olson, 2013). Instead, factors such as angry and aggressive personalities, indifference to other people's feelings, and the quantity of violent gaming increase the likelihood of violent behavior (see Markey et al., 2014; Przybylski and Mishkin, 2015).

## What? Adolescents Can Buy Ultraviolent Video Games, but Not a Magazine with an Image of a Nude Woman?!

In 2011, the Supreme Court ruled (7–2 in *Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Association*) that video games, even ultraviolent ones, that are sold to minors are protected by the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech. The majority said that none of the scientific studies prove that violent games cause minors to act aggressively, and that parents, not the government, should decide what is appropriate for their children (Schiesel, 2011; Walls, 2011).



Hot Property/Shutterstock.com

Not surprisingly, the video game industry was jubilant over the decision. Many parents and lawmakers, on the other hand, agreed with one of the dissenting justices that it makes no sense to forbid selling a 13-year-old boy a magazine with an image of a nude woman, but not an interactive video game in which the same boy "actively . . . binds and gags the woman, then tortures and kills her" (Barnes, 2011: A1).





Many men's health and fitness magazines routinely feature models who have undergone several months of extreme regimens, including starvation and dehydration, to tighten their skin and make their muscles "pop." The magazines also use lighting tricks and Photoshop to project an idealized image of hypermasculinity that, in reality, is impossible to attain (Christina, 2011; see also Ricciardelli et al., 2010).

## ADVERTISING

In 2006, dozens of companies promised to limit child-directed TV ads that used cartoons and other characters to promote unhealthy food. Some companies have run shorter commercials, but the content hasn't changed very much (Kunkel et al., 2015; see also Chapter 3).

Advertisers are targeting children at increasingly younger ages. A new form of advertising called *advergaming* combines free online games with advertising. Advergaming is growing rapidly. Sites like Wonka.com, operated by Nestlé, and Barbie.com, operated by Mattel, attract millions of young children and provide marketers with an inexpensive way to "draw attention to their brand in a playful way, and for an extended period of time" (Moore, 2006: 5).

Young people see 45 percent more beer ads and 27 percent more ads for hard liquor in teen magazines than adults do in their magazines (Jernigan, 2010). Girls ages 11 to 14 are subjected to about 500 advertisements a day on the Internet, billboards, and magazines in which the majority of models are "nipped, tucked, and air-brushed to perfection" (Bennett, 2009: 43).

What effect do such ads have on girls' and women's self-image? About 43 percent of 6- to 9-year-old girls use lipstick or lip gloss, and 38 percent use hairstyling products. In addition, 8- to 12-year-old girls spend more than \$40 million a month on beauty products, 80 percent of 10-year-old girls have been on a diet, and 80 percent of girls ages 13 to 18 list shopping as their favorite activity (Hanes, 2011; Seltzer, 2012). Many girls and young women believe that they have to be gorgeous, thin, and almost perfect to be loved by their parents and boyfriends (Schwyzer, 2011).

Many women, especially white women, who are unhappy with their bodies, turn to cosmetic surgery. In 2016 women had 92 percent of all cosmetic procedures; the number (almost 14.2 million) has increased 118 percent since 2000. Men had 1.3 million procedures, a 27 percent increase since 2000. Seventy percent of all patients were white. The most common cosmetic surgery was breast enlargement or breast lift for women and nose reshaping or eyelid surgery for men (American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2017).

4-5

## SOCIALIZATION THROUGHOUT LIFE

Biological aging comes naturally, but social aging is a different matter. As we progress through the life course—from infancy to death—we are expected to learn culturally approved norms, values, and roles.

### 4-5a Infancy and Toddlerhood

Infancy (between birth and 12 months) and toddlerhood (ages 1 to 3) encompass only a small fraction of the average person's life span, but are periods of both extreme helplessness and considerable physical and cognitive growth. Some scientists describe healthy infants' brains as "small computers" because of their enormous capacity for learning (Gopnik et al., 2001: 142).

The quality of relationships with adults and other caregivers has a profound effect on infants' and toddlers' development. Engaging infants in talk increases their vocabulary. By age 2, toddlers who know more words have better language skills that, in turn, help them control their behavior at age 3 and later (Vallotton and Ayoub, 2011).

### That's Not All ...

There are many socialization agents other than family, play and peer groups, teachers and schools, and the media. If you think about the last few years, which groups or organizations have influenced who you are? What about the military, a company you've worked for, college and athletic clubs, religious organizations, support groups, athletic memberships, community groups, or others? All affect our socialization throughout life.



Lewis Hine/Archive Photos/Getty Images

Childhood—viewed as a distinct stage of development—is a fairly recent phenomenon (Ariès, 1962). Until 1938, children made up a large segment of the U.S. labor force, especially in factories. They worked 6 days a week, 12 or more hours a day, received very low wages, and were often injured because of dangerous equipment.

On average, family members spend about 30 minutes a day reading to children under age 2 (Rideout, 2014). The biggest change is children's media use. In 2014, 99 percent of all children under age 2 were using mobile devices (e.g., smartphone, tablet), up from only 10 percent in 2011. They watched TV almost an hour a day, used apps up to 20 minutes a day, and played video games another 13 minutes a day. About 20 percent of 1-year-olds have their own tablets, and 28 percent of 2-year-olds can navigate a mobile device without help (Kabali et al., 2015).

You saw earlier that the AAP has advised parents to limit their infants' and toddlers' screen time. Only 28 percent of parents say that media decreases face-to-face family time, but they often underestimate the amount of time that children under age 2 spend with electronic devices (Rideout, 2013). Electronic media usage increases digital literacy. According to a pediatrics professor, however, young children "need laps more than apps" (quoted in Louis, 2015: A16).

#### 4-5b Childhood Through Adolescence

Physical, emotional, and other development continues through childhood and adolescence (roughly ages 4 to 12). Children acquire cognitive skills that include processing thoughts, speaking, reasoning, memorizing and recalling information, analyzing problems, and

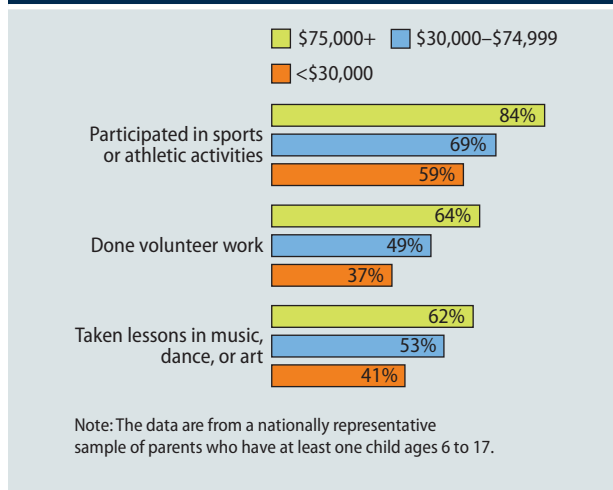
evaluating options. The quantity and quality of time that parents and teachers invest in developing cognitive development affect children's long-term outcomes.

Social class enhances or limits cognitive growth. Middle-class parents, regardless of race or ethnicity, engage in "concerted cultivation" child-rearing processes that deliberately try to improve their children's cognitive and social skills. In contrast, working-class and poor parents—because of a lack of free time or resources—facilitate "natural growth" by granting their children more autonomy in everyday life (Lareau, 2011). Especially since the early 1990s, the gap between high- and low-educated parents' investment in children's development has increased (Altintas, 2016).

Besides reading to their children, helping them with homework, and attending their children's school-based events, high-income parents are much more likely than lower-income parents to enroll children in extracurricular activities (Figure 4.2). Extracurricular activities hone cognitive skills, decrease the likelihood of antisocial behavior, boost self-esteem, teach time management and collaborating to achieve a common goal, and uncover leadership potential.

Self-help books and self-proclaimed child experts routinely instruct parents to praise their kids to bolster their self-esteem. Is such advice misguided? A recent study of parents with children ranging from 7 to 12 years old found that constantly praising kids as "special" or "exceptional" and applauding every little achievement results in narcissism. The children often demand special treatment, can't tolerate setbacks, are more violent

**Figure 4.2 Higher Income Children Are More Likely to Be in Extracurricular Activities**



Source: Based on "Parenting in America...," 2015, p. 11.

than other people, and are at high risk for drug addiction and depression (Brummelman et al., 2015). A recent review of 41 studies concluded that, in the long run, consistent and well-deserved (but not constant) praise strengthens the parent-child relationship, teaches children to overcome setbacks, and improves their problem-solving skills (Owen et al., 2012; Petersen, 2012).

Most U.S. children enjoy happy and healthy lives, but many don't. More than 5 million children younger than 18 (7 percent of all children in this age group) have an incarcerated parent. Another 416,000 are in the foster care system. Almost 13 percent of all children live in households where a parent or other adult uses, manufactures, or distributes illicit drugs. And, every year, at least 684,000 children experience neglect or physical and sexual abuse (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011; Murphey and Cooper, 2015; Child Information Gateway, 2016; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). Thus, for millions of U.S. children, the socialization process is shaky at best.

#### 4-5c The Teenage Years

Ages 13 to 19 is another period of tremendous change. Teenagers establish their own identity and become more independent as they mature and break away from parental supervision, a healthy development process. The most difficult part of raising adolescents, according



Ryan McVay/Getty Images

to some parents, is dealing with their changing moods and behavior.

For many years, people attributed such dramatic changes to “raging hormones.” Scientists now believe that there’s a link between a teen’s baffling behavior and the fact that his or her brain may be changing far more than was thought previously. During adolescence, the brain matures at different rates. Areas involved in basic functions such as processing information and controlling physical movement mature first. The parts of the brain responsible for controlling impulses, avoiding risky behavior, and planning ahead—the hallmarks of adult behavior—are among the last to mature (National Institute of Mental Health, 2011).

Parental involvement is usually beneficial in a child’s development, but “helicopter parents,” who hover over their kids, are hyperinvolved, intrusive, and overcontrolling. Anecdotal examples include parents verbally attacking teachers about their children’s low grades, demanding that their child be moved to another class before the school year has even begun, completing their homework assignments, showing up in the guidance counselor’s office with college applications that they have filled out for their children, and haggling with college professors over the student’s grade on an exam or paper (Krache, 2008; Weintraub, 2010; Rochman, 2013).

Helicopter parenting diminishes teens’ and young adults’ ability to develop decision-making and problem-solving skills. However well-intentioned, helicopter parents increase their own stress and decrease their children’s feelings of autonomy and competence. In turn, not believing in one’s ability to achieve goals on one’s own leads to teenagers’ and young adults’ feeling anxious, depressed, and more dissatisfied with life (Shellenbarger, 2013; Schiffrin et al., 2014).

#### 4-5d Adulthood

Socialization continues throughout adulthood. People adopt a series of new roles that may include work, marriage, parenthood, divorce, remarriage, buying a house, and experiencing the death of a child, parent, or grandparent. We’ll examine these transitions in later chapters. Two of the most important roles in adulthood are work and parenthood, but let’s begin with young adults who are reluctant to leave their parents’ nest.

#### THE CROWDED EMPTY NEST

During the 1960s and 1970s, sociologists almost always included the “empty nest” in describing the family life course. This is the stage in which parents, typically in their

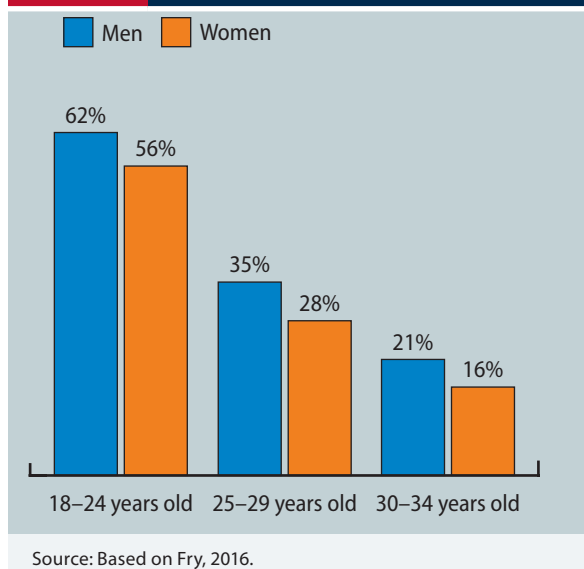


Tim Pannell/Corbis

Nationally, 57 percent of 6- to 17-year-olds participate in at least one after-school extracurricular activity. The benefits include learning time management, exploring diverse interests, and building social skills, but some family practitioners believe that today’s children are too overbooked and overscheduled (Laughlin, 2014; Lawrence, 2015). Do you agree?



**Figure 4.3** Who's Not Leaving the Nest?



50s, find themselves alone after their children have married, gone to college, or found jobs and moved out.

Today, young adults are living at home longer than they did in the past. The terms *boomerang children* and *boomerang generation* refer to young adults who move back in with their parents, often with a spouse, girlfriend or boyfriend, and children in tow.

Most young adults leave the parental nest by age 23, but the proportion ages 18 to 34 who are living with parents increased from 20 percent in 1960 to 32 percent in 2014 (Fry, 2016). Among young adults ages 18 to 34, men are more likely than women to live with their parents (Figure 4.3).

Macro-level factors have contributed to many Americans' delayed transition to adulthood, especially living independently. Financial insecurity, student loan debt, low wages, divorce, credit card debt, and going from job

to job until they find work they enjoy have made it harder for young middle-class adults to maintain the lifestyles that their parents created. And the transition to independence gets tougher the lower a person's occupation and education. In 2014, for instance, only 19 percent of 18- to 34-year-olds who were college graduates were living with their parents, compared with 36 percent who had not completed a college degree (Fry, 2016).

On a micro level, almost 33 percent of today's parents, compared with 19 percent in 1993, say that children shouldn't be expected to be on their own financially until age 25 or later (Taylor et al., 2012). Among those ages 18 to 24, 87 percent live at home because parents "make it easy for me to stay" (Payne and Copp, 2013). They enjoy the comforts of the pampering parental nest. According to one of my male students in his late 20s, for example, "My mom enjoys cooking, cleaning my room, and just having me around. I don't pitch in for any of the expenses, but we get along great because she doesn't hassle me about my comings and goings" (Benokraitis, 2015: 354).

Many young adults, as you'll see in Chapter 12, are postponing marriage and don't feel a need to establish their own homes. Perhaps most important, the stigma traditionally linked to young adults' living at home has faded. Among those ages 25 to 34 who live at home, 61 percent say they have friends or family members who have moved back in with their parents (Parker, 2012). The implication (and perhaps justification) of moving back home or not leaving in the first place is that "a lot of people are doing it."

## WORK ROLES

The average American who was born between 1957 and 1964 has held 11 jobs from ages 18 to 46 alone; 26 percent have held 15 jobs or more ("Number of Jobs Held . . .," 2012). Such job changing means that our occupational socialization is an ongoing process.

Learning work roles can be difficult because each job has different demands and expectations. Even when there's formal job training, we must also learn the subtle rules that are implicit in many job settings. A supervisor who says, proudly and loudly, "I have an open door policy. Come in and chat whenever you want," may *really* mean "I have an open door policy if you're not going to complain about something." Even if we remain in the same job for many years, we must often acquire new skills, especially technological ones, or risk being laid off.

Being laid off can be stressful at any age. In the case of midlife men (generally defined as those ages 45 to 60),



such changes are especially traumatic: They must learn new job-hunting skills and often adjust to as much as a 70 percent decrease in their earnings (see Chapter 11). Instead of enjoying the security of a job in their midlife years, these men must undergo occupational socialization that assaults their self-image as good employees and family providers.

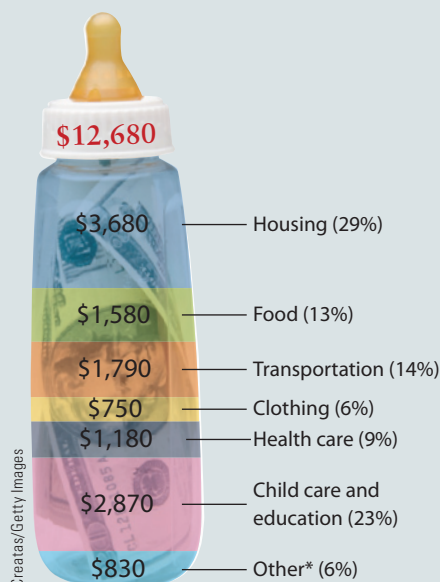
## PARENTING ROLES

Like workplace roles, parenting does *not* come naturally. Most first-time parents muddle through by trial and error. Family sociologists often point out that we get more training for driving a car or a fishing license than for parenting.

Most couples don't realize that children are expensive. Middle-income couples, with an average income of \$81,700 a year, spend about 16 percent of their earnings on a child during the first 2 years (*Figure 4.4*). These couples will spend almost \$234,000 for each child from birth through high school. Child-rearing costs are much higher for single parents and especially for low-income families if a child is disabled, chronically ill, or needs

**Figure 4.4** How Much Does It Cost to Raise a Child?

In 2015, middle-income married couples—those with before-tax income between \$59,200 and \$107,400—spent \$12,680 per year for a child under age 2. This amount doesn't include the costs of prenatal care or delivery.



\* Includes personal care items, entertainment, and reading materials.

Source: Based on Lino et al., 2017, Table 1.

specialized care that welfare benefits don't cover. Expenses are also much higher for parents whose children attend private schools (Lino et al., 2017).

About 23 percent of Americans are "sandwiched" between their children and their parents. That is, they're caring for at least one parent age 65 or older, raising a child under age 18, and/or providing economic assistance to a grown child. Pulled in many directions, these midlife adults must learn to deal with the stress of juggling a full-time job and caregiving responsibilities (Parker and Horowitz, 2015; see also Chapter 12).

## 4-5e Later Life

Socialization continues in later life. People age 65 and older often remarry and must learn to play new roles such as stepparent or step-grandparent. Many others undergo unwanted rites of passage such as widowhood, divorce or re-divorce, becoming a custodial parent, and dealing with the death of an adult child or grandchild.

Because we live longer, we may spend 20 percent of our adult life in retirement. When retired people are unhappy, it's usually because of health or income problems rather than loss of the worker role (see Chapter 14). If retirement benefits don't keep up with inflation or if a retiree isn't covered by a pension plan, people can plunge into poverty soon after retirement. Poverty is devastating at any age, but sliding down the economic ladder during one's 60s and 70s is especially traumatic because there's little chance of recouping one's income (see Chapters 12 and 14).

Older people who are in poor health and experience continuous pain sometimes welcome death. Among those who are healthy, some reenter the labor force or volunteer in various organizations, many are involved with their grandchildren, and others forge new relationships after widowhood (see Chapter 12). Thus, even in the later years, many people continue to learn new roles.

## 4-6 RESOCIALIZATION AND TOTAL INSTITUTIONS

Throughout life, many people undergo **resocialization**, the process of unlearning old ways of doing things and adopting new attitudes, values, norms, and behavior. Resocialization ranges from mild to intense, and can be voluntary or involuntary.

**resocialization** unlearning old ways of doing things and adopting new attitudes, values, norms, and behavior.

#### 4-6a Resocialization

Much resocialization is voluntary, as when an American wife moves to the Middle East with her Iranian husband and follows local customs about veiling, women's submissive roles, and staying out of public life. Other examples include entering a religious order, seeking treatment in a drug rehabilitation facility, or serving in the military.

Voluntary resocialization is usually mild. First-year college students, new employees, and members of support groups, for instance, must learn new rules and live up to an individual's, a group's, or an organization's expectations. Such changes, however, are usually short term and may even be enjoyable.

On the other hand, some voluntary resocialization can be long, difficult, and intense. New parents' lives change dramatically as they learn parenting roles. In divorce, people may experience a sense of relief and liberation, but must also cope with emotional distress, financial changes, and child custody disputes. People who experience a permanent physical disability must cope with physical limitations, psychological issues, and stigma. Soldiers who return from wars, even if they haven't suffered physical injuries, describe coming home and living a normal life as daunting. They must reconnect with their children, adjust to spouses who have become more independent, and deal with posttraumatic stress disorders (PTSD) that include depression and nightmares (Jones, 2013; van Agtmael, 2013).

Resocialization can also be involuntary when it occurs against a person's will. Examples include children sent to a foster home or older people persuaded to move to an assisted-living facility. Whether voluntary or not, total institutions are the most intense forms of resocialization.

**total institutions** isolated and enclosed social systems that control most aspects of the participants' lives.

#### 4-6b Total Institutions

A **total institution** is an isolated and enclosed social system that controls most aspects of its participants' lives. Prisons, mental hospitals, nursing homes, juvenile detention camps, convents and monasteries, boarding schools, and military training centers are all total institutions to varying degrees. Because a total institution's goal is resocialization, people are isolated from the rest of society, stripped of their former identities, and required to conform to new rules and behavior (Goffman, 1961).

Resocialization in total institutions is an intense two-step process. First, the staff uses *degradation ceremonies*, humiliating rituals that publicly stigmatize people and try to erode their identities and independence (Garfinkel, 1956). Inmates are strip-searched, deloused, and fingerprinted; their heads are shaved; they're issued a uniform and are given a serial number; they have no privacy, limited access to family and friends, and little communication with the outside world; and they're told what to do and when. In the military, soldiers get short haircuts, wear matching uniforms, follow rigid schedules, and make few personal decisions. The purpose of these practices and restrictions is to destroy any sense of individualism, autonomy, and past identity, and to produce a more compliant person (Goffman, 1961; see also Chapter 7).

In the second resocialization step, the staff tries to build a new identity that conforms to the institution's expectations. Inmates who conform are rewarded with simple privileges (e.g., making phone calls, more visits with family) and an earlier release. Soldiers often bond with one another, become more self-disciplined, may use their new skills in civilian jobs, and are proud of having served in the military ("Once a Marine, always a Marine").

Most resocialization occurs in institutions—ranging from monastic orders to the military.

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Total institutions don't always succeed in resocializing people. Inmates, for instance, find ways to make money, to barter, to smuggle in banned items (including drugs and smartphones), and to make and enforce their own rules through a system of rewards and punishments (Kilgore, 2015; Biunno, 2016). Netflix's *Orange Is the New Black* series dramatizes female inmates' making

and breaking formal and informal rules to cope with imprisonment.

As this chapter shows, socialization is a powerful force in shaping who we are. It doesn't produce robots, however, because people are creative, adapt to new environments, and change as they interact with others.

## STUDY TOOLS<sup>4</sup>

### READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you've read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.

# 5

## Social Interaction in Everyday Life



Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images News/Getty Images

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 5-1 Explain the importance of social interaction and its relationship to social structure.
- 5-2 Define and illustrate status set, ascribed and achieved statuses, master status, and status inconsistency.
- 5-3 Explain how and why social roles differ, and how people cope with role conflict and role strain.
- 5-4 Compare and illustrate symbolic interaction, social exchange, and feminist explanations of social interaction.
- 5-5 Describe and illustrate nonverbal communication, its importance, and cross-cultural variations.
- 5-6 Summarize the benefits and costs of online interaction.

After finishing  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 99** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**

What, if anything, annoys you about airplane passengers? Among U.S. adults, the top offenders are parents who don't control their whining or misbehaving children, people behind them who kick the seat, and travelers who talk loudly or listen to loud music, usurp several overhead bins, become drunk or disruptive, and never stop talking (Expedia, 2017).

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I spend more time on social media than I do talking face-to-face with my family and friends.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree						strongly disagree

Such complaints illustrate **social interaction**, the process of acting toward and reacting to people around us. Social interaction—verbal, nonverbal, face-to-face, or on social media—is central to all human social activity, can be cooperative or competitive, and can be interpreted in various ways across cultures and groups over time. As people interact, they create social structure.

## 5-1 SOCIAL STRUCTURE

**Social structure** is an organized pattern of behavior that governs people's relationships (Smelser, 1988). Because social structure shapes our actions, life is typically orderly and predictable rather than chaotic or random. We're often not aware of the impact of social structure until we violate cultural rules, formal or informal, that dictate our daily behavior—whether in class, at home, at work, or in an airplane.

Every society has a social structure that encompasses statuses, roles, groups, organizations, and institutions (Smelser, 1988). We'll examine groups, organizations, and institutions in later chapters. Let's take a closer look here at statuses and roles, two building blocks of social structure.

## 5-2 STATUS

For most people, the word *status* signifies prestige. An executive, for example, has more status than a receptionist,

and a physician has a higher status than a nurse. For sociologists, **status** is a social position that a person occupies in a society (Linton, 1936). Thus, executive, secretary, physician, and nurse are all social statuses. Other examples of statuses are musician, voter, sister, parent, police officer, and friend.

Sociologists don't assume that one position is more important than another. A mother, for example, isn't more important than a father, and an adult isn't more important than a child. Instead, all statuses are significant because they determine social identity, or who we are.

### 5-2a Status Set

Every person has many statuses (*Figure 5.1*). Together, they form her or his **status set**, a collection of social statuses that a person occupies at a given time (Merton, 1968). Dionne, one of my students, is female, African American, 42 years old, divorced, mother of two, daughter, aunt, Baptist, voter, bank supervisor, volunteer at a soup kitchen, and country music fan. All of these socially defined positions (and others) make up Dionne's status set.

Status sets change throughout the life course. Because she'll graduate next year and is considering remarrying and starting an after-school program, Dionne will add at least three more statuses to her status set and will also lose the statuses of divorced and college student. As Dionne ages, she'll continue to gain new statuses (grandmother, retiree) and lose others (supervisor at a bank, or wife, if she is widowed).

Statuses are *relational*, or complementary, because they're connected to other statuses: A *husband* has a *wife*, a *real-estate agent* has *customers*, and a *teacher* has *students*. No matter how many

**social interaction** acting toward and reacting to people around us.

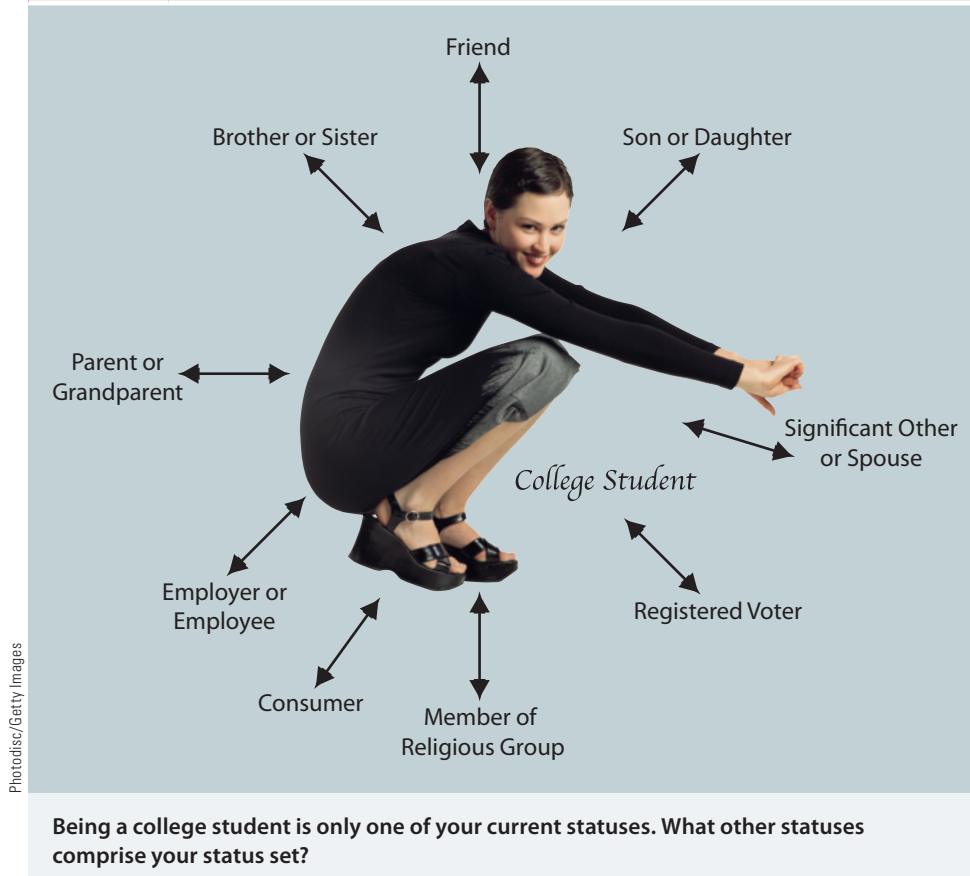
**social structure** an organized pattern of behavior that governs people's relationships.

**status** a social position that a person occupies in a society.

**status set** a collection of social statuses that a person occupies at a given time.



**Figure 5.1** Is This Your Status Set?



statuses you occupy, every status is linked to those of other people. These connections between statuses influence our behavior and relationships.

### 5-2b Ascribed and Achieved Status

Status sets include both ascribed and achieved statuses. An **ascribed status** is a social position that a person is born into. We can't control, change, or choose our ascribed statuses, which include sex (male or female), age, race, ethnicity, and family relationships. Your ascribed statuses, for example, might include *male*, *Latino*, and *brother*.

**ascribed status** a social position that a person is born into.

**achieved status** a social position that a person attains through personal effort or assumes voluntarily.

**master status** overrides other statuses and forms an important part of a person's social identity.

**status inconsistency** the conflict that arises from occupying social positions that are ranked differently.

An **achieved status**, in contrast, is a social position that a person attains through personal effort or assumes voluntarily. Your achieved statuses might include college graduate,

mother, and employee. Unlike our ascribed statuses, our achieved statuses can be controlled and changed. We have no choice about being a son or daughter (an ascribed status), but we have an option to become a parent (an achieved status).

Students sometimes think that religion and social class are ascribed rather than achieved statuses. It's true that someone may be born into a family that practices a certain religion or one that is poor, middle class, or wealthy. Because we can change these statuses through our own actions, however, neither religion nor social class is an ascribed status. A Catholic might convert to Judaism (or vice versa), and thousands of Americans born into poor or working-class families have become millionaires (see Chapter 8).

Some master statuses—like sex, age, and race—are ascribed. Whatever you do, for example, people will see you as male or female and react accordingly. Other master statuses are achieved. For many people, their occupation is their master status: Occupation tends to be the first thing we ask about when we meet someone; conveys much information about income, education, skills, and achievements; and lingers after we've left our jobs (e.g., someone is introduced as a former CEO or ex-military officer). Other achieved master statuses can be based on religion, community leadership, family wealth, or deviant behavior.

### 5-2c Master Status

A **master status** overrides other statuses and forms an important part of a person's social identity (Hughes, 1945; Becker, 1963). A master status is usually immediately apparent, makes the biggest impression, affects others' perceptions, and, consequently, often shapes a person's entire life.

Some master statuses—like sex, age, and race—are ascribed. Whatever you do, for example, people will see you as male or female and react accordingly. Other master statuses are achieved. For many people, their occupation is their master status: Occupation tends to be the first thing we ask about when we meet someone; conveys much information about income, education, skills, and achievements; and lingers after we've left our jobs (e.g., someone is introduced as a former CEO or ex-military officer). Other achieved master statuses can be based on religion, community leadership, family wealth, or deviant behavior.

### 5-2d Status Inconsistency

Because we hold many statuses, some clash. **Status inconsistency** refers to the conflict that arises from



ZUMA Press, Inc./Alamy Stock Photo

A physical disability can become a master status. One of the military's major tasks is helping severely injured soldiers become as independent as possible.

occupying social positions that are ranked differently. Examples include a teacher who works as a bartender or a skilled welder who stocks shelves at a grocery store because neither can find a better job in a stagnant economy. We'll cover status inconsistency in more detail in Chapter 7. For now, you should be aware that you occupy many statuses, and some of them may clash now and in the future.

## 5-3 ROLE

Each status is associated with one or more roles. A **role** is the behavior expected of a person who has a particular status. We *occupy* a status but *play* a role. In this sense, a role is the dynamic aspect of a status (Linton, 1936).

College student is a status, but the role of a college student requires many *formal* behaviors such as going to class, reading, thinking, completing weekly assignments, writing papers, and taking exams. *Informal* behaviors may include joining a student club, befriending classmates, attending football games, and even abusing alcohol on weekends.

Like statuses, roles are relational. Playing the role of professor requires teaching, advising students, answering email and text messages, and grading exams and assignments. Most professors are also expected to serve on

committees, do research, publish articles and/or books, and perform services like giving talks to community groups. Thus, the status of college student or professor involves numerous role requirements that govern who does what, where, when, and how.

Roles can be rigid or flexible. A secretary typically plays a role that's defined by rules about when to come to work, how to answer the phone, when to submit the necessary work, and in what format. A boss, on the other hand, usually enjoys considerable flexibility: She or he has more freedom to come in late or leave early, to determine which projects should be completed first, and to decide when to hire or fire employees.

Because roles are based on mutual obligations, they ensure that social relations are fairly orderly. We know what we're supposed to do and what others expect of us. If professors fail to meet their role obligations by missing classes or coming to classes unprepared, students may respond by studying very little, cutting classes, and submitting negative course evaluations. If students miss classes, don't turn in the required work, or cheat, professors can fail them or assign low grades.

### 5-3a Role Performance

Roles define how we're *expected* to behave in a particular status, but people vary considerably in fulfilling the responsibilities associated with their roles. Many college students succeed, whereas others fail; some professors inspire their students, whereas others put them to sleep. These differences reflect **role performance**, the *actual* behavior of a person who occupies a status. For example, a professor may demand more of graduate students than of undergraduates. An instructor may also interact differently with a 19-year-old student than a 40-year-old student who's anxious about returning to college.

### 5-3b Role Set

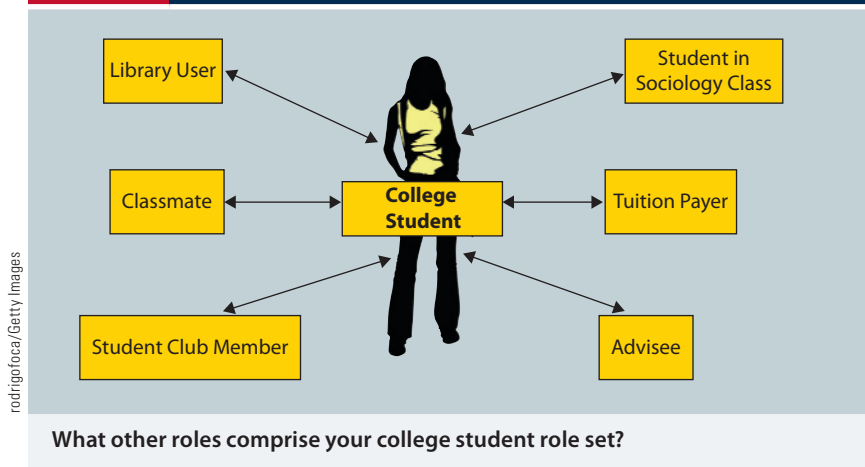
We occupy many statuses and play many roles associated with each status. A **role set** is the array of roles attached to a particular status. The status of a college student, for example, may include at least six different roles (Figure 5.2). Each of these

**role** the behavior expected of a person who has a particular status.

**role performance** the actual behavior of a person who occupies a status.

**role set** array of roles attached to a particular status.

**Figure 5.2** Role Set of a Typical College Student



roles is linked to people with different statuses (e.g., professor, registrar, librarian). Because a different set of norms governs each of these relationships, the student interacts differently with a classmate than with a reference librarian or a professor.

Figure 5.2 shows only one status—that of college student. If you think about a college student's other statuses (employee, son or daughter, parent, girlfriend or boyfriend, husband or wife), you can see that meeting the expectations of numerous role sets can create considerable role conflict and role strain.

### 5-3c Role Conflict and Role Strain

Playing many roles often leads to **role conflict**, difficulties in playing two or more contradictory roles. College students who have a job, especially if it's full-time, often experience role conflict because both employers and professors expect them to excel, but it's very difficult to meet these expectations. The role conflict increases if the student has young children or cares for an aging parent or grandparent.

Whereas role conflict arises because of the expectations of contradictory roles, **role strain** is due to the conflicting demands within the same role. Students experience role strain when several exams are scheduled on the same day and they're also involved in time-

consuming extracurricular activities. Faculty members experience role strain when the requirements of being a professor—teaching, research, and community service—sap their energy

**role conflict** difficulties in playing two or more contradictory roles.

**role strain** difficulties due to conflicting demands within the same role.

and time. Military chaplains report role strain in preaching about peace while blessing those about to go to war.

Almost all of us experience role strain because many inconsistencies are built into our roles. Table 5.1 gives examples of some of the reasons for role conflict and role strain.

### 5-3d Coping with Role Conflict and Role Strain

Role conflict and role strain can produce tension, hostility, aggression, and stress-related physical problems that include insomnia, headaches, ulcers, eating disorders, anxiety attacks, chronic fatigue, nausea, weight loss or gain, and drug and alcohol abuse (Weber et al., 1997). Some role conflict and role strain may last only a few weeks, but others are long-lived (e.g., working in a stressful or low-paying job).

To deal with role conflict and role strain, some people *deny that there's a problem*. Employed mothers,

**Table 5.1** Why Do We Experience Role Conflict and Role Strain?

Reason	Example
Because many people are overextended, some roles are bound to conflict with others.	Students may study less than they want because employers demand that they work overtime or on weekends.
People have little or no training for many roles.	Parents are expected to turn out "perfect" kids even though they receive training for driving a car but none for parenting.
Some role expectations are unclear or contradictory.	Some employers pride themselves on having family-friendly policies but expect employees to work 12 hours a day, travel on weekends, and use vacation days to care for a sick child.
Highly demanding jobs often create difficulties at home.	Some jobs (being in the military, policing, and firefighting) require people to be away from their families for extended periods of time or during crises.



especially those who are divorced, often become supermoms. They provide home-cooked meals, attend their children's sports activities, and volunteer for a school's fund-raising campaign even though they're exhausted, must do laundry at midnight, and neglect their own interests and well-being. Supermoms may succeed over a number of years in managing role conflict and role strain. Eventually, however, they may become angry and resentful, or experience health or emotional problems (Douglas and Michaels, 2004).

There are five more effective ways to minimize role conflict and role strain. First, we can reduce role conflict through *compromise* or *negotiation*. To decrease the conflict between work and family roles, many couples draw up schedules that require fathers to do more of the housework and child rearing (see Chapter 12).

Second, we can *set priorities*. If extracurricular activities interfere with studying, which is more important? Succeeding in college always requires making sacrifices, such as attending fewer parties or not seeing friends as often as we'd like.

Third, we can *compartmentalize* our roles. Many college students take courses in the morning, work part-time during the afternoon or evening, and devote part of the weekend to leisure activities. It's not always easy but usually possible to separate our various roles.

Fourth, we can decide *not to take on more roles*. One of the most effective ways to avoid role conflict is to just say "no" to requests to do volunteer work, pressure

from family or friends to take on unwanted tasks (e.g., babysitting), or pleas to become involved in college or community activities.

Finally, we can *exit* a role or status. Withdrawing from community activities and club offices, for example, can decrease role conflict and role strain considerably. There's always pressure to remain in a role, but none of us is indispensable, and there are many people who are eager to replace us. Although necessary, some role exits are painful and long-lived. Divorce, for instance, isn't a quick event but a process that goes on for many years (sometimes decades), during which two people (and their children) must redefine their expectations and adjust to a different household structure (see Chapter 12).



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5-4

## EXPLAINING SOCIAL INTERACTION

Statuses and roles shape our everyday relationships, but social interaction provides the basis of these relationships. At the macro level, functionalists and conflict theorists study interaction among and between social structures, institutions, and societies (see, especially, Chapters 1 and 6). However, three micro perspectives—symbolic interaction, exchange theory, and some feminist theories—are especially useful in understanding why we interact as we do, and why people sometimes interpret the same words differently. The explanations offer different insights, but each shows how people interact in their daily lives (*Table 5.2* summarizes these approaches).

### 5-4a Symbolic Interaction

For interactionists, the most significant characteristic of all human communication is that people take each other and the context into account (Blumer, 1969). When your professors ask, "How are you?" they expect a "Fine, thanks" and probably barely look at you. A doctor, on the other hand, usually looks you in the eye when asking "How are you?" and takes notes as soon as you start to reply. Thus, "How are you?" has different meanings in different social contexts and elicits different responses ("I'm doing okay" vs. "I've been having a lot of headaches lately"). In this sense, people construct reality.



Geo Martinez/Shutterstock.com

Like other people, college students can reduce their role conflict and role strain by setting priorities and compartmentalizing their roles.

**Table 5.2 Sociological Explanations of Social Interaction**

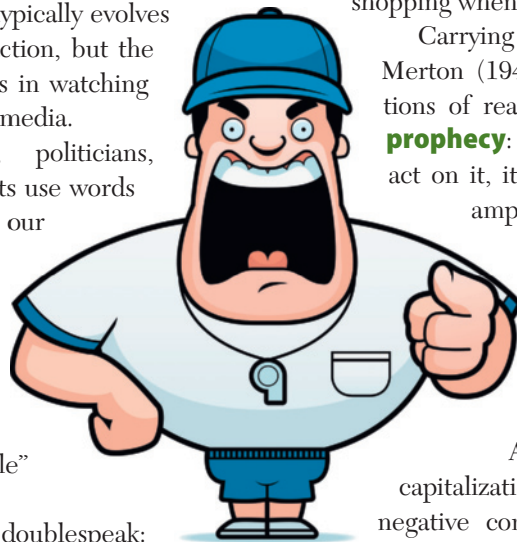
Perspective	Key Points
Symbolic Interactionist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People create and define their reality through social interaction.</li> <li>• Our definitions of reality, which vary according to context, can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies.</li> </ul>
Social Exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social interaction is based on a balancing of benefits and costs.</li> <li>• Relationships involve trading a variety of resources, such as money, youth, and good looks.</li> </ul>
Feminist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Females and males act similarly in many interactions but may differ in communication styles and speech patterns.</li> <li>• Men are more likely to use speech that's assertive (to achieve dominance and goals), whereas women are more likely to use language that connects with others.</li> </ul>

## SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

“Human reality is socially constructed reality” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 172). That is, we produce, interpret, and share the reality of everyday life with others. This social construction of reality typically evolves through direct, face-to-face interaction, but the interaction can also be indirect, as in watching television or participating in social media.

Businesspeople, advertisers, politicians, educators, and even social scientists use words intentionally to shape or change our perceptions of reality. For example, doublespeak is “language that pretends to communicate but really doesn’t. [It] makes the bad seem good, the negative appear positive, the unpleasant appear attractive or at least tolerable” (Lutz, 1989: 1).

There are several kinds of doublespeak: *Euphemisms* are words or phrases that avoid a harsh, unpleasant, or distasteful reality; *gobbledygook* (or *bureaucratese*) overwhelms the listener with big words and long sentences; and *inflated language* makes simple everyday things seem complex (Lutz, 1989; see also Beard and Cerf, 2015). Take the Doublespeak quiz to see how much doublespeak you understand or use.



Cory Thoman/Shutterstock.com

and Dorothy Thomas (1928: 572) observed, “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.” That is, our behavior is a result of how we interpret a situation (“My mother-in-law hates me, so I go shopping when she drops in”).

Carrying this idea further, sociologist Robert Merton (1948/1966) proposed that our definitions of reality can result in a **self-fulfilling prophecy**: If we define something as real and act on it, it can, in fact, become real. For example, physical education teachers who publicly humiliate students may turn them off physical fitness for good. One man said, “To this day I feel totally inadequate in team-related activities and have a natural reflex to AVOID THEM AT ALL COSTS” (Stean, 2009: 217; capitalization in original). Thus, gym teachers’ negative comments make students feel inadequate, regardless of their ability, and change their behavior during adulthood.

Our perceptions of reality shape our behavior, but how do people define that reality? Interactionists use two research tools—*ethnomethodology* and *dramaturgical analysis*—to help answer this question.

## ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

A term coined by sociologist Harold Garfinkel (1967), **ethnomethodology** is the study of how people construct and learn to share definitions of reality that make everyday interactions possible. That is, we base our interactions on common assumptions about what makes sense in specific situations (Schutz, 1967; Hilbert, 1992).

People make sense of their everyday lives in two ways. First, by observing conversations, people

## SOCIAL INTERACTION AND SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECIES

Our perceptions of reality shape our behavior. In an oft-cited statement, known as the *Thomas Theorem*, sociologists W. I. Thomas

**self-fulfilling prophecy** if we define something as real and act on it, it can, in fact, become real.

**ethnomethodology** the study of how people construct and learn to share definitions of reality that make everyday interactions possible.

discover the general rules that we all use to interact. Second, people can understand interaction rules by breaking them. Over a number of years, Garfinkel instructed his students to purposely violate everyday interaction rules and then to analyze the results.

In these exercises, some of his students went to a grocery store and insisted on paying more than was asked for a product. Others were instructed, in the course of an ordinary conversation “to bring their faces up to the subject’s until their noses were almost touching” (Garfinkel, 1967: 72).

When students violated interaction norms, they were sanctioned. Grocery clerks became hostile when the students insisted on paying more than the marked price for a product, and people backed off when their noses were almost touching: “Reports were filled with accounts of astonishment, bewilderment, shock, anxiety, embarrassment, and anger” (Garfinkel, 1967: 47).

Violating interaction rules, even unspoken ones, can trigger anger, hostility, and frustration. College students become upset if professors are sarcastic or disrespectful, are unprepared or consistently late, constantly read from the book, or discourage students’ comments and questions (Berkos et al., 2001).

## DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS

**Dramaturgical analysis** is a research approach that examines social interaction as if occurring on a stage where people play different roles and act out scenes for the “audiences” with whom they interact. According to sociologist Erving Goffman (1959, 1967), life is similar to a play in which each of us is an actor, and our social interaction is much like theatre because we’re always on stage and always performing. In our everyday “performances,” we present different versions of ourselves to people in different settings (audiences).

Because most of us try to present a positive image of ourselves, much social interaction involves *impression management*, a process of suppressing unfavorable traits and stressing favorable ones (see Chapter 4). To control information about ourselves, we often rely on props to convey or reinforce a particular image. For example, physicians, lawyers, and college professors may line their office walls with framed diplomas, medical certificates, or community awards to give the impression that they’re competent, respected, and successful.

## Doublespeak

- |                                 |                                          |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1. automotive internist         | A. a lie                                 |
| 2. reducing costs               | B. bombing                               |
| 3. alternative fact             | C. undertaker                            |
| 4. auto dismantler and recycler | D. cutting salaries and/or firing people |
| 5. air support                  | E. fake                                  |
| 6. previously owned             | F. car mechanic                          |
| 7. genuine imitation            | G. junk dealer                           |
| 8. bereavement care expert      | H. stock market crash                    |
| 9. equity retreat               | I. used                                  |
| 10. revenue enhancement         | J. tax increase                          |

Answers: 1-F; 2-D; 3-A; 4-G; 5-B; 6-I; 7-E; 8-C; 9-H; 10-J

For Goffman, a performance involves front- and back-stage behaviors. The *front stage* is an area where an actual performance takes place. In front-stage areas, such as living rooms or restaurants, the setting is clean and the servers or hosts are typically polite and deferential to guests. The *back stage*, an area concealed from the audience, is where people can relax. Bedrooms and restaurant kitchens are examples of back stages. After guests have left, the host and hostess may kick off their shoes and gossip about their company. In restaurants, cooks and servers may criticize the guests, use vulgar language, and yell at each other. Thus, the civility and decorum of the front stage may change to rudeness in the back stage.

Another example of front- and back-stage behavior involves faculty and students. Professors want to create the impression that they’re well prepared, knowledgeable, and hardworking. In back-stage areas like their offices, however, faculty may complain to their colleagues that they’re tired of teaching a particular course or grading terrible exams and papers, or they may confess that they don’t always prepare for classes as well as they should. Students often plead with instructors for higher grades: “But I studied very hard” or “I’m an A student in my other courses.” In back-stage areas like dormitories, student lounges, or libraries, however, students may admit to their friends that they barely studied or that they have a low grade-point average.

**dramaturgical analysis** examines social interaction as if occurring on a stage where people play different roles and act out scenes for the audiences with whom they interact.





The chaotic and crowded back-stage conditions in many restaurant kitchens differ markedly from the efficient and relaxed front-stage behavior of its servers. Can you think of a situation where your front- and back-stage behaviors differ dramatically?

the domestic violence research shows that women stay in abusive relationships because their self-esteem has eroded after years of criticism and ridicule from both their parents and their spouses or partners (“You’ll be lucky if anyone marries you,” “You’re dumb,” “You’re ugly,” and so on). In effect, the abused women (and sometimes men) believe that they have nothing to offer in a relationship, that they don’t have the right to expect benefits (especially when the abuser blames the victim for provoking the anger), or that enduring an abusive relationship is better than being alone. An estimated 33 percent of unhappily married couples stay together because one or both partners believe that they have too much to lose if they divorce (e.g., not seeing children, financial insecurity) (Wong, 2014; see also Chapter 12).

## 5-4b Social Exchange Theory

**Social exchange theory** proposes that individuals seek through their interactions to maximize their rewards and minimize their costs. An interaction that elicits a reward, such as approval or a smile, is more likely to be repeated than an interaction that evokes disapproval or criticism (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Homans, 1974; Blau, 1986). Because interactions are most satisfying when there’s a balance between giving and taking, individuals must decide whether and which resources to exchange.

People bring various tangible and intangible resources to a relationship (money, status, intelligence, good looks, youth, power, affection). Any of a person’s resources can be traded for more, better, or different resources. Marriages between older men and young women often reflect an exchange of the man’s power, money, and/or fame for the woman’s youth, physical attractiveness, and ability to bear children.

**social exchange theory** proposes that individuals seek through their interactions to maximize their rewards and minimize their costs.

Many of our cost-reward decisions are conscious and deliberate, but others are passive or based on long-term negative interactions. Much of

## 5-4c Feminist Theories

Cultural norms and gender role expectations shape our interaction patterns. Generally, women are socialized to be more comfortable talking about their feelings,



In predominantly white organizations, many black professionals believe that they’re held to different interaction standards than their white coworkers. Consequently, they manage their emotions to avoid being labeled as “too sensitive,” “angry,” “irritating,” or “unpleasant” (Wingfield, 2010).

whereas men are socialized to be dominant and take charge, especially in the workplace. Women often ask questions that probe about feelings (“Were you glad it happened?”). Women are also more likely than men to do conversational “maintenance work” that encourages conversation (“What happened at the meeting?”) (Lakoff, 1990; Farley et al., 2010).

Women’s speech tends to be supportive (“You must’ve felt terrible”) and tentative (“I kind of feel that . . .”). “Uptalk” is a style of speech in which every sentence rises in pitch, as if the speaker is always asking a question (“My name is Jennifer?”). Women are much more likely than men to uptalk, which shows uncertainty and a lack of self confidence. And, in many social situations, women—particularly those ages 40 to 60—often apologize for the way they look (weight, hair, wrinkles). Men don’t do so, “even when they look terrible” (Wolven, 2014; Wood, 2015).

Compared with female speech, men’s speech often reflects *conversational dominance*, speaking more frequently, and for longer periods. Men also show dominance by interrupting or ignoring others, reinterpreting the speaker’s meaning, changing the topic, or giving unsolicited and unwanted advice (Tannen, 1990; Toth, 2011; Gurkoff and Ranieri, 2012).

Such interaction differences aren’t innate because of one’s sex. Instead, much interaction is contextual—that is, it varies depending on the situation. For example, fathers who do much of the parenting have communication styles that are similar to those of mothers. In the workplace, women and men who occupy high-level decision-making positions have similar interaction styles with superiors and subordinates (Cameron, 2007).

You’ve seen, so far, that much of our interaction is verbal and face-to-face. Nonverbal communication also affects our relationships.

## 5-5 NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

**Nonverbal communication** refers to messages sent without using words. This silent language, a “language of behavior” that conveys our real feelings, can be more potent than our words (Hall, 1959: 15). For example, sobbing sends a much stronger message than saying “I feel very sad.” Some of the most common nonverbal messages are silence, visual cues, touch, and personal space.

### 5-5a Silence

Silence expresses a variety of emotions: Agreement, apathy, awe, confusion, disagreement, embarrassment,



regret, respect, sadness, thoughtfulness, and fear, to name just a few. In various contexts, and at particular points in a conversation, silence means different things to different people. Sometimes silence saves us from embarrassing ourselves. Think, for example, about the times you fired off an angry email or text message, regretted doing so an hour later, and then dreaded getting a fuming response.

Many of us have experienced the pain of getting “the silent treatment” from friends, family members, coworkers, or lovers. Not talking to people who are important to us builds up anger and hostility. Initially, the “offender” may work hard to make the closemouthed person discuss a problem. Eventually, the target of the silent treatment gets fed up, gives up, or ends a relationship. In intimate relationships, silence often signals emotional detachment and the beginning of a breakup.

### 5-5b Visual Cues

Visual cues, another form of nonverbal communication, include gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact. Let’s consider a few examples of such body language in our daily interactions.

#### GESTURES

Most of us think we know what certain gestures mean—folding your arms across your chest indicates a closed, defensive attitude; leaning forward often shows interest; shrugging your shoulders signals indifference; and knitted eyebrows show worry or concentration. Constantly rolling one’s eyes, which conveys contempt and superiority, can be an early predictor of divorce (Weisman, 2016).

Finger-pointing usually directs attention outward, placing blame or responsibility on someone else. The common “talk to the hand” gesture sends a stronger message: “Go away!” or

**nonverbal communication**  
messages that are sent without using words.



**UNITED STATES**  
okay

**SOUTH AMERICA**  
not okay

**JAPAN**  
money

**FRANCE**  
zero

**GERMANY**  
vulgar gesture

**OTHER COUNTRIES**  
better check first

Hemera Technologies/AbleStock.com/Getty Images/Jupiter Images

“I’m not listening to you.” Gestures, however, should be interpreted in context. Because of habit or hearing problems, for instance, a coworker may always lean forward when listening, regardless of interest.

The same gesture may have different meanings in different countries:

- ▶ Tapping one’s elbow several times with the palm of one’s hand indicates that someone is sneaky (in Holland), stupid (in Germany and Austria), or mean or stingy (in South America).
- ▶ Twisting an index finger into one cheek means “She’s beautiful” in Libya, and that something tastes good in Italy. The same gesture in southern Spain means that a man is effeminate, and “You’re crazy!” in Germany.
- ▶ In many Middle Eastern countries, people view the shoes and the soles of one’s feet as unclean. Thus, stretching out one’s legs with the feet pointing at

someone or crossing one’s legs so that a sole faces another person is considered rude (Morris, 1994; Lynch and Hanson, 1999; Jandt, 2001; Donadio, 2013).

In a remarkable tarmac ritual, and regardless of weather, the ground crews at Japanese airports use many gestures as a jet pushes back from the gate. First, the crew members line up, snap to attention, and then, “in perfect unison,” they bow. This gesture is directed toward the passengers (“Thank you for visiting Japan”), the plane’s flight crew (“We respect your expertise and dedication”), and, ultimately, as recognition of the ground crew’s commitment to service (“We have fulfilled our duties to the best of our abilities”). Then they straighten up, smile broadly, and wave goodbye to show the passengers that they had been welcome to Japan (Gottlieb, 2011: 44).

## FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Facial expressions reveal emotions, but they can be deceptive. First, our facial expressions don’t always show our true feelings. Parents tell their children “Don’t you roll your eyes at me!” or “Look happy when Aunt Minnie hugs you.” Thus, children learn that displaying their real feelings—especially when they’re negative—is unacceptable.

Second, faces can lie about feelings. Parents often know when children are lying because they avoid eye contact, cry, or blink and swallow frequently. Some doctors say that they can tell if their patients are lying because of signs such as avoiding eye contact, pausing, or voice inflections, but many adults can control their facial expressions. They can deceive, successfully and over many years, because they’ve rehearsed the lies in their heads, are smooth talkers with a reputation for being trustworthy, or have gotten away with lying in the past.



Departing jets get a wave from the ground crew in Tokyo.

Sanier/Getty Images





Digital Vision/Thinkstock

Is she being friendly? Or flirting?

In nonverbal interaction, people can correctly distinguish truth from lies only about 54 percent of the time (Reddy, 2013; Shea, 2014).

Third, facial expressions can be misleading because of cultural variations. American businesspeople have grumbled that Germans are cool and aloof, whereas many German businesspeople have complained that Americans are excessively friendly and hide their true feelings with grins and smiles. The Japanese, who believe that it's rude to display negative feelings in public, smile more than Americans do to disguise embarrassment, anger, and other negative emotions (Jandt, 2001).

The only consistent research finding, across cultures, is that women smile more than men. This difference may be due to cultural norms that socialize women to hide negative feelings that might make people uncomfortable, and to show deference to men (Szarota, 2010; McDuff et al., 2017). Men are more likely than women to mistake smiles and friendliness as being flirtatious and sexually seductive (La France et al., 2009; Rutter and Schwartz, 2012).

## EYE CONTACT

Eye contact serves several social purposes (Eisenberg and Smith, 1971; Ekman and Friesen, 1984; Siegman and Feldstein, 1987). First, we get much information about other people by looking at their eyes. Eyes open wide show surprise, fear, or a flicker of interest. When we're angry, we stare in an unflinching manner. When we're sad or ashamed, our eyes may be cast down.

Second, appropriate eye contact depends on the social context. Especially during job interviews, eye contact conveys attentiveness, confidence, and respect. Managers expect eye contact from subordinates, but subordinates often complain that a manager's prolonged eye contact is domineering or intimidating. Looking at a

coworker when speaking shows trust and interest, but an overly intense gaze can be disturbing (Chen et al., 2013). When two people like each other, they establish eye contact more often and for longer periods than when there's tension in the relationship.

Finally, cultural norms affect eye contact. In many Asian cultures, including Japan, meeting another's eyes can be rude. Asians are more likely than Westerners to regard a person who makes frequent eye contact as angry, unapproachable, and unpleasant (Akechi et al., 2013). In effect, then, cross-cultural communication breaks down when we don't understand cultural rules about acceptable body language.

## 5-5c Touch

Touching, another important form of nonverbal communication, sends powerful messages about our feelings and attitudes. Parents worldwide communicate with their infants through touch—stroking, holding, patting, rubbing, and cuddling.

Touching can be positive (hugging, embracing, kissing, and holding hands) or negative (hitting, shoving, pushing, spanking). Other forms of touching are controlling.



Rod Aydelotte-Pool/Getty Images

Pictured are former President Bush and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah at Bush's Texas ranch in 2002. Many U.S. journalists raised questions about two men holding hands. In response, Arab Americans were quick to point out that Arab society sees the outward display of affection between men as an expression of respect and trust. Thus, government officials and military officers often hold hands as they walk together or converse with one another.

One of my students left a boyfriend because “He said he loved and trusted me, but gripped my arm tightly every time I talked to another guy and pulled me away.” Between intimate partners, a decline in the amount of touching may signal that feelings are cooling off.

## GENDERED TOUCHING

Whether touching is viewed as positive or negative depends on the situation and one’s gender. In higher education, even when the faculty member is popular, male and female students perceive touching differently. When female professors touch male students on the arm while talking to them, the students view the gesture as friendly. When a male professor touches a female student on the arm, she may get nervous because she’s afraid that the touching may escalate (Lannutti et al., 2001; Fogg, 2005). Generally, women are more likely than men to initiate hugs and touches that express support, affection, and comfort. In contrast, men more often use touching to assert power or show sexual interest (Wood, 2015).

## CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATIONS IN TOUCHING

As with other forms of nonverbal communication, the interpretation of touching varies from culture to culture. In some Middle Eastern countries, people don’t offer anything to another with the left hand because it’s used to clean oneself after using the toilet. Among many Chinese and other Asian groups, hugging, backslapping, and handshaking aren’t as typical as they are in the United States because such touching is seen as too intimate (Lynch and Hanson, 1999).

According to one scholar, Americans—even strangers—seem to be hugging more. Nonetheless, she maintains, the United States is a “medium touch” culture: “More physically demonstrative than Japan, where a bow is the all-purpose hello and goodbye, but less demonstrative than Latin or Eastern European cultures, where hugs are robust and can include a kiss on both cheeks” (Drexler, 2013: C3).

### 5-5d Personal Space

In the example of airlines at the beginning of this chapter, you saw that the distance that people establish

Why do many men use more public space than women? Because they’re larger and have longer legs? Or because men, but not women, feel “totally empowered to take up a lot public space,” even if it inconveniences someone else (see Bahadur, 2013)?

between themselves is an important aspect of nonverbal communication. Americans are more annoyed by a passenger who invades their seat space (47 percent) than skimpy airline leg room (39 percent), long security lines (37 percent), or weather delays (20 percent) (Aguila, 2014). Personal space plays a significant role in our everyday nonverbal interactions, reflects power and status, and varies across societies.

## WHEN IS OUR PERSONAL SPACE VIOLATED?

Our space is public or private. In the public sphere, which is usually formal, we have clearly delineated spaces: “This is your locker,” “That’s her office,” or “You’re parking in my spot.” We usually decorate our public spaces with businesslike artifacts such as awards or framed photos of a group’s accomplishments.

After a snowstorm, people in densely populated cities who shovel parking spots “mark” their personal spaces with lawn chairs, strollers, and even a table set for two, complete with a bottle of wine. Some of the most aggressive (and locally accepted) retaliation occurs in South Boston, where residents punish violators by slashing their tires or smashing their car windows (Goodnough, 2010).

Private spaces send a different message. They convey informality and a relaxed feeling. Private spaces—homes,



dpa picture alliance/Alamy Stock Photo

apartments, and dorm rooms—are often mini-museums that reflect people’s interests, hobbies, hygiene, and personalities.

People, particularly men, sometimes invade our personal space by standing too close to us in a line, leaning against us, using all of the shared armrest in tight airline seats, or plopping their feet on the chair next to us in a classroom, airport, or movie theatre. Not all space intrusions are physical encroachments. Loud cell phone conversations are a good example of an auditory intrusion into our personal space.

In intimate relationships (as between family members), our personal space is often 2 feet or less because we’re at ease with close physical proximity. In contrast, in public situations (someone speaking to a large audience or faculty in large classrooms), the personal space is often 12 feet or more because the speaker, who has a higher social status than the audience, has a formal relationship with the listeners and avoids close physical contact (Hall, 1966).

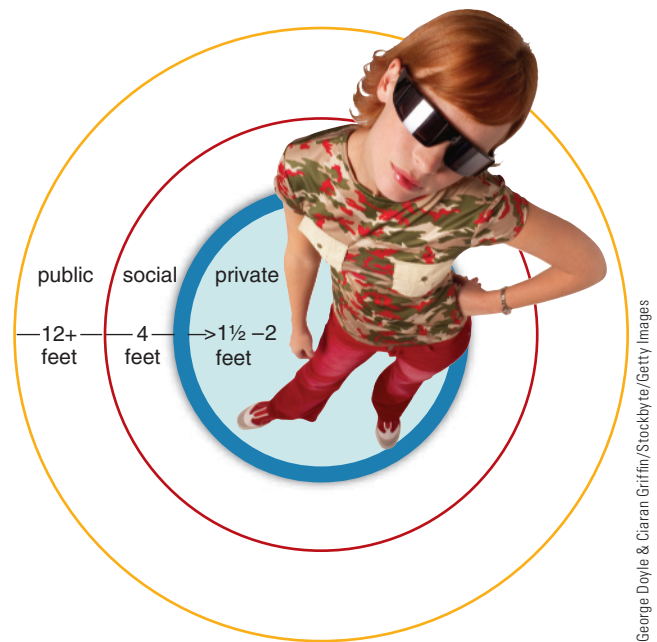
## SPACE AND POWER

Space usage signifies who has privilege, status, and power. Wealthy people can afford enormous apartments in the city or houses in the suburbs, whereas the poor are crowded into the most undesirable sections of a city or town or in trailer parks. Executives, including college presidents, usually have huge offices (even entire suites), whereas faculty members often share office space, even though many of their discussions with students are confidential. Generally, the higher the socioeconomic status, the greater the consumption of space, including large cars, reserved parking spaces, private dining areas, first-class airline seats, and luxurious skyboxes at sports stadiums.

Some wealthy men feel entitled to violate women’s personal space. In a leaked recording, Donald Trump boasted about “grabbing women by the pussy.” “When you’re a star,” he crowed, “you can do anything.” Trump denied such sexual assaults, but more than a dozen women have accused him of groping them, grabbing their buttocks, or kissing them against their will. Almost a third of the men who voted for Donald Trump said that grabbing a woman by her genitalia without consent isn’t a sexual assault (Nelson and Crockett, 2017; *New York Times*, 2016; PerryUndem, 2017).

## CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATIONS AND SPACE

Cultural norms and values determine how we use space. Americans not only stand in line but also have strict queuing rules: “Hey, the end of the line is back there” and “That guy is trying to cut into the line.” In contrast,



George Doyle & Ciaran Griffin/Stockbyte/Getty Images

“along with Italians and Spaniards, the French are among the least queue-conscious in Europe” (Jandt, 2001: 109). In these countries and others, people routinely push into the front of a group waiting for taxis, food, and tickets, and nobody objects.

Americans maintain personal space in an elevator by moving to the corners or to the back. In contrast, an Arab male may stand right next to another man even when no one else is in the elevator. Because most Arab men don’t share American concepts of personal space in public places and in private conversations, they consider it offensive if the other man steps or leans away. In many Middle Eastern countries, however, there are strict rules about women and men separating themselves spatially during religious ceremonies and about women avoiding any physical contact with men in public places (Office of the Deputy Chief . . . , 2006; Commisceo Global, 2016; see also Chapter 3).

## 5-6 ONLINE INTERACTION

Many of us now interact in *cyberspace*, an online world of computer networks. In cyberspace, **social media** are websites that enable users to create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas. Social media include social networking sites (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), gaming sites (e.g., *Second Life*), video sites (e.g., YouTube), and blogs (websites

**social media** websites that enable users to create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas.



maintained by people who provide commentary and other material). Who's online and why? And what are the benefits and costs of online interaction?

## 5-6a Who's Online and Why?

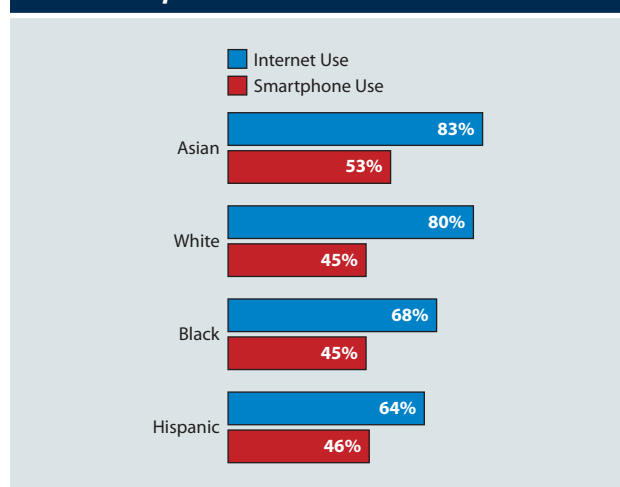
The percentage of Americans age 18 and older who are connected to the Internet increased from practically zero in 1994 to 88 percent in 2016. The first iPhone was released in 2007. By 2016, 77 percent of Americans over the age of 12 owned a smartphone, giving them online access all the time ("Driven to Distraction," 2017; Smith, 2017).

### DEMOGRAPHIC VARIATIONS

About 87 percent of women and men use the Internet. Only 67 percent of Americans aged 65 and older are online compared with 96 percent of those aged 30 to 49, and 99 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds (Anderson and Perrin, 2017).

Race, ethnicity, and social class also affect a person's likelihood of being online. As *Figure 5.3* shows, Asian Americans are the most connected group in the United States. Their greater "connectivity" is due primarily to high education and income levels. Many Asian American parents are professionals who can afford computers and online service, and they encourage their children to use technology for education, a major avenue of upward mobility. Asian Americans also tend to live in urban and

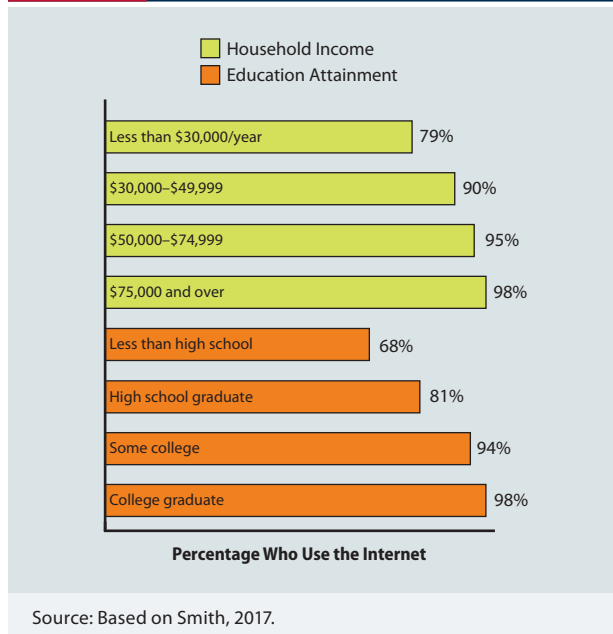
**Figure 5.3 Internet and Smartphone Use, by Race and Ethnicity**



Note: The data are for people age 25 and older, 2012.

Source: Based on U.S. Census Bureau, "Computer and Internet Trends in America," Infographic, February 3, 2014. Accessed November 1, 2014 (census.gov/hhes/computer).

**Figure 5.4 Social Class and Internet Use, 2016**



Source: Based on Smith, 2017.

suburban areas where high-speed Internet connections are readily available (File and Ryan, 2014; see also Chapters 10 and 13).

The U.S. offline population has declined substantially—from 48 percent in 2000 to only 13 percent in 2016 (Anderson and Perrin, 2016)—but there's still a digital divide between social classes. The higher a person's education and family income, the greater the likelihood of being online (*Figure 5.4*). Thus, children from the poorest families are the most likely to lack technological skills.

### WHAT WE DO ONLINE

The average American spends almost 11 hours a day staring at a screen (Nielsen, 2016). Among our many online activities, the most popular are *social networking sites* that connect people who have similar personal or professional interests. About 70 percent of adults use social networking sites, up from only 5 percent in 2005 ("Social Media Fact Sheet," 2017). We spend more time on social media and email than on radio and news sites (see *Table 5.3*).

Among online adults ages 18 and older, 79 percent use Facebook at least once a day, more than double the share that uses Instagram (32 percent), Pinterest (31 percent), LinkedIn (29 percent), and Twitter (24 percent). Besides social networking, more than half of online users access healthcare information, seek parenting advice, do

**Table 5.3 How Americans Spend Their Online Time**

Average minutes per day spent on . . .

Email	56
Social media	50
Search	26
Online radio and news	14 minutes each

Source: Based on Statista, 2016.

banking, learn about community events or activities, and use navigation devices (Greenwood et al., 2016). Thus, people go online for a variety of reasons.

### 5-6b What Are the Benefits and Costs of Online Interaction?

You'll see in Chapter 16 that technology brings both benefits and costs. The same is true of online interaction, ranging from family ties to privacy issues.

#### FAMILY TIES

Social media has had a mixed effect on families. By age 3, many children have learned technological skills (e.g., creating a password, navigating some websites, and using tablets). Video games like *Minecraft* encourage school age children to build, explore, collaborate, and improve hand-eye coordination and problem solving (Dockterman, 2013; Lewin, 2013). On the other hand, screen time erodes the quality and quantity of interaction between parents and young children: "Some parents are perpetually tuned into their own devices, responding to every ping of their cellphones and tablets" (Brody, 2015: D7).

Cell phones have increased the frequency of interaction between parents, especially if both are employed, to coordinate schedules and to chat with their children. Also, parents report spending more time with their children by playing home video games. On the other hand, some children complain that they rarely receive their parents' full attention because a parent is often immersed in email, texting, or being online even when pushing a swing, driving, or eating meals.

A team of researchers observed 55 parents and their young children at fast-food restaurants. Forty parents immediately took out mobile devices and used them throughout most of the meal (Radesky et al.,

2014). By paying more attention to their electronic gadgets than their children, parents are sending their kids a powerful message: "My cell phone is more important than you are."

Among adults who are married or in committed relationships, 74 percent say that the Internet, smartphones, and social media have strengthened their communication and emotional closeness. On the other hand, 20 percent believe that the technology has had a negative effect on their relationships (e.g., a cell phone distracts a spouse or partner when the couple is together, they argue about the amount of time one of them spends online) (Lenhart and Duggan, 2014).

#### ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS

An increasing number of people use social media to discuss important matters, get social support, and keep up or revive dormant relationships. Some ethnic groups, especially Asian Americans, who are rarely featured on television, have become successful on YouTube. They've found "millions of eager fans" who follow their comedy sketches and discuss topics, particularly sex and race, that are taboo among older generations (Considine, 2011: ST6; see also Pipkin, 2013).

Millions of Americans turn to the Web to find romance. About 11 percent of Internet users (representing 9 percent of all American adults) have used online dating sites (e.g., Match.com, plentyoffish.com). Seventy percent of online daters believe that online dating is a good way to meet prospective marriage mates, but only 5 percent of Americans who are currently married or in a long-term relationship met their partner online. Some 54 percent of online daters, particularly women, say that people have lied about their age, height, weight, income, occupation, and marital status. And, in 2015 alone, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2016) received nearly 13,000 complaints about romance scams from people who reported being swindled out of a total of over \$204 million (Smith and Anderson, 2015; see also Benokraitis, 2015).

#### CONNECTIONS AND DISCONNECTIONS

Online interaction develops networking skills, helps people find jobs, and encourages political engagement. Some of the benefits of texting include faster communication and avoiding uncomfortable interactions. On the other hand, there's a "constant compulsion to connect" (Suddath, 2013: 80). For example:

- ▶ The average worker checks his or her email "an extraordinary" 74 times a day (Roberts, 2014).

- ▶ On average, 18- to 24-year-olds use their smartphones more than 80 times a day (“Driven to Distraction,” 2017).
- ▶ Nearly half of adults say they couldn’t live without their smartphones, 41 percent check them several times an hour, and 11 percent do so every few minutes (Anderson, 2015; Newport, 2015).

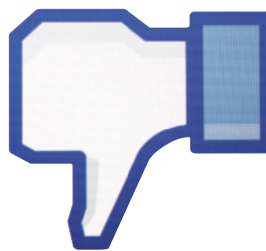
Fully 57 percent of U.S. teenagers have met a new friend online while browsing social networks or playing video games (Lenhart et al., 2015). The average Facebook-using teen has 300 “friends,” 33 percent of whom she or he has never met in person. According to some critics, social networking sites, especially Facebook, are superficial, give people a false sense of connection to others, inflate egos, and diminish time to develop relationships with the few friends that we have (DiSalvo, 2010; Madden et al., 2013).

The more often young adults use Facebook, according to several studies, the unhappier they become, and regardless of gender, level of loneliness, or self-esteem. The root cause of the unhappiness is envy, even though Facebook users suspect that their “friends” Photoshop images and exaggerate their achievements, job success, vacations, and love life. Jealousy, anger, and loneliness are especially likely if Facebook users receive fewer positive comments, “likes,” and general feedback than their friends do (Krasnova et al., 2013; Kross et al., 2013). Even adults admit that social media makes them feel bad about themselves when their friends describe awards, promotions, and “living a more fulfilling, fabulous life than I am” (Melton, 2013).

Relying too much on technology can hurt relationships. Smartphones are displacing (or reducing) romantic interactions and creating conflict when partners don’t give each other their full attention. Instead of mingling and conversing with coworkers during lunch or a break, many are texting or checking their email (Turkle, 2015; Roberts and David, 2016). The next time you go to a restaurant, watch how often—instead of chatting with each other—people check messages and social networks even before scanning the menu, and how often they check their cell phones throughout a meal.



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## ONLINE HARASSMENT

Nationally, 94 percent of parents say that they’ve talked with their children about proper online behavior, but 34 percent of 12- to 17-year-old students have experienced cyberbullying at least once during the school year. *Cyberbullying* refers to deliberately using digital media to communicate false, embarrassing, or hostile information about someone. Cyberbullying is less common than traditional bullying, but has more profound negative outcomes that include depression, academic and mental health problems, severe isolation, and, most tragically, suicide (Anderson, 2016; Cyberbullying Research Center, 2016).

Harassment—from name calling to threatening behavior—is becoming a common part of online life. Fully 72 percent of adult Internet users have seen someone harassed online, and 47 percent have experienced it personally. Half of the latter didn’t know the person who had most recently attacked them. Men

are more likely to experience name-calling and embarrassment, whereas women are targets of more intense and serious forms of online assaults like sexual harassment and cyberstalking (Lenhart et al., 2016).

*Cyberstalking* is the repeated use of electronic communications to harass, threaten, or frighten someone. Nationally, 8 percent of Internet users have been cyberstalked to the point of feeling unsafe or afraid. Young people, particularly women under 30, and LG-BTQ individuals are especially likely to be targets of cyberstalking. Cyberstalking may evolve into offline stalking, including abusive or harassing phone calls, vandalism, threatening or obscene mail, trespassing, and physical assault (Lenhart et al., 2016).

Tweeters can be engaging, funny, and supportive. Many of these faceless strangers can also be racist, sexist, abusive, and hateful. Because tweets are short and easy to read, public accusations and vile, ugly things said about anyone can quickly get a huge audience’s attention.

## PRIVACY ISSUES

A major cost of online interaction is jeopardizing our privacy because email and text messages are neither anonymous nor confidential. Many companies monitor and preserve their employees’ email messages and can





Highwaystarz-Photography/Getty Images

use them to discipline or fire people. It's also becoming increasingly common for college admissions officers and employers to search social media sites before deciding whether to accept a student or to make a job offer (Belkin and Porter, 2012; Singer, 2013).

People often text and say things in emails they'd never say in person, especially when they're flirting, angry, frustrated, or tired. Emails, text messages, Snapchat photos, and videos don't disappear after being deleted but may last indefinitely in cyberspace. Divorce lawyers have successfully retrieved deleted

emails, Facebook posts, tweets, and Instagram photos to convince judges that a divorcing spouse shouldn't get financial support or custody of the children (Hillin, 2014).

Only 3 percent of American adults say they trust Facebook with their personal data, but millions willingly give out personal information on Facebook and other social media sites—photos, phone number, address, age, education and work background, political and religious views, and so on (Fleming, 2015; Beres, 2016). It takes a private investigator just a few clicks to get a composite picture of someone from public records, email messages, and social media sites.

Tech giants like Apple, Facebook, and Google know more about their users than many people realize—where they go, what they search for, what they buy, which restaurants they frequent, what they do for fun, and when they go to bed. Besides collecting data on its own users, Facebook has partnerships with several companies that collect behavioral data—from store transactions and customer email lists to divorce and Web browsing records—that it then sells to advertisers (Angwin et al., 2016). Neither state nor federal laws prohibit the collection or sharing of such data by third parties.

## STUDY TOOLS<sup>5</sup>

### READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you've read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.

# 6

# Groups, Organizations, and Institutions



P G Arphexad/Alamy Stock Photo

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 6-1 Compare and illustrate the different types of social groups, explain why people conform to group pressure, and discuss the impact of social networks.
- 6-2 Describe and illustrate three types of formal organizations, summarize the strengths and shortcomings of bureaucracies, and explain how informal groups affect organizations.
- 6-3 Compare the theoretical explanations of groups and organizations, including their contributions and limitations.
- 6-4 Explain why social institutions are important and how they're interconnected.

After finishing  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 117** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**



Every year, about a dozen of our neighbors, all fervent Ravens football fans, get together to buy season tickets and to plan elaborate tailgating parties. They wear Ravens caps and purple jerseys, and most of the drivers attach pennants to their car antennas. These fervent football fans are a social group.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

It's a good idea for companies to use video surveillance, including in restrooms.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree			strongly disagree			

## 6-1 SOCIAL GROUPS

A **social group** is two or more people who share some attribute and interact with one another. They have a sense of belonging or “we-ness.” Friends, families, work groups, religious congregations, clubs, athletic teams, and Vietnam veterans are all examples of social groups. Each of us is a member of many social groups, but we identify more closely with some groups than others.

### 6-1a Types of Social Groups

Some groups are small and personal (families); others are large and impersonal (financial organizations). Some are highly organized and stable (political parties); others are fluid and temporary (high school classmates). The most basic types of social groups are primary and secondary groups.

### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY GROUPS

A **primary group** is a relatively small group of people who engage in intimate face-to-face interaction over an extended period (Cooley, 1909/1983). Primary groups, such as families and close friends, are our emotional glue. They have a powerful influence on our social identity because we interact with them on a regular basis over many years, usually throughout our lives. Because primary group members genuinely care about each other, they contribute to one another's personal development, security, and well-being. Our family and close friends, particularly, stick with us through good and bad, and we feel comfortable being ourselves with them.



In contrast to primary groups, a **secondary group** is a large, usually formal, impersonal, and temporary collection of people who pursue a specific goal or activity. Your sociology class is a good example of a secondary group. You might have a few friends in class, but students typically interact infrequently and impersonally. When the semester (or quarter) is over and you've accomplished your goal of passing the course, you may not see each other again (especially if you're attending a large college or university). Other examples of secondary groups include sports teams, labor unions, and a company's employees.

Unlike primary groups, secondary groups are usually highly structured: There are many rules and regulations, people know (or care) little about each other personally, relationships are formal, and members are expected to accomplish specific tasks. Whereas primary groups meet our *expressive* (emotional) needs, secondary groups fulfill *instrumental* (task-oriented) needs. Once a task or activity is completed—whether it's earning a grade, turning in a committee report, or building a bridge—secondary groups split up and become members of other secondary groups.

Table 6.1 summarizes the characteristics of primary and secondary groups. These characteristics are **ideal types**—general traits that describe a social phenomenon rather than every case. Ideal types provide composite pictures of how structures, events, and behaviors differ rather than specific descriptions of reality. Because primary and secondary groups are ideal types, their characteristics can vary. Thus, primary group members may sometimes devote themselves to meeting instrumental needs (running a family-owned business), and secondary group members (military units and athletic teams) can develop lasting ties.

**social group** two or more people who share some attribute and interact with one another.

**primary group** a small group of people who engage in intimate face-to-face interaction over an extended period.

**secondary group** a large, usually formal, impersonal, and temporary collection of people who pursue a specific goal or activity.

**ideal types** general traits that describe a social phenomenon rather than every case.



**Table 6.1** Characteristics of Primary and Secondary Groups

	Characteristics of a Primary Group	Characteristics of a Secondary Group
<b>Interaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face-to-face</li> <li>• Usually small</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face-to-face or indirect</li> <li>• Usually large</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional, personal, and satisfying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotionally neutral and impersonal</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intimate, warm, and informal</li> <li>• Usually long-term</li> <li>• Valued for their own sake (expressive)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typically remote, cool, and formal</li> <li>• Usually short-term</li> <li>• Goal-oriented (instrumental)</li> </ul>
<b>Individual Conformity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively free to stray from norms and rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected to adhere to rules and regulations</li> </ul>
<b>Membership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members aren't easily replaced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members are easily replaced</li> </ul>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family, close friends, girlfriends and boyfriends, self-help groups, street gangs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College classes, political parties, professional associations, religious organizations</li> </ul>

## IN-GROUPS AND OUT-GROUPS

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump accused Mexico of “sending” people who are criminals to the United States: “*They’re* bringing drugs. *They’re* bringing crime. *They’re* rapists.” Trump’s comments illustrate in-groups and out-groups. Members of an **in-group** share a sense of identity and belonging that typically excludes and devalues outsiders. **Out-group** members are people who are viewed and treated negatively because they’re seen as having values, beliefs, and other characteristics different from those of an in-group. For example, “we” vegetarians are healthier than “you” meat eaters, “we” computer geeks are smarter than “you” fraternity and sorority “types,” and so on.

Almost everyone sees others as members of in-groups and out-groups. From ancient times to the present, people in various parts of the world have made “we” and “they” distinctions based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, and other social and biological characteristics (Tajfel, 1982; Hinkle and Schopler, 1986). Such distinctions can promote in-group solidarity and cohesion. They can also create conflict and provoke inhumane actions, including wars, massacres of out-group members, and civil wars (see Chapter 3).

One person’s in-group may be another person’s out-group. The general

public and criminal justice system see gangs as dangerous out-groups. Many young people who join gangs, however, experience in-group benefits. Attractions include making money, although illegally; close relationships with family members and friends who are already involved in gang life; protection against violent family or community members and rival gangs; a sense of self-worth, support, and belonging; and the status of being an “outlaw” that the entertainment industry often glamorizes as sexy and exciting (Taylor and Smith, 2013).

## REFERENCE GROUPS

An in-group or an out-group can become a **reference group**, people who shape our behavior, values, and attitudes (Merton and Rossi, 1950). Reference groups influence who we are, what we do, and who we’d like to be



Is the cast of characters on the television series NCIS an example of a primary group? A secondary group? Both? Neither?

**in-group** people who share a sense of identity and belonging that typically excludes and devalues outsiders.

**out-group** people who are viewed and treated negatively because they’re seen as having values, beliefs, and other characteristics different from those of an in-group.

**reference group** people who shape our behavior, values, and attitudes.

in the future. Unlike primary groups, however, reference groups rarely provide personal support or face-to-face interaction over time.

Reference groups might be people with whom we already associate (a college club or an athletic team). They can also be groups that we admire and want to be part of (teachers or doctors). Each person has many reference groups. Your sociology professor, for example, may be a member of several professional associations, a golf enthusiast, a parent, and a homeowner. Identification with each of these groups influences her or his everyday attitudes and actions.

Like in-groups and primary groups, reference groups can have a strong impact on our self-identity, self-esteem, and sense of belonging because they shape our current and future attitudes and behavior. We typically add or drop reference groups throughout the life course. If you aspire to move up the occupational ladder, your reference group may change from entry-level employees to managers, vice presidents, and CEOs.

## 6-1b Group Size and Structure

Two important characteristics of a social group are its size and leadership. Both affect a group's interaction and dynamics.

### GROUP SIZE: DYADS, TRIADS, AND BEYOND

German sociologist Georg Simmel (1858–1918) pioneered the study of **dyads**, groups with two members, and **triads**, groups with three members. A dyad (e.g., parent–child, lovers, husband–wife, close friends) is the most cohesive of all groups because its members tend to have a personal relationship and to interact more intensely than do people in larger groups. Dyads can be unstable, however, because both persons must cooperate. If either member doesn't fulfill her or his responsibilities, the dyad collapses (Simmel, 1902; Mills, 1958).



Sam Edwards/Media Bakery

This triad studies together for sociology exams. What might happen if one student drops out of the study group? What if three more students join the group?

Adding only one member to a dyad has important consequences because it changes a group's dynamics (behavior over time). A triad is more stable than a dyad because the group can continue if a person drops out, and a member may patch up an argument that erupts between the other two. On the other hand, a third person may intentionally create conflict to break up a relationship or to attain a dominant position. In any triad, two of the members can gang up against or leave out the third (Simmel, 1902; Mills, 1958). Triads also tend to interact less often and intensely than do dyads (e.g., think about a third roommate who moves in, another person who joins you and a coworker at lunch, or someone who tags along on a date).

As more members are added—a fourth, fifth, and so on—interaction changes even more and alliance possibilities increase. At about seven or eight members, the group may break down into dyads and triads because it's difficult to have a single conversation about the task at hand (Becker and Useem, 1942). As a result, larger groups often require some kind of leadership to keep the members focused.

### GROUP LEADERSHIP

Several classic studies (Lewin et al., 1939; Bales, 1950) identified three basic types of group leaders. An **authoritarian leader** gives orders, assigns tasks, and makes all major decisions. There's a clear division between leaders and followers, and leaders focus on completing *instrumental* tasks (e.g., marketing a new smartphone). Authoritarian leadership is most effective when there's little time for group decision making and the leader is the most knowledgeable member of the group. On the other hand, authoritarian leaders tend to stifle creativity and may be viewed as controlling and bossy.

By contrast, a **democratic leader** encourages group discussion and includes everyone in the decision-making process. Democratic leaders have the final say, but tend to be concerned about meeting a group's *expressive* needs (e.g., maintaining harmony, high morale, cohesiveness). Democratic leaders engage group members and encourage their creativity, but have also been blamed for not taking charge in times of crisis, and being less productive than groups with authoritarian leaders.

A **laissez-faire** (pronounced les-ey-fair) **leader**

**dyad** a group with two members.

**triad** a group with three members.

**authoritarian leader** gives orders, assigns tasks, and makes all major decisions.

**democratic leader** encourages group discussion and includes everyone in the decision-making process.

**laissez-faire leader** offers little or no guidance to group members and allows them to make their own decisions.



Lisa Werner/Alamy Stock Photo

U.S. government shutdowns occur when political leaders don't compromise on legislation that funds federal agencies and operations.

offers little or no guidance to group members and allows them to make their own decisions. Laissez-faire leaders are similar to the permissive parents you met in Chapter 4: There are few rules, few demands, and people do pretty much what they want. Laissez-faire leadership is effective in situations where group members are highly qualified in an area of expertise. However, this leadership style often leads to poorly defined roles, low productivity, a lack of motivation, little cooperation between group members, and not meeting a group's goals.

It's difficult for a leader to meet both a group's instrumental and expressive needs because involving everyone in decision making may result in not accomplishing a group's objectives. Also, leadership styles are more effective in some settings than others. Imagine, for example, if your college professors were laissez-faire ("Take the exams whenever you want") or if your employers were always democratic ("Let's vote on who'll do what today").

### 6-1c Group Conformity

Most Americans see themselves as rugged individualists who have minds of their own (see the discussion of values in Chapter 3). A number of studies have shown, however, that many of us are profoundly influenced by group pressure. Four of the best known of these studies are by Solomon Asch, Stanley Milgram, Philip Zimbardo, and Irving Janis.

#### ASCH'S RESEARCH

In a now classic study of group influence, social psychologist Solomon Asch (1952) told subjects that they were taking part in an experiment on visual judgment. After seating six to eight male undergraduates around a

table, Asch showed them the line drawn on card 1 and asked them to match the line to one of three lines on card 2 (Figure 6.1). The correct answer, clearly, is line C.

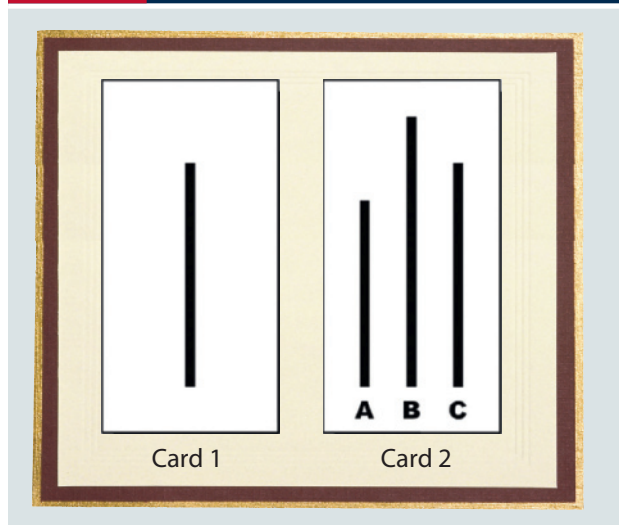
All but one of the subjects—who usually sat in the last chair—were Asch's confederates, or accomplices. In the first test, all the confederates selected the correct matching line. In the other tests, each of them, one by one, deliberately chose an incorrect line. Thus, the nonconfederates faced a situation in which seven other group members had unanimously agreed on a wrong answer. Averaged over all of the trials, 37 percent of the nonconfederate subjects ended up agreeing with the group's incorrect answers. When they were asked to judge the length of the lines alone, away from the influence of the group, they made errors only 1 percent of the time.

Asch's research demonstrated the power of groups over individuals. Even when we know that something is wrong, we may go along with the group to avoid ridicule or exclusion. Remember that these experiments were done in a laboratory and with people who didn't know each other. A group's influence on a person's attitudes and behavior can be even stronger when it's a real-life situation.

#### MILGRAM'S RESEARCH

In a well-known laboratory experiment on obedience, psychologist Stanley Milgram (1963, 1965) asked 40 volunteers to administer electric shocks to other study participants. In each experimental trial, one participant was a "teacher" and the other a "learner," one of Milgram's accomplices. The teachers were businessmen, professionals, and blue-collar workers.

**Figure 6.1** Cards in Asch's Experiment





The learner was strapped into a realistic-looking chair that supposedly regulated electric currents. The teacher read aloud pairs of words that the learner had to memorize. Whenever the learner gave a wrong answer, the teacher was told to apply an electric shock from a low of 15 volts to a high of 450 volts. The learner didn't actually receive a shock, but was told to fake pain and fear. When the learners shrieked in agony, the majority of the teachers, although distressed, obeyed the study supervisor and administered the shocks when told to do so.

Milgram's study was controversial. Ordering electric shocks raised numerous ethical questions about the participants' suffering extreme emotional stress (see Chapter 2, and Perry, 2013, for a recent critique). However, the results showed that an astonishingly large proportion of ordinary people obeyed an authority figure's instructions to inflict pain on others. It's easy to sit back and say "I'd never do something like that," but we do. For example, many workers obey employers when told to ignore evidence that their product is unsafe (Tavris, 2013).

## ZIMBARDO'S RESEARCH

The Stanford Prison Experiment conducted by social psychologist Philip Zimbardo also underscores the influence of groups on behavior (Haney et al., 1973; Zimbardo, 1975). Zimbardo recruited volunteers through a local California newspaper for an experiment on prison life. He then selected 24 young men, most of them college students.

On a Sunday morning, nine of the men were "arrested" at their homes as neighbors watched. The men were booked and transported to a mock prison that Zimbardo and his colleagues had constructed in the basement of the psychology building at Stanford University. The "prisoners" were searched, issued an identification number, and outfitted in a dresslike shirt and heavy ankle chains. Those assigned to be "guards" were given uniforms, billy clubs, whistles, and reflective sunglasses. The guards were told that their job was to maintain control of the prisoners but not to use violence.

All the young men quickly assumed the roles of either obedient and docile prisoners or autocratic and controlling guards. The guards became increasingly



Alexandra Milgram

more cruel and demanding. The prisoners complied with dehumanizing demands (such as eating filthy sausages) to gain the guards' approval and bowed to their authority.

Zimbardo's study was scheduled to run for 2 weeks but was stopped after 6 days because the guards became increasingly aggressive. Among other things, they forced the prisoners to

clean out toilet bowls with their bare hands, locked them in a closet, and made them stand at attention for hours. Instead of simply walking out or rebelling, the prisoners became withdrawn and depressed. Zimbardo ended the experiment because of the prisoners' stressed-out reactions.

The experiment raised numerous ethical questions about the harmful treatment of participants. It demonstrated, however, the powerful effect of group conformity: People exercise authority, even to the point of hurting others, or submit to authority if there's group pressure to conform (Zimbardo et al., 2000).

## JANIS'S RESEARCH

Sometimes intelligent people, including those in highly responsible positions, make disastrous and irrational decisions. Why? Social psychologist Irving Janis (1972, 1982) cautioned presidents and other heads of state to



AP Images

Many social scientists have used Milgram's findings to explain the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, where U.S. soldiers humiliated prisoners because they were "just following orders."

## SOMETIMES INTELLIGENT PEOPLE, EVEN THOSE IN HIGHLY RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS, MAKE DISASTROUS AND IRRATIONAL DECISIONS.

be wary of **groupthink**—a situation in which in-group members make faulty decisions because of group pressures, rather than critically testing, analyzing, and evaluating ideas and evidence. To demonstrate group loyalty, Janis argues, individuals don't raise controversial issues, don't question weak arguments, or probe "soft-headed thinking." As a result, influential leaders often make decisions, based on their advisors' consensus, that turn out to be political and economic disasters.

Examples of groupthink "fiascoes" that Janis studied included U.S. failure to anticipate the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, and the escalation of the Vietnam War during the 1960s. More recently, a U.S. Senate study (2004) concluded that U.S. leaders' decision to invade Iraq in 2003 was based on a groupthink dynamic that relied on unproven and inaccurate assumptions, inadequate or misleading sources, and a dismissal of conflicting information showing that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction.

Janis and other researchers have focused on high-level decision making, but groupthink is common in all kinds of groups—student clubs, PTAs, search committees, juries, fraternities, religious groups, and college administrators (Hansen, 2010; Cohen and DeBenedet, 2012). People can avoid groupthink by hammering out disagreements and seeking advice from informed and objective people outside the group.

**groupthink** in-group members make faulty decisions because of group pressures, rather than critically testing, analyzing, and evaluating ideas and evidence.

**social network** a web of social ties that links individuals or groups to one another.

**formal organization** a complex and structured secondary group designed to achieve specific goals in an efficient manner.

### 6-1d Social Networks

A **social network** is a web of social ties that links individuals or groups to one another. It may involve as few as three people or millions.

Network links between people or groups can be strong or weak. Some of our social networks,



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Do social networks affect divorce rates? A research team that analyzed three decades of divorce data found that people were 75 percent more likely to get divorced if a friend was divorced, and 33 percent more likely to end a marriage if a friend's friend was divorced (McDermott et al., 2013; Chapter 12 discusses some of the micro- and macro-level reasons for divorce).

like our primary and secondary groups, may be tightly knit, involve interactions on a daily basis, and have clear boundaries about who belongs and who doesn't. In other cases, our social networks connect us to large numbers of people whom we don't know personally, with whom we interact only rarely or indirectly, and the boundaries change as people come and go. Examples of distant networks include members of the American Sociological Association and LinkedIn subscribers.

*Electronic communities* (also called *online communities* and *virtual communities*) are social networks whose members interact via the Internet. They exchange information, give advice, and engage in public discussions. Some electronic communities—ranging from art to yoga enthusiasts—have thousands of members. Others are small, focused on a single interest, and geographically close. One of my friends used meetup.com to find a local group of equally fervent cyclists who ride on Saturday mornings.

6-2

## FORMAL ORGANIZATIONS

A **formal organization** is a complex and structured secondary group designed to achieve specific goals in an efficient manner. We depend on a variety of formal organizations to provide goods and services in a stable and predictable way. Examples include water departments, food producers and grocery chains

that stock our favorite items, and garment industries and retailers that manufacture and sell the clothes we wear.

## 6-2a Characteristics of Formal Organizations

Formal organizations share some common characteristics:

- ▶ Social statuses and roles are organized around shared expectations and goals.
- ▶ Norms governing social relationships among members specify rights, duties, and sanctions.
- ▶ A formal hierarchy includes leaders or individuals who are in charge.

Modern, complex societies rely on formal organizations, including businesses and schools, to accomplish complex tasks. Organizations differ, however, in their goals, membership, and degree of hierarchy.

## 6-2b Types of Formal Organizations

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1975) identified three types of formal organizations—utilitarian, normative, and coercive—based on their purpose and people’s reasons for participating.

### UTILITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS

Most people belong to a *utilitarian organization*, one that provides an income or other specific current or future material reward. Examples include government agencies, factories, corporations, and schools. Colleges are workplaces, but also offer students the opportunity to earn degrees and future income.



Is this a utilitarian, normative, or coercive organization? (If your immediate response was “coercive,” try again.)

**Table 6.2 Volunteering in the United States, 2015**

Percentage of adults who volunteer	25
Total number of volunteers age 16 and older	63 million
Median annual hours per volunteer	52
Total dollar value of volunteer time	\$184 billion

Sources: Based on BLS News Release, 2016, and Corporation for National & Community Service, 2016.

### NORMATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

People join *normative organizations* (also called *voluntary organizations* or *voluntary associations*) because of shared interests and to pursue goals that they consider personally worthwhile or rewarding. Examples include political parties, civic organizations (e.g., Habitat for Humanity), religious organizations, choirs, cultural groups, occupational groups (e.g., American Accounting Association), and groups that have a recreational focus (e.g., Beer Collectors of America).

Helping others is a strong American value (see Chapter 3). Thus, every year, millions of Americans—many of whom have full-time jobs—are volunteers in a variety of local, regional, and national organizations, saving government agencies billions of dollars by providing needed services (Table 6.2). Charitable donations, more than \$390 billion, set a record in 2016. Individual contributions made up 72 percent of all giving, compared with only 5 percent from corporations (Giving USA Foundation, 2017).

### COERCIVE ORGANIZATIONS

Membership in *coercive organizations* is largely involuntary. People are pushed or forced to join these organizations because of punishment (prisons) or treatment (psychiatric hospitals, drug rehabilitation centers). Most coercive organizations are total institutions characterized by strict rules, the members’ isolation, and resocialization (see Chapter 4).

A single formal organization can fall into all three categories. For example, the military is a coercive organization because of its rigid rules, resocialization, and members’ isolation from the rest of the population. It’s a utilitarian organization that provides millions of jobs for both soldiers and civilians. The military is also a normative organization: Some people join during wartime because of civic responsibility; many volunteer their time and resources to support soldiers and their families; and others help veterans find jobs, housing, and health care for war-related injuries.



## 6-2c Bureaucracies

A **bureaucracy** is a formal organization designed to accomplish goals and tasks in an efficient and rational way. Bureaucracies aren't a modern invention but existed thousands of years ago in ancient Egypt, China, and Africa. Some bureaucracies function more smoothly than others, and some formal organizations are more bureaucratic than others. Whether they're relatively small (a 100-bed hospital) or huge (the Social Security Administration), bureaucracies have some common characteristics.

### IDEAL CHARACTERISTICS OF BUREAUCRACIES

Max Weber (1925/1947) identified six key characteristics of the ideal type of bureaucracy. In Weber's model, the following characteristics describe what an efficient and productive bureaucracy *should* be like:

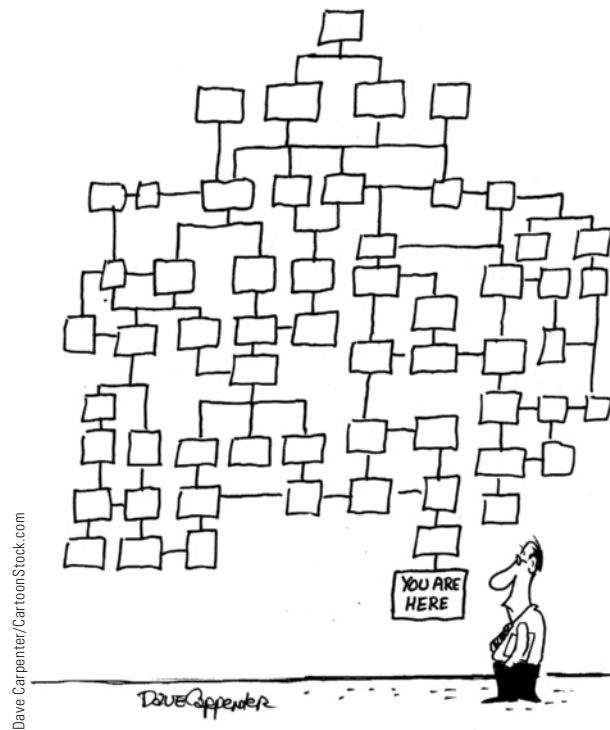
- ▶ **High degree of division of labor and specialization.** People perform very specific tasks.
- ▶ **Hierarchy of authority.** Workers are arranged in a hierarchy in which each person is supervised by someone in a higher position. The resulting pyramids—often presented in organizational charts—show who has authority over and is responsible to whom. Thus, there's a chain of command, stretching from top to bottom, that coordinates decision making.
- ▶ **Explicit written rules and regulations.** Detailed written rules and regulations cover almost every possible kind of situation and problem that might arise, including hiring, firing, salary scales, rules for sick pay and absences, and everyday operations.
- ▶ **Impersonality.** There's no place for personal likes, dislikes, or tantrums. Workers are expected to behave professionally. An impersonal workplace in which all employees are treated equally minimizes conflict and favoritism and increases efficiency.
- ▶ **Qualifications-based employment.** People are hired based on objective criteria such as skills, education, experience, and standardized test scores.

If workers perform well and have the necessary credentials and technical competence, they'll move up the career ladder.

- ▶ **Separation of work and ownership.** Neither managers nor employees own the offices they

**bureaucracy** a formal organization designed to accomplish goals and tasks in an efficient and rational way.

**goal displacement** a preoccupation with rules and regulations rather than achieving the organization's objectives.



work in, the desks they sit at, the technology they use, or the products that they assemble, invent, or design.

A “rational matter-of-factness,” Weber maintained, makes bureaucracies more productive by “eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements” (Weber, 1946: 216). Weber viewed bureaucracies as superior to other forms of organization because they're more efficient and predictable. He worried, however, that bureaucracies could become “iron cages” because people become trapped in them, “their basic humanity denied.”

### BUREAUCRATIC DYSFUNCTIONS

Weber described the ideal characteristics of a productive and efficient bureaucracy, but what's the reality? As you read through the following list of problems, think about the ones you've experienced while working in a bureaucracy or dealing with one.

- ▶ **Weak reward systems** reduce the motivation to do a good job and are thus a major source of inefficiency and lack of innovation (Barton, 1980). Besides low wages or salaries, weak reward systems include few or no health benefits, little recognition, unsafe equipment and work environments, and few incentives to be creative.
- ▶ **Rigid rules** squelch creativity and can lead to **goal displacement**, a preoccupation with rules and regulations rather than achieving the organization's



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About 67 percent of U.S. employees are disengaged and emotionally detached from the job because of poor leadership, lack of upward mobility, boredom, and similar problems. Such alienation can lead to poor physical and mental health, low productivity, inferior customer service, and high absenteeism—all of which jeopardize a team's performance and the organization's financial vitality (Harter and Adkins, 2017).

objectives (Merton, 1968). A global management consultant criticizes companies for creating numerous “dumb rules” that hobble the best and most talented workers: “The more rules, the less passion, which means less motivation” (Daskal, 2016: 19).

- ▶ Rigid rules and goal displacement often lead to **alienation**, a feeling of isolation, meaninglessness, and powerlessness. Alienation—at all levels—may result in high turnover, tardiness, absenteeism, stealing, sabotage, stress, health problems, and in some cases, whistle-blowing (reporting organizational misconduct to legal authorities).

- ▶ *Communication problems* are common in bureaucracies. Because communication typically flows down rather than up the hierarchy, employees (and many managers below the highest echelons) rarely know what's going on. Supervisors and their subordinates may be reluctant to discuss problems or offer suggestions because they fear being criticized, demoted, or fired (Blau and Meyer, 1987; Patel, 2017). Communication problems also waste time and resources. An employee prepared a monthly report for nearly three years because no one ever mentioned that the company no longer needed it (Harnish, 2014).

- ▶ The **iron law of oligarchy** is the tendency of a bureaucracy to become increasingly dominated by a small group of people (Michels, 1911/1949). A handful of people can control and rule a bureaucracy because the top officials and leaders monopolize information and resources. As a result, those at the top maintain their power and privilege.
- ▶ The cumulative effect of these and other bureaucratic dysfunctions can result in a *dehumanization* that stifles organizational creativity and freedom. As a result, work becomes more automated and impersonal (see “The McDonaldization of Society”).

Bureaucracies are plagued by other problems like favoritism and dishonest employee evaluations (Kilmann, 2011). They function, however, largely because of the internal development of informal groups and collaborative work teams.

**alienation** a feeling of isolation, meaninglessness, and powerlessness.

**iron law of oligarchy** the tendency of a bureaucracy to become increasingly dominated by a small group of people.

## Health Care on Aisle 7!

To avoid medical and health insurance bureaucracies, more people are turning to *retail clinics* (also called *convenient care clinics*). The first one opened in 2000, the number grew to 1,400 by 2012, and is expected to increase to at least 3,000 by 2018 (Bachrach and Frohlich, 2016; Statista, 2017).

The clinics—usually staffed by nurse practitioners—offer low-cost treatment for more than 25 common conditions (e.g., strep throat and ear infections), and provide health screening tests, immunizations, and physicals. The clinics are located in pharmacies, grocery stores, and “big box” stores like Target and Walmart. There's no need to make an appointment.

Waiting time, if any, is minimal. Patients are in and out in about 15 minutes, and most of the clinics are open evenings and weekends (“Health Care in America,” 2015).



Brand X Pictures/Getty Images

## 6-2d **Getting Around Bureaucratic Dysfunctions**

Weber's model overlooked the many ways that workers get around rigid bureaucratic regulations and impersonality. Since around 2000, self-managing work teams have become more common. Let's begin with a brief look at some of the early studies' missteps and contributions regarding the importance of informal group networks.

### **HISTORIC STUDIES OF INFORMAL GROUP NETWORKS**

For many years, and well into the 1930s, experts concentrated on organizational efficiency based on the principles of *scientific management* developed by Frederick Winslow Taylor, a mechanical engineer who wanted to improve industrial productivity. Taylor (1911/1967) considered workers—especially those in factories and on assembly lines—as mere adjuncts to machines, assumed that people don't like to work, maintained that employees need close supervision, and believed that management had to enforce cooperation because most workers aren't capable of handling even the simplest tasks.

Studies conducted by industrial psychologists and sociologists between 1927 and 1932 shook up Taylor's views. The research teams studied employees at the Western Electric Company's Hawthorne plant in Chicago. The *Hawthorne studies*, as they're often called, found that informal groups were critical to the organization's functioning (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939/1942; Mayo, 1945; Landsberger, 1958).

Informal social groups can promote an organization's goals if they collaborate, are cohesive, and motivate their members. They can also resist an organization's goals and formal rules. In one of the Hawthorne studies, Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939/1942) spent 6 months observing a group of 14 men who wired telephone switchboards in what the company called the "bank-wiring room."

The bank-wiring room work group consisted of nine wiremen, three solderers, and two inspectors. Management offered financial incentives for higher productivity, but the work group pressured people to limit output. The wiremen developed the following norms that controlled the group's behavior:

1. **You shouldn't turn out too much work.** If you do, you're a "rate-buster" and a "speed king."
2. **You shouldn't turn out too little work.** If you do, you're a "chiseler."

3. **You shouldn't tell a supervisor anything that will be detrimental to a coworker.** If you do, you're a "squealer."

4. **You shouldn't "act officious."** If you're an inspector, for example, you shouldn't act like one.

If individuals violated any of these norms, the other workers used "binging" (striking a person on the shoulder) to punish them.

Why did the men control productivity rather than take advantage of the management's promise of higher wages? They feared that if they produced at a high level, they'd be required to do so regularly. They also worried that high productivity would lead to layoffs because supervisors would conclude that fewer workers could achieve the same output. In addition, the bank-wiring room men experienced high morale and job satisfaction because they felt they had some control over their work. In contradiction to Taylor's scientific management perspective, then, the Hawthorne studies concluded that there's an important relationship between formal and informal organization.

### **MODERN WORK TEAMS**

Since the Hawthorne studies, many companies have recognized that informal groups affect workers' productivity. As a result, numerous organizations have implemented alternative management strategies.

Today, *self-managing work teams* are the dominant model in most large organizations (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2002; Neider and Schriesheim, 2005). Contrary to Taylor's notion that workers do and managers think, self-managing work teams, sometimes referred to as *postbureaucratic organizations*, involve groups of 10 to 15 people who take on the duties of their former supervisors. They gather, interpret, and act on the information, and take collective responsibility for their actions—whether it's designing a new refrigerator or handling a university's food service. Not held back by unresponsive managers, effective self-managing groups focus on their goals and are committed to the organization's success (Colvin, 2012).

### **COLLABORATION**

Many organizations emphasize collaboration. The benefits include a diverse pool of ideas, greater worker participation and job satisfaction, a sense of belonging, and speedier completion of tasks, because people can achieve more when they combine their skills.

On the other hand, "collaborative overload" can result in interruptions that increase the total time needed



## The McDonaldization of Society

According to sociologist George Ritzer (1996: 1), the organizational principles that underlie McDonald's, the well-known fast-food chain, are beginning to dominate "more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world." McDonaldization has four components: efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control.

1. **Efficiency** means that consumers have a quick way of getting meals. In a society where people rush from one place to another and where both parents are likely to work or single parents are pressed for time, McDonald's (and similar franchises) offers an efficient way to satisfy hunger and avoid much "fuss and mess" (see also Jargon, 2013). Like their customers, McDonald's workers function efficiently: The menu is limited, the registers are automated, and employees perform their tasks rapidly and easily.
2. **Calculability** emphasizes the quantitative aspects of the products sold (portion size and cost) and the time it takes to get the products. Customers often feel that they're getting a lot of food for what appears to be a nominal sum of money and that a trip to a fast-food restaurant will take less time than eating at home. In reality, soft drinks are sold at a 600 percent markup because most of the space in the cup is taken up by ice. It costs at least twice as much and takes twice as long to get to the restaurant, stand in line, and pick up the food than to prepare a similar meal at home.
3. **Predictability** means that products and services will be the same over time and in all locales. "There's great comfort in knowing that McDonald's offers no surprises" (p. 10). The Quarter Pounder is the same regardless where customers order. Outside of the United States, "homesick American tourists in far-off countries can take comfort in the knowledge that they'll likely run into those familiar golden arches and the restaurant they have become so accustomed to" (p. 81). Workers, like customers, behave in predictable ways: "There are, for example, six steps to window service: greet the customer, take the order, assemble the order, present the order, receive payment, thank the customer and ask for repeat business" (p. 81).



4. **Control** means that technology shapes behavior. McDonald's controls customers subtly by offering limited menus and uncomfortable seats that encourage diners to eat quickly and leave. "Consumers know that they're supposed to line up, move to the counter, order their food, pay, carry the food to an available table, eat, gather up their debris, deposit it in the trash receptacle, and return to their cars. People are moved along in this system not by a conveyor belt, but by the unwritten, but universally known, norms for eating in a fast-food restaurant" (p. 105).

McDonald's controls employees more openly and directly. Workers are trained to do a limited number of things in precisely the same way, managers and inspectors make sure that subordinates toe the line, and McDonald's has steadily replaced human beings with technologies that include soft-drink dispensers that shut off when the cup is full and a machine that rings and lifts the French fries out of the oil when they're crisp. Such technology increases the corporation's control over workers because employees don't have to use their own judgment or need many skills to prepare and serve the food.

Efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control reflect a rational system (remember Weber?) that increases a bureaucracy's efficiency. On the other hand, Ritzer contends, McDonaldization reflects the "irrationality of rationality" because the results can be harmful. The huge farms that now produce "uniform potatoes to create those predictable French fries" of the same size rely on the extensive use of chemicals that then pollute water supplies. And the enormous amount of nonbiodegradable trash that McDonald's produces wastes our money because we—and not McDonald's—pay for landfills.

McDonald's is such a powerful model that many businesses have cloned its four dimensions of efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. Examples include "McDentists" and "McDoctors," drive-in clinics designed to deal quickly with minor dental and medical problems; "McChild" care centers like KinderCare; and "McPaper" newspapers, such as *USA Today* (Ritzer, 2008).

**Table 6.3 Sociological Perspectives on Groups and Organizations**

Theoretical Perspective	Level of Analysis	Main Points	Key Questions
Functionalist	Macro	Organizations are made up of interrelated parts and rules and regulations that produce cooperation in meeting a common goal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why are some organizations more effective than others?</li> <li>• How do dysfunctions prevent organizations from being rational and effective?</li> </ul>
Conflict	Macro	Organizations promote inequality that benefits elites, not workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who controls an organization's resources and decision making?</li> <li>• How do those with power protect their interests and privileges?</li> </ul>
Feminist	Macro and micro	Organizations tend not to recognize or reward talented women and regularly exclude them from decision-making processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do many women hit a glass ceiling?</li> <li>• How do gender stereotypes affect women in groups and organizations?</li> </ul>
Symbolic Interactionist	Micro	People aren't puppets but can affect what goes on in a group or organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do people ignore or change an organization's rules?</li> <li>• How do members of social groups influence workplace behavior?</li> </ul>

to complete a task. The most vulnerable are *knowledge workers*, people who acquire, organize, analyze, and use information (e.g., programmers, data and systems analysts, product developers). Some researchers estimate that knowledge workers “waste” 70 to 85 percent of their time attending meetings (virtual or face-to-face), answering email or phone calls, and dealing with an avalanche of requests (Drucker, 2001; “The Collaboration Curse,” 2016; Cross et al., 2016).

## 6-3 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

How do organizations operate? And how do social groups affect massive bureaucracies? Functionalist, conflict, feminist, and interactionist perspectives offer different insights, providing a multifaceted understanding of groups and organizations (*Table 6.3* summarizes these perspectives).

### 6-3a Functionalism: Groups and Organizations Benefit Society

Functionalist perspectives emphasize that social groups and organizations are composed of interrelated, mutually dependent parts. As Weber pointed out, when a bureaucracy operates rationally and efficiently, workers and bosses cooperate to turn out a final product, whether it's an automobile or a can of soup.

Effective leadership is a primary factor in job satisfaction. Even in our sprawling government bureaucracies, and across all organizational levels, the happiest workers are those whose bosses reward motivation and commitment, encourage integrity, and promote the employees' professional development and creativity (Partnership for Public Service, 2011).

A recent study of a large company with technology-based service jobs (e.g., retail clerks, airline gate agents, call-center workers) found that replacing a supervisor from the bottom 10 percent of the pool with one from the top 10 percent increased output almost as much as adding a tenth person to a nine-worker team. The researchers concluded that productivity increases when the most promising workers are paired with top bosses who provide frequent feedback and teach better work methods and skills (Lazear et al., 2013). Thus, good bosses don't threaten or punish employees, but provide concrete training to get the job done.

Some companies have boosted productivity by encouraging workers' interaction. Examples include providing group rather than individual breaks, and carving out meeting spaces that accommodate three or four people instead of 12 or more (Silverman, 2013).

Groups and organizations can also be dysfunctional. Workers may be alienated because of few rewards, favoritism, and incompetent supervisors. Only about a third of U.S. workers and managers are engaged in their jobs. Among employees who feel unchallenged, bored, or dissatisfied, 75 to 80 percent spend more than 2 hours a day surfing the Net or on Twitter, Facebook, and other social media sites. Wasting time—which results in low productivity, unhappy customers, and lower profits—costs



Since 1975, the number of employee-owned companies in the United States has grown from 1,600 to more than 11,500, and now represents about 12 percent of the private sector workforce. These firms are profitable because the workers are highly motivated: They have a stake in the business, control the decision making, contribute original ideas and cost-saving solutions, and depend on each other. Pictured here are people learning to bake bread at the King Arthur Flour Company's Baking Education Center in Norwich, Vermont, an employee-owned company that has "a ferocious focus on treating employees well" (Koba, 2013; Marikar, 2015).

organizations up to \$398 billion annually (Adkins, 2015; OfficeTime, 2015).

Since 2008, business spending on employees has grown only 2 percent compared with 26 percent on equipment and software (Rampell, 2011). Many people contend that doing so increases unemployment rates. From a functionalist perspective, however, investing more in equipment than workers is a rational bureaucratic response to the rising costs of health care benefits and economic competition from other countries (see Chapter 11).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

For critics, especially conflict theorists, functionalists exaggerate cooperation and tend to gloss over dysfunctions like worker dissatisfaction and alienation. At some of the largest and most successful companies like Amazon, current and former employees have complained of 80-hour work weeks, interrupted vacations, sending negative feedback about coworkers to bosses, and little tolerance for those struggling with life-threatening illnesses or family crises (Kantor and Streitfeld, 2015). Still, many Americans' views of corporations are contradictory. About 63 percent (compared with 48 percent in 2001) are dissatisfied with the size and power of major companies, but only 20 percent want greater regulation (Riffkin, 2016).

Another issue is whether informal social networks improve worker morale and control as much as functionalists claim. After all, a tedious and monotonous job is tedious and monotonous regardless of the degree of informal coworker interaction.

### 6-3b Conflict Theory: Some Benefit More Than Others

Conflict theorists contend that organizations promote inequality that benefits the top of the hierarchy, not workers. In many companies, those at higher levels are more

comfortable hiring and promoting people like themselves (male, white, and middle class or higher). Phrases like "fitting the mold" and "having common interests" are often code words for belonging to an in-group. In 2016, women and minorities made up only 14.4 percent of Fortune 500 corporate boards—up slightly from 12.8 percent in 2010. The negligible gains "are certainly not representative of the broad demographic changes we have seen in the United States..." (Deloitte and Alliance for Board Diversity, 2017: 1).

Inequality in income, status, and other rewards means that owners and managers can easily exploit workers. Those at the top dictate to those at the middle and the bottom. Because organizations serve elites, conflict theorists argue, they routinely ignore workers' needs and interests.

What about rewarding the best employees? According to a management professor, "I've examined scores of empirical studies since the early 1980s and have not found convincing evidence that performance reviews are fair, accurate or consistent across managers, or that they improve organization effectiveness." Instead, subjective evaluations "are intimidating tools that make employees too scared to speak their minds" (Culbert, 2011: A25).

There's also considerable incompetence, waste, and corruption in many government agencies and big business. For example:

- ▶ In 2014 alone, the federal government paid more than \$125 billion to ineligible Medicare, Medicaid, and low-income recipients ("Government Efficiency and Effectiveness," 2015).
- ▶ Since at least 2012, the Veterans Administration has ignored the agency's competitive bidding laws, wasting at least \$6 billion a year on high prices for medical goods and services (Rein and Wax-Thibodeaux, 2015).



- ▶ Between 2008 and 2012, the Agriculture Department paid \$22 million to farmers who had been dead for at least two years (GAO, 2013).
- ▶ In 2016, the Pentagon buried an internal study that it had wasted \$125 billion on accounting, human resources, and property management. At least 40 percent of all U.S. weapons given to the Afghan and Iraqi armies “can’t be traced” (Vicens, 2015; Whitlock and Woodward, 2016).
- ▶ Since 2000, the federal government has used more than \$3 billion taxpayer dollars to build or renovate 36 professional sports stadiums (e.g., for the New York Yankees and Indianapolis Colts). Dozens of studies have shown that such facilities don’t increase local economic development or create jobs (Gayer et al., 2016).
- ▶ At least 110 Americans, so far, have been injured or killed by an airbag that Ford, Honda, Nissan, and Toyota automakers knew was defective. Volkswagen sold more than 600,000 diesel cars over a decade that the company equipped with illegal devices to evade U.S. emission rules (see Chapters 7 and 15).

Besides wasting billions of taxpayer dollars, according to many federal employees, government agencies hire and promote incompetent people, offer few advancement opportunities and rewards for good performance, and keep increasing the layers of unnecessary executives and managers. One employee complained, for instance, that “It takes 13 steps and five layers to get a signature from our office director” (Rein, 2011: B4; U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2014).

Compared with government agencies, privately owned organizations have more freedom, authority, and control over activities and decision making, but at what cost? When Walmart opened its small Express stores in

many rural or isolated towns, local groceries and pharmacies closed because they couldn’t compete with Walmart’s prices. To increase profits at its Supercenters and some Neighborhood Markets, in 2016 Walmart shut all 102 of its Express stores. Investors were pleased, but some residents had to make 50-minute roundtrip drives to the nearest grocery stores and pharmacies (Pettypiece, 2016).

Because of these and similar problems, many Americans are disillusioned with a number of institutions and organizations (Figure 6.2).

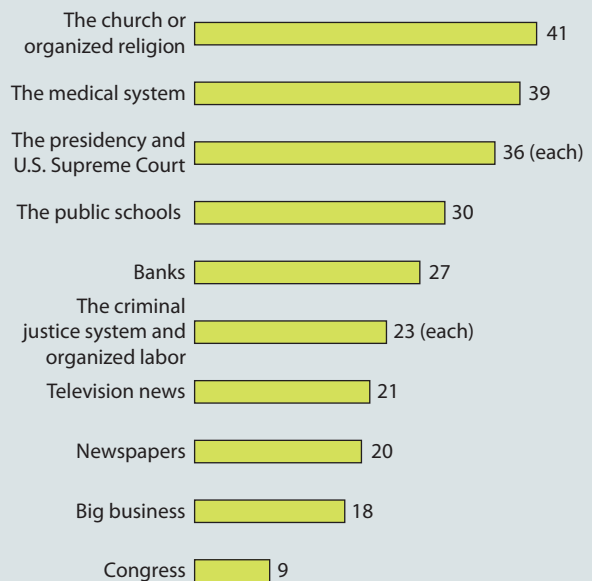
## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Conflict theory has several weaknesses. First, it assumes that greater equality leads to a more successful and productive organization. However, self-managing work teams can fail because of ineffective team leaders or management interference. Employee-owned companies have bankrupted because of inexperienced management, competition, and low worker morale (Lencioni, 2002; “When Workers Are Owners,” 2015).

Second, conflict theorists rarely credit many organizations’ supporting controversial social issues that promote greater equality. Regardless of motives (e.g., improving a tarnished public image, boosting profits, becoming more

**Figure 6.2** Many Americans Have Little Confidence in Organizations

Percentage who said, in 2016, that they have “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in ...



Note: A majority of Americans had high confidence only in the military (73 percent), small business (68 percent), and the police (56 percent).

Source: Based on Norman, 2016.



socially responsible), a number of the nation's most powerful CEOs and businesses—including Walmart, NASCAR, Apple, AT&T, and Southwest Airlines—have supported controversial gay marriage laws and fought discrimination against lesbian, gay, and transgender customers (Green and Higgins, 2016; see also Chapters 7, 9, and 11).

Third, do conflict theorists focus too much on organizational deficiencies? There are, after all, many organizations that are efficient, profitable, and that don't exploit their workers (Kaplan, 2010).

### 6-3c **Feminist Theories: Men Benefit More Than Women**

Feminist scholars point out that across all social classes, women (and especially minority women) consistently fare worse than men, especially in leadership roles. Women have enjoyed increased success in organizations since the 1980s, but rarely at the highest levels. For example, women hold only 21 (4.2 percent) of the CEO positions at Fortune 500 companies (Merelli, 2017), and there's a huge gender gap in S&P 500 companies between the female labor force and CEOs (*Figure 6.3*).

Companies benefit from female leadership. Female CEOs are more likely than their male counterparts to mentor women workers, to match people to job skills, and to pay wages that reward productivity. On average, female managers are more engaged than male managers, more likely to encourage their subordinates' development, to recognize and praise their accomplishments, and to make them feel valued (Fitch and Agrawal, 2015; Flabbi et al., 2016).

Why, then, does the gender gap in top positions persist? Large numbers of women still hit a **glass ceiling**—workplace attitudes or organizational biases that prevent them from advancing to leadership positions. Examples of obstacles include men's negative attitudes about women in the workplace, women's placement in staff positions that aren't on the career track to the top, a lack of mentoring, biased evaluations by male supervisors, and little or no access to highly visible committees or task forces (Barreto et al., 2009; Auster and Prasad, 2016; see also Chapters 9 and 11).

In contrast, many men who enter female-dominated occupations (e.g., nursing and teaching) receive higher wages and faster promotions, a phenomenon known as a **glass escalator**. In 2016, for example, men made up only 11 percent of all full-time registered nurses. However, the average female nurse earned \$59,436, about 10 percent less than the \$65,572 that the average male nurse earned. Men on glass escalators also move up to supervisory positions more quickly than do females (Goudreau, 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

**Figure 6.3 Women in S&P 500 Companies**



Note: The Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) is made up of the largest public companies of the leading U.S. industries (as selected by economists).

Source: Catalyst, 2017.

### **CRITICAL EVALUATION**

Feminist theories show that groups and organizations treat many talented women like outsiders. One weakness, however, is that much of the emphasis is still on white and black women even though Latinas and Asian American women comprise a large segment of the labor force.

A second limitation is that even when feminist scholars say that both sexes suffer from organizational stereotypes, they tend to gloss over stereotypes that affect men and how female supervisors reinforce glass ceilings and escalators (see Huffman, 2013). Many women experience a double standard, but they fail for some of the same reasons as men: Female managers and executives make mistakes, may not network within and outside a company, avoid lateral moves (that can lead to a promotion), or turn down promotions and job offers that involve risk-taking, long hours, and work-related stress (Reingold, 2016).

### 6-3d **Symbolic Interaction: People Define and Shape Their Situations**

Whereas functionalist, conflict, and (some) feminist theorists examine groups and organizations on a macro level, symbolic interactionists focus on micro-level behavior. They emphasize that an individual's perception

**glass ceiling** workplace attitudes or organizational biases that prevent women from advancing to leadership positions.

**glass escalator** men who enter female-dominated occupations receive higher wages and faster promotions than women.

and definition of a situation shape group dynamics and, consequently, organizations.

Group leaders or members can create or reinforce conformity (as shown in the Asch and Milgram studies). Informal groups can also determine what goes on in an organization by refusing to obey the rules and implementing their own (as in the Hawthorne studies). Thus, according to symbolic interactionists, individuals make choices, change rules, and mold their own identities instead of being manipulated (Kivisto and Pittman, 2001).

Symbolic interactionists also note that people's outcomes depend on how coworkers and bosses interpret the *same* behavior. For example, whether women are supervisors or clerical workers, if they lose their temper, they're overwhelmingly seen as too emotional, incompetent, out of control, weak, and worth less pay. Their angry male counterparts, in contrast, are often viewed as authoritative, tough, and forceful (Brescoll and Uhlmann, 2008).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Symbolic interaction explains how members of groups and organizations interpret the world around them and, as a result, affect what goes on. However, symbolic interaction, a micro-level theory, ignores macro-level factors that affect workers and consumers. About 51 percent of Americans seek out "all natural" products, but much of the food contains chemically processed vitamins and artificial ingredients. The average consumer has little knowledge of and control over such false advertising, a macro-level factor (Esterl, 2013).

In contrast to interactionists' claims, most people can't shape or change their situations. Formal organizations (the U.S. government and large companies) often invade the privacy of citizens, workers, or consumers by collecting information and monitoring people's behavior. Knowledge workers must share large, noisy, open office spaces and do much of their work when they get home at night. A majority (51 percent) of police officers say their job is frustrating because of factors over which they have no control, such as biased media coverage, unfair departmental disciplinary procedures, and a shortage of resources ("The Collaboration Curse," 2016; Morin et al., 2017).

We've looked at social groups and formal organizations, both of which are part of larger structures that sociologists call *social institutions*. The final section introduces you to this important concept and lays the foundation for analyses of social institutions in later chapters.

## 6-4

# SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

A **social institution** (or simply, *institution*) is an organized and established social system that meets one or more of a society's basic needs. There are five major social institutions, worldwide, that ensure a society's survival:

- ▶ The *family* replaces a society's members through procreation, socializes children, and legitimizes sexual activity between adults.
- ▶ The *economy* determines how a society produces, distributes, and consumes goods and services.
- ▶ The *government* (which includes police, military, and courts) maintains law and order, creates and enforces laws, regulates elections, and protects people's civil liberties.
- ▶ *Education* helps to socialize children, transmits values and knowledge, and teaches work-related skills.
- ▶ *Religion* offers meaning and purpose through shared beliefs, values, and practices related to the supernatural.

Besides these core institutions (which we'll examine in Chapters 7 and 11–14), people develop new institutions in response to cultural changes. In the past, for example, the family and religion addressed most health problems. Only in relatively recent times have *medicine* and *health care systems* emerged as distinct institutions that diagnose, treat, and try to prevent illness and disease. Because of technological and economic changes, the *mass media* is another relatively recent institution. It disseminates information to a large audience, creates desires for goods and services, influences our attitudes about social issues, and reinforces a society's values and beliefs.

## Five major social institutions

- family
- economy
- government
- education
- religion

## 6-4a Why Social Institutions Are Important

People create social institutions to address basic needs or problems. Institutions have an organized purpose, weave together norms and values, and, consequently, guide behavior. They may differ across countries, but each institution carries out certain tasks in a particular society that contribute to its overall functioning and stability. No two families are exactly alike, but the family institution affirms

**social institution** an organized and established social system that meets one or more of a society's basic needs.



broadly shared cultural agreements about what a family should be and do. In the same vein, no two grocery stores are exactly alike, but the economy establishes and maintains a variety of rules that make food shopping predictable.

Institutions aren't just "somewhere out there." We create, live inside, change, resist, and reproduce them, and participate simultaneously in multiple institutions. Understanding institutions, and how they're interconnected, can tell us a lot about how a society functions.

## 6-4b How Social Institutions Are Interconnected

Institutions are linked. Consider the connections among seven institutions that affect obesity, a serious health problem. *Medicine* tells us that obesity is a major (and preventable) reason for disease, disability, and death, and for steadily rising *health care* costs (see Chapter 14). The *mass media* publicizes such information and medical advice about prevention. It also promotes unhealthy food through persuasive marketing techniques (e.g., free gifts, celebrity endorsements, false nutrition claims) on television and other electronic devices (Jenkin et al., 2014).

In *education*, many schools now offer healthier meals, but school vending machines still sell high-fat snacks and sugary drinks. When state and local *governments* slash education budgets, schools decrease physical education and sports programs. At the federal level, the most recent food guidelines advise Americans to consume less saturated and trans fats and sugar, but don't tell people to avoid sodas, sugary drinks, and processed meat (Evich, 2016; Yeager, 2016).

*Families* contribute to the growing obesity problem. By the time children enter school, their parents have already shaped their eating habits and preferences (see



Caspar Benson/Getty Images

On average, a 12-ounce can of soda contains at least 9 teaspoons of sugar. Over the course of a year, drinking one soda a day can make you 16 pounds fatter (Loumarr, 2015). Which social institutions affect your beverage choices?

Chapters 4 and 14). Parents and other family members can encourage physical activity, restrict certain foods, and limit exposure to mass media marketing that promotes unhealthy eating habits.

The *economy* has far-reaching effects on obesity through its linkages to other institutions. Almost all politicians rely on the food industry to help finance their elections and to hire them as lobbyists after they leave public office (see Chapter 11). Beverage giants like Coca-Cola and PepsiCo have donated millions of dollars to nearly 100 prominent health groups (e.g., National Institutes of Health, American Diabetes Association) while simultaneously spending millions to defeat public health measures aimed at curbing soda consumption. The mass media relies on food ads even though companies make unhealthy products. And, because of advertising and packaging claims, many families think that fruit and sports drinks and flavored waters—all of which have high amounts of sugar—are healthy (Munsell et al., 2015; Aaron and Siegel, 2017).

## STUDY TOOLS6

### READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you've read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.

# 7

# Deviance, Crime, and Social Control



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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 7-1 Differentiate between deviance and crime, and describe the key characteristics of deviance.
- 7-2 After evaluating the two major crime measures, identify and illustrate the different types of crime.
- 7-3 Describe, illustrate, and evaluate functionalist perspectives on deviance.
- 7-4 Describe, illustrate, and evaluate conflict perspectives on deviance.
- 7-5 Describe, illustrate, and evaluate feminist perspectives on deviance.
- 7-6 Describe, illustrate, and evaluate symbolic interaction perspectives on deviance.
- 7-7 Identify and evaluate the criminal justice system's social control methods.

After finishing  
this chapter go to

**PAGE 137** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**

A group of hackers broke into AshleyMadison.com, a website that arranges extramarital affairs, and released more than 35 million of the subscribers' names, addresses, and personal information. The online profiles included thousands of American and European military and government personnel and high-level executives. Many people believed that the deceitful spouses got what they deserved, but hundreds of church leaders resigned, some people lost their jobs, and several subscribers committed suicide (Weise and Vanden Brook, 2015; Rosenthal, 2016).

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

There would be less crime if the punishments were more severe.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree					strongly disagree	

Who was deviant? The hackers? The website owners? The subscribers? And what, exactly, is deviance? Before reading further, take the True or False quiz to see how much you know about U.S. deviance and crime.

7-1

## WHAT IS DEVIANCE?

Have you ever driven above the speed limit? Cheated on an exam? Engaged in underage drinking? All are examples of **deviance**—violations of social norms. Unlike

## True or False?

### HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT U.S. DEVIANCE AND CRIME?

1. All deviant behavior is criminal.
2. Deviance serves a useful purpose in society.
3. Most crime victims are women.
4. Crime rates have decreased since 1990.
5. People are more likely to be arrested for a drug violation than for driving while drunk.
6. Murder and assault are more common than illegal gambling and prostitution.
7. Suburbs are safer than cities.
8. Death penalties deter crime.

The answers for #2, #4, and #5 are true; the others are false. You'll see why as you read this chapter.

the general public, sociologists use the concept *deviance* nonjudgmentally: They're interested in understanding and explaining why all of us violate norms from time to time, and why people judge some acts (hacking) more negatively than others (subscribing to an infidelity site).

Deviance becomes **crime**, a violation of society's formal laws, when it breaks rules that have been written into law and enforced by a political authority. For example, trafficking children under age 18 for prostitution, pornography, or sex is deviant. It's not a crime, however, until a country enacts laws that punish offenders.

### 7-1a Some Key Characteristics of Deviance

Deviance is universal because it exists in every society. Still, deviance can vary quite a bit over time, from situation to situation, from group to group, and from culture to culture (Sumner, 1906; Schur, 1968):

- ▶ **Deviance can be a trait, a belief, or a behavior.** People usually do something to be considered deviant. We can also be treated as outsiders simply because of our appearance, skin color, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation (Becker, 1963; see also Chapters 9, 10, and 13).
- ▶ **Deviance is accompanied by social stigmas.** A **stigma** is a negative label that devalues a person and changes her or his self-concept and social identity. Stigmatized individuals may react in many ways: They may alter their appearance (as through cosmetic surgery), associate with others like themselves who accept them (as in gangs), hide information about some aspect of their deviance (an

**deviance** a violation of social norms.

**crime** a violation of society's formal laws.

**stigma** a negative label that devalues a person and changes her or his self-concept and social identity.



ex-convict who doesn't reveal that status), or divert attention from a stigma by excelling in some area (as music or sports) (Goffman, 1963).

- ▶ **Deviance varies across and within societies.** What's accepted or tolerated in one society may be deviant in another. The United States comprises only 5 percent of the world's population, but accounts for 31 percent of global public *mass shootings* (incidents that result in killing four or more people outside homes and that aren't gang-related, hostage situations, or robberies). Between 1983 and 2013, the United States had 78 mass shootings, nearly twice as many as 24 other industrialized countries combined. Within the United States, 8 of the 10 deadliest mass shootings between 1982 and 2016 occurred in the South and West. Across and within countries, stricter gun control laws and lower firearm ownership rates are correlated with fewer mass shooting incidents (Florida, 2013; Lankford, 2015; Lemieux, 2015; Myers, 2016).
- ▶ **Deviance varies across situations.** What's acceptable in one context may be stigmatized in another. Among U.S. adults, between 74 and 77 percent say it's generally okay to use a cell phone on public transportation and while walking down the street or waiting in line. In contrast, only 4 to 5 percent approve of using cell phones at meetings, movie theaters, and religious services (Rainie and Zickuhr, 2015).
- ▶ **Deviance is formal or informal.** *Formal deviance* is behavior that violates laws. A leading example is crime, a topic we'll examine shortly. In contrast,

*informal deviance* is behavior that disregards accepted social norms, such as picking one's nose or teeth or scratching one's private parts in public, belching loudly, and not dressing appropriately (e.g., wearing jeans to a wedding reception or job interview).

- ▶ **Perceptions of deviance can change over time.** Many behaviors that were acceptable in the past are now seen as deviant. Only during the 1980s and 1990s did U.S. laws define date rape, marital rape, stalking, and child abuse as crimes. Smoking—widely accepted in the past—has been banned in most public places, and increasing numbers of employers don't hire people who use tobacco. Texas is now one of the eight states that allows students to carry concealed guns in four-year public colleges. In 2017, Nevada became the first state to install vending machines with free needles for drug users.

On the other hand, most Americans now shrug off behaviors that were stigmatized in the past. Cohabitation, seen as sinful and immoral 40 years ago, is now widespread and considered normal. Americans' support for legalizing marijuana for recreational use increased from only 12 percent in 1969 to 60 percent in 2016 (Geiger, 2016). And a third of Americans have at least one tattoo, up from only 16 percent in 2003 (Geiger, 2016; Shannon-Missal, 2016).

## 7-1b Who Decides What's Deviant?

Because deviance is culturally relative and standards change over time, who decides what's right or wrong? An important group is those who have authority or power. During our early years, parents and teachers specify acceptable and unacceptable behavior (see Chapter 4). As we get older, laws also define what's deviant (e.g., being forbidden to drive until age 16 or to purchase or consume alcohol until age 21).

Many employers—especially those in businesses and federal agencies—don't hire people with visible “body art” (“Tattoos in the Workplace . . .,” 2014). Lawmakers pass numerous laws that people must obey, but often exempt themselves. Examples include having immunity from employment discrimination and sexual harassment lawsuits, and passing laws that allow guns in

More than 800 women in Ghana live in exile in witch camps. Most are poor widows or older women who are blamed for outbreaks of disease in their villages and relatives' or neighbors' illness or death (Küntzle and Blondé, 2013). Murders of women and children accused of sorcery have risen since 2009. Saudi Arabia, Nepal, India, Papua New Guinea, Tanzania, and Uganda still kill people suspected of witchcraft (Hoffman, 2014).



Markus Matzel/ullstein bild/Getty Images

Are any of these  
people deviant?  
Why or why not?



Alfred Wekelo/Shutterstock.com; Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images News/Getty Images; Dmitry Naumov/Shutterstock.com; iStock.com/belterz

schools, restaurants, public buildings, and churches, but not in state legislative chambers (Skoning, 2013; Deprez and Selway, 2014).

Public attitudes and behavior also affect definitions of deviance. Many people, including health practitioners, now use the word “overweight” instead of “fat” or “obese” to decrease the stigma or being fat. On the other hand, there has been considerable *normalization of deviance*, the gradual process through which unacceptable practices or standards become acceptable. Examples include the growing acceptance of same-sex and interracial marriage, legalized gambling, political corruption, and recreational marijuana (see Chapters 3, 10, and 11). Normalizing some types of deviance generates considerable income, particularly at the state level.

## 7-2

## TYPES OF DEVIANCE AND CRIME

*Noncriminal deviance*—such as suicide, alcoholism, lying, mental illness, and adult pornography—is common. Sociologists are especially interested in *criminal deviance*, behavior that violates laws, because most of the transgressions are visible, publicized by the media, and threaten people’s lives or property. Measuring criminal deviance may seem straightforward, but isn’t as simple as it appears.

### 7-2a Measuring Crime

Two of the most important sources of crime statistics are the FBI’s *Uniform Crime Report* (UCR) and the U.S. Department of Justice’s *National Crime Victimization Survey* (NCVS). Each has its strengths and weaknesses.

The UCR data are crimes reported to the police and arrests made each year. The statistics are useful in examining trends over time, but the UCR doesn’t include

offenses such as corporate crime, kidnapping, and Internet crimes; simple assaults (those not involving weapons or serious injury); nor the 53 percent of all violent crimes (e.g., rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) and 65 percent of property crimes (e.g., burglary and motor vehicle theft) that aren’t reported to the police (Gramlich, 2017). Because of such limitations, many sociologists also use victimization surveys to measure the extent of crime.

A **victimization survey** interviews people about being crime victims. Because the response rates are at least 90 percent, the NCVS offers a more accurate picture of many offenses than does the UCR. The NCVS also includes both reported and unreported crime, and isn’t affected by police discretion in deciding whether to arrest an offender.

Still, many victims don’t report a crime to either the police or interviewers for a variety of reasons: They fear reprisal for getting the offender in trouble, believe that the police can’t or won’t do anything to help, or the crime, particularly rape, is too painful to discuss. Some people don’t want to admit having been victims—especially when the perpetrator is a family member or friend. Others may be too embarrassed to tell an interviewer that they were victimized while drunk or engaged in drug sales (Hagan, 2008; Truman and Langton, 2015).

No one knows the extent of U.S. crime because even the best sources (the UCR and NCVS) provide only estimates, and data for higher-income lawbreakers are more elusive than for lower-income offenders. Let’s begin with the latter, often called *street crimes*, offenses committed by ordinary people, usually in public places.

### 7-2b Street Crimes

A majority of Americans (59 percent) say crime is an “extremely” or “very serious” problem in the United

**victimization survey**  
interviews people about being  
crime victims.

One of the biggest costs for retail stores is *wardrobing*, returning expensive clothes after wearing them. Such “borrowing” has also become prevalent in fine jewelry, high-priced cameras, men’s clothes (like business suits for special occasions), and even household tools. Wardrobing has increased 40 percent since 2009, and cost retailers \$9.1 billion in 2015 (Timberlake, 2013; Allen, 2015). Who do you think pays for wardrobing fraud?



or robbed are now less than half of what they were in the early 1990s (Glassner, 2010; Oppel, 2011; Truman and Morgan, 2016).

About 75 percent of Americans say that neither they nor anyone in their household has experienced a crime. Nonetheless, 53 percent worry “a great deal” about being a crime victim. Since 1989, up to 89 percent have said that crime had increased compared with the previous year (McCarthy, 2015; Davis, 2016).

Why is there such a disconnect between many Americans’ perceptions of crime and official statistics? Among other reasons, the media inspire fear by publicizing violent crimes; television shows and movies exaggerate the

prevalence of crime; and many people believe misinformation. Both during and after the 2016 presidential election, Donald Trump claimed that the U.S. murder rate “is the highest it’s been in 27 years,” that Philadelphia’s murder rate was “just terribly increasing,” and that “carnage” plagued “inner cities” (Diamond, 2017; Hee Lee, 2017; see also Chapter 2). The statements were false, but they sparked public concerns and misperceptions about crime.

States (McCarthy, 2015). They’re usually referring to *violent crimes* (e.g., murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault) that use force or the threat of force against others. *Property crimes* (e.g., burglary, motor-vehicle theft, arson) involve the destruction or theft of property, but offenders don’t use force or the threat of force.

## INCIDENCE OF VIOLENT AND PROPERTY CRIMES

Property crimes are more common than violent crimes, but both have been falling (*Figure 7.1*). Despite occasional crime spikes in some large cities, between 2008 and 2015 violent and property crime rates fell 26 percent and 22 percent, respectively. The average person is 433 times more likely to experience a theft than to be murdered, and the odds of being murdered

## OFFENDERS AND VICTIMS

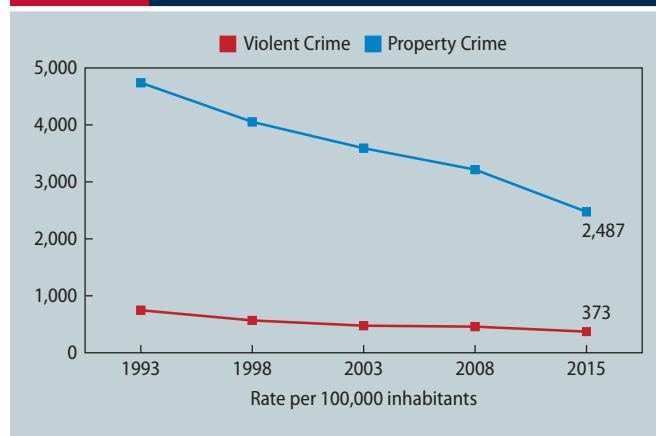
Most offenders are never caught, but street crimes aren’t random. Of those arrested in 2015, for example:

- ▶ 34 percent were under age 25, and 30 percent were ages 25 to 34. In contrast, only 6 percent were 55 or older, and many of the crimes involved drug abuse and drunk driving rather than violent and property crimes.
- ▶ 73 percent were males. They accounted for 80 percent of arrests for violent crime and 62 percent for property crime.
- ▶ 70 percent were white, 27 percent were black, and 3 percent were American Indian, Latino, or Asian (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016).

Men are more likely than women to be crime victims, but the type of victimization differs. Males experience higher rates of homicide, robbery, and aggravated assault, whereas females are more likely to be victims of rape, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence.

Violent victimization rates are lower for whites and Latinos (17 per 1,000 persons age 12 and older) than for blacks, Asians, and American Indians (25). The

**Figure 7.1** U.S. Crime Rates Have Decreased



Source: Based on Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016, Table 1.



Men are much more likely than women to be victims of violent crime.

rates are also much higher for people under age 25 (28) than those age 65 and older (5). People in low-income households (under \$10,000 a year) are almost four times more likely than high-income households (\$75,000 or more a year) to experience violent victimization. Overall, the most likely victims of violent crimes are young, black, female, poor, urban, and women who are divorced or separated (Truman and Morgan, 2016; see also Norman, 2015).

Crime rates are higher in low-income areas, but does this mean that poor people are more deviant? Because police devote more resources to poor neighborhoods, those at the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder are more likely to be caught, arrested, prosecuted, and incarcerated. *Intellectual property theft*—which includes offenses like software piracy, bootlegging musical recordings and movies, selling company trade secrets, and copyright violations—is primarily a middle-class crime, but the offenders are difficult to catch.



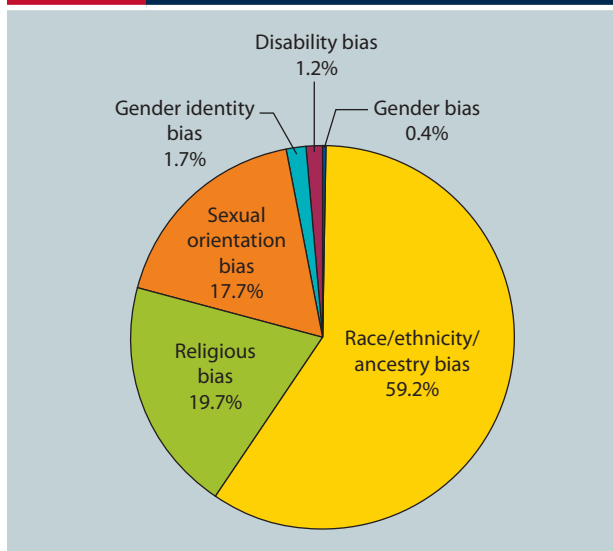
## 7-2c Hate Crimes

In 2016, 21-year-old Dylann Roof killed nine African Americans in a South Carolina church. Roof said that “blacks were taking over the world” and that he was rescuing the “white race” (Silverstein, 2015). The massacre is an example of a **hate crime** (also known as a *bias crime*), a criminal offense motivated by the fact or perception that the victims differ from the perpetrator. The attacks, often violent, are based on prejudice toward race, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016; see also *Figure 3.3* and the related discussion of hate groups on page 51).

The FBI recorded 6,885 hate crimes in 2015: 83 percent were directed at individuals; the remaining 17 percent were against businesses or financial institutions, religious organizations, or the government. (The number is probably much higher because more than half of victims don’t report hate crimes to police.) Almost 60 percent of the incidents were racially motivated (*Figure 7.2*). Forty-eight percent of the offenders were white, 24 percent were black, 16 percent were of unknown races, and 9 percent were multi-racial (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016; Masucci and Langton, 2017).

Why do people commit hate crimes? In *thrill hate crimes*, the offenders are “just having fun” by attacking minorities, bashing gays, or destroying property. Perpetrators of *defensive hate crimes* feel justified, even obligated, to protect their neighborhood against outsiders who are the “wrong” race, ethnicity, and so on. *Retaliatory hate crimes* are motivated by revenge for a real or imagined incident (e.g., attacking Muslims after the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing) (McDevitt et al., 2002; Levin and Nolan, 2017).

**Figure 7.2** Reasons for Hate Crimes, 2015



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Latest Hate Crime...,” 2016.

## 7-2d White-Collar Crime

**White-collar crime** refers to illegal activities committed by high-status people in the course of their occupations (Sutherland, 1949; Cressey, 1953). The offenses don’t involve violence because white-collar criminals use their status and powerful positions to enrich themselves or others. Typical white-collar crimes include

**hate crime** (also known as *bias crime*) a criminal offense motivated by the fact or perception that the victims differ from the perpetrator.

**white-collar crime** illegal activities committed by high-status people in the course of their occupations.

embezzlement (stealing an employer's or client's money); identity theft; bribery; insider trading (illegal stock manipulation); and mass marketing, mortgage, and investment fraud (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014).

Bank tellers, who have low salaries and easy access to customer information, are particularly susceptible to white-collar crime. Between 2011 and 2015, Wells Fargo employees opened more than 2 million fake accounts to meet sales goals. The fraud resulted in \$2.6 million in unnecessary fees for tens of thousands of clients. Wells Fargo fired 5,300 tellers and low-level managers. The executive who supervised the 6,000 retail branches and knew about the swindles retired with a \$125 million payout (Clifford and Silver-Greenberg, 2016; Ochs, 2016).

White-collar crimes are lucrative because most offenders aren't caught. According to one estimate, there's only one FBI investigator per almost 4,000 financial services sales agents, personal financial advisers, and financial analysts. Thus, the odds of being arrested are very small (Rohrlich, 2010; see [fbi.gov/wanted/wcc](http://fbi.gov/wanted/wcc) for annual updates of the FBI's most wanted white-collar criminals).

Even when white-collar criminals are arrested and convicted, few are incarcerated. Of the almost 3,800 suspected embezzlers, for example, only 14 percent have been arrested and sentenced; of those arrested and sentenced, only 7 percent served any prison time (Motivans, 2013). Because so few of the most affluent white-collar offenders are punished, they enjoy lavish lifestyles that include yachts, private jets, and \$2 million birthday parties (Lublin, 2013; Spitznagel, 2013).

## 7-2e Corporate Crimes

**Corporate crimes** (also known as *organizational crimes*) are illegal acts committed by executives to benefit themselves and their companies. Corporate crimes include a vast array of illicit activities such as conspiracies to stifle free market competition, price-fixing, tax evasion, and false advertising. The target of the crime can be the general public, the environment,

or even a company's own workers (see Chapters 11 and 15). Often, corporate offenders commit multiple crimes (fraud, insider trading, and perjury).

Corporate crime is common. In the auto industry alone, and during



AP images/Kathy Willens

In 2009, Bernard Madoff—a highly respected stockbroker and investment advisor—pleaded guilty to defrauding thousands of investors of almost \$18 billion between 1991 and 2008. Madoff was sentenced to 150 years in a federal prison. So far, it's cost almost \$1 billion to recover 61 percent of the stolen money (Ross et al., 2016).

just the last few years, General Motors (GM) knew about a malfunctioning ignition switch as far back as 2001, but started recalling cars only in 2014 after dozens of death and injury lawsuits. At least four automakers knew that Takata's airbags had a deadly defect linked to deaths and injuries, but installed them anyway "to save on costs." Well over a year before Volkswagen publicly admitted cheating on pollution tests, executives knew that the diesel cars were giving off more than 40 times the legal U.S. limit of nitrogen oxide, which can cause respiratory problems (Vlastic, 2015; Krisher and Biesecker, 2016; Tabuchi and Boudette, 2017: B1).

Corporate crime is common because it's profitable. In the ignition switch problems, the Department of Justice (DOJ) fined GM \$900 million, which amounts to less than 1 percent of the company's annual revenue. Education Management Corporation, one of the nation's largest for-profit education companies, received \$11 billion from students and the federal government by lying about its programs. The DOJ fine, again, was less than 1 percent of the corporation's revenue, but left tens of thousands of students with worthless degrees and huge debts (United States Senate, 2016).

## 7-2f Cybercrime

**Cybercrime** (also called *computer crime*) refers to illegal activities that are conducted online. These high-tech crimes include defrauding consumers with bogus financial investments, embezzling, sabotaging computer systems, hacking,

**corporate crimes** (also called *organizational crimes*) illegal acts committed by executives to benefit themselves and their companies.

**cybercrime** (also called *computer crime*) illegal activities that are conducted online.

and stealing confidential business and personal information.

In 2016, there were 4,149 data breaches, worldwide, that stole more than 4.2 billion records; 68 percent of the breaches were targeted at American companies, government agencies, and individuals. In the same year, U.S. internal data breaches hit a record high of 1,093, a 40 percent increase from 2015. Since 2007, the leading reasons for data breaches have been *hacking* (illegal access to a computer), *phishing* (masquerading as a legitimate person or group to obtain a login name and password), and *skimming* (stealing credit card information). Criminals can use stolen information (e.g., social security numbers, addresses, and names) to file false tax returns, order credit cards, and drain people's bank accounts (Internet Theft Resource Center, 2017; Risk Based Security, 2017).

In 2015, the FBI received almost 289,000 complaints that resulted in more than \$1 trillion in financial losses. The most common offenses were identity theft and payments for goods and services that people never received. About 64 percent of Americans have experienced illegal credit card charges (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016; Olmstead and Smith, 2017). Stealing personal information has become so routine, according to one observer, "that most such breaches are quickly forgotten" and are "merely an occasional inconvenience" ("The Ashley Madison Hack," 2015: 14).

## 7-2g Organized Crime

**Organized crime** refers to activities of individuals and groups that supply illegal goods and services for profit. Organized crime includes human and drug trafficking, loan-sharking (lending money at unlawful rates), illegal gambling, pornography, theft rings, hijacking cargo, and laundering money obtained from illicit activities (e.g., prostitution) by depositing the money in legitimate enterprises (e.g., banks) (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017).

One of the most profitable activities, *organized retail crime*, involves stealing billions of dollars in merchandise that is then sold online, a practice known as "e-fencing." Organized crime costs the retail industry



VladimirLloyd/Getty Images

Is this a victimless crime?

approximately \$30 billion each year (National Retail Federation, 2016).

Since 2013, organized crime rings have orchestrated 80 percent of global cybercrimes, usually targeting financial institutions. In 2014, a Russian crime syndicate stole 1.2 billion U.S. usernames, passwords, and email addresses in "the largest hack in history." Criminal organizations employ highly sophisticated staff who circumvent bank security systems. Russia and China are especially likely to sponsor organized cybercrime, which makes money by stealing other countries' intellectual property and government secrets (IBM Journal Staff, 2016; Kessem, 2016; Rodgers, 2016).

## 7-2h Victimless Crimes

**Victimless crimes** (also called *public order crimes*) are illegal acts that have no direct victim. Because crimes such as illicit drug use, prostitution, illegal gambling, and pornography are voluntary, the people involved don't consider themselves victims or report the offenses. Prostitutes argue, for instance, that they're simply providing services that people want, and drug users claim that they're hurting only themselves.

Some contend that this term is misleading because victimless crimes often lead to property and violent crimes, as when addicts commit burglary, rob people at gunpoint, and engage in identity theft to get money for drugs. In a national survey, 70 percent of the respondents said that a family member's drug abuse had a negative effect on the emotional or mental health of at least one other family member, and 39 percent experienced financial problems because they went into debt to pay for an uninsured addict's treatment (Saad, 2006). In 2014, 36 percent of Americans—up from 15 percent in 1947—said that alcohol was a major cause of family problems. Drug use is also often a reason for divorce and family turmoil (White and Witkus, 2013; Jones, 2014).

The next sections examine four important sociological perspectives that help us understand why people are deviant. *Table 7.1* summarizes these theories.

**organized crime** activities of individuals and groups that supply illegal goods and services for profit.

**victimless crimes** (also called *public order crimes*) illegal acts that have no direct victim.



**Table 7.1 Sociological Explanations of Deviance**

Theoretical Perspective	Level of Analysis	Key Points
Functionalist	Macro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deviance is both functional and dysfunctional.</li> <li>Anomie increases the likelihood of deviance.</li> <li>People are deviant when they experience blocked opportunities to achieve the culturally approved goal of economic success.</li> </ul>
Conflict	Macro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There's a strong association between capitalism, social inequality, power, and deviance.</li> <li>The most powerful groups define what's deviant.</li> <li>Laws rarely punish the illegal activities of the powerful.</li> </ul>
Feminist	Macro and micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There's a large gender gap in deviant behavior.</li> <li>Women's deviance reflects their general oppression due to social, economic, and political inequality.</li> <li>Many women are offenders or victims because of patriarchal beliefs and practices and living in a rape culture.</li> </ul>
Symbolic Interactionist	Micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deviance is socially constructed.</li> <li>People learn deviant behavior from significant others such as parents and friends.</li> <li>If people are labeled or stigmatized as deviant, they're likely to develop negative self-concepts and engage in criminal behavior.</li> </ul>

## 7-3 FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVES ON DEVIANCE

For functionalists, deviance is a normal part of society. They don't endorse undesirable behavior, but view deviance as both functional and dysfunctional.

### 7-3a Dysfunctions and Functions

*Dysfunctions* are the negative consequences of behavior, but what's dysfunctional for one group or individual may be functional for another. For example, gangs are functional because they provide members with a sense of belonging, identity, and protection. Gangs are also dysfunctional because they commit violent and property crimes (Egley and Howell, 2013).

Deviance is *dysfunctional* because it:

- ▶ **Creates tension and insecurity.** Any violation of norms—a babysitter who cancels at the last minute or the theft of your smartphone or tablet—makes life unpredictable and increases anxiety.
- ▶ **Erodes trust in personal and formal relationships.** Crimes like date rape and stalking make many women

suspicious of men, and victims of identity theft have had problems obtaining banking services or credit cards because financial organizations don't trust them (see Harrell and Langton, 2013).

- ▶ **Decreases confidence in institutions.** In the 2008 stock market crash, taxpayers had to pay for the financial industry's corporate fraud and mismanagement. Since then, millions of people, even those who didn't lose money, worry that their retirement funds may disappear in the future (see Chapter 12).

- ▶ **Is costly.** Besides personal costs to victims (e.g., fear, emotional trauma, physical injury), deviance is expensive. All of us pay higher prices for consumer goods and services (e.g., auto and property insurance), as well as higher taxes for prosecuting criminals and for building and maintaining prisons. And as you saw earlier, white-collar, corporate, cyber, and organized crime cost the U.S. economy hundreds of billions of dollars every year.

Deviance can also be *functional* because it provides a number of societal benefits (Durkheim, 1893/1964; Erikson, 1966; Sagarin, 1975). For example, deviance

- ▶ **Affirms cultural norms and values.** Negative reactions, like expelling a college student who's caught cheating or incarcerating a robber, reinforce a society's norms and values about being honest and law-abiding.
- ▶ **Provides temporary safety valves.** Some deviance is accepted under certain conditions, enabling people to "blow off steam." Typically, a community and police will tolerate noise, underage drinking, loud music, and obnoxious behavior during college students' spring break because it's a short-lived nuisance.
- ▶ **Bolsters the economy.** Deviance can benefit a community financially. Some towns welcome new prisons because they generate jobs and stimulate the economy (Semuels, 2010). Unlike a manufacturing plant that might close down or move to another country, prisons are rarely dismantled.

- **Triggers social change.** When auto collisions increased, states started passing laws that banned distracted driving. Since 1999, drunk driving and deadly crashes among persons aged 16 to 25 have declined primarily because of drinking age laws, mass media campaigns, and sobriety checkpoints (Governors Highway Safety Association, 2014; Azofeifa et al., 2015).

### 7-3b Anomie and Social Strain Theory

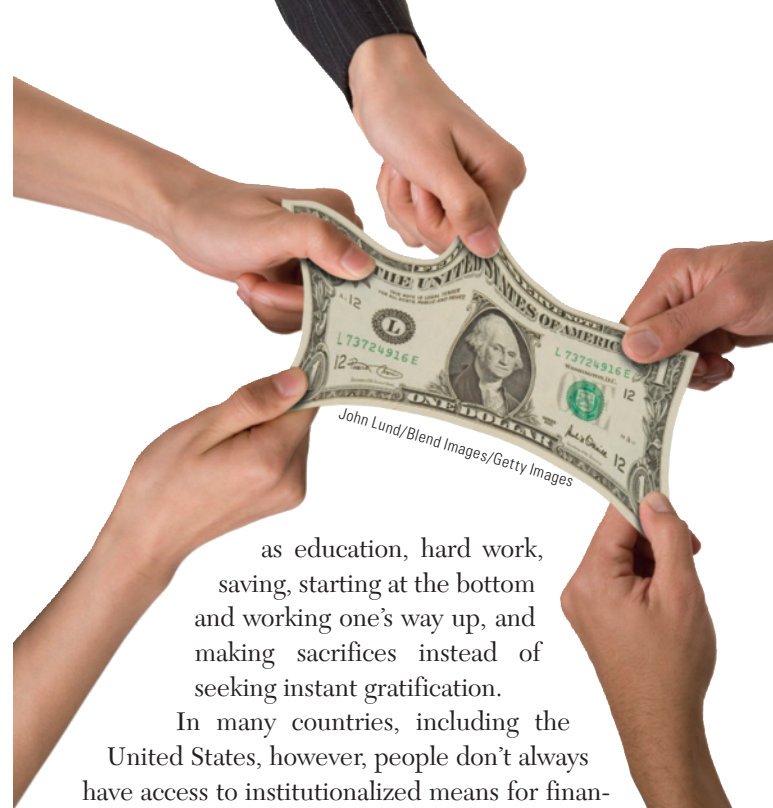
Functionalists offer many explanations of deviance, but two of the most influential are anomie and strain theories. Both analyze why so many people engage in deviant behavior even though they share many of the same goals and values as those who conform to social norms.

#### DURKHEIM'S CONCEPT OF ANOMIE

Émile Durkheim (1893/1964, 1897/1951) introduced the term **anomie** to describe the condition in which people are unsure how to behave because of absent, conflicting, or confusing social norms. During periods of rapid social change, such as industrialization in Durkheim's time, societal rules may break down. As many young people moved to the city to look for jobs in the nineteenth century, norms about proper behavior that existed in the countryside crumbled. Even today, as you'll see in Chapter 15, many urban newcomers experience anomie and miss the neighborliness that was common at home.

#### MERTON'S CONCEPT OF SOCIAL STRAIN

Robert Merton (1938) expanded the concept of anomie to explain how social structure helps to create deviance. According to Merton, Americans are socialized to believe that anyone can realize the American dream of accumulating wealth and being successful economically. To achieve the *cultural goal* of economic success, society emphasizes legitimate and *institutionalized means* such



as education, hard work, saving, starting at the bottom and working one's way up, and making sacrifices instead of seeking instant gratification.

In many countries, including the United States, however, people don't always have access to institutionalized means for financial success because of poverty, low wages, or long-term unemployment. How do they respond?

Merton's **strain theory** posits that people may engage in deviant behavior when they experience a conflict between goals and the means available to obtain the goals. Not all people turn to deviance to resolve social strain (Table 7.2). Most of us *conform* by working harder and longer to become successful. You're reading this textbook, to illustrate Merton's typology, because you've chosen conformity to achieve success through an institutionalized means (a college education).

Merton's other four modes of adaptation signify

**anomie** the condition in which people are unsure how to behave because of absent, conflicting, or confusing social norms.

**strain theory** people may engage in deviant behavior when they experience a conflict between goals and the means available to obtain the goals.

**Table 7.2** Merton's Strain Theory of Deviance

Mode of Adaptation	Accept Cultural Goals?	Accept Institutionalized Means to Achieve Goals?	Examples
Conformity	Yes	Yes	College graduate
Innovation	Yes	No	Thief
Ritualism	No	Yes	Low-level bureaucrat
Retreatism	No	No	Alcoholic
Rebellion	No—seeks to replace goals	No—seeks to replace means for achieving goals	Antigovernment militia member

Source: Based on Merton, 1938.

deviance. *Innovation* occurs when people endorse the cultural goal of economic success but turn to illegitimate means, especially crime, to achieve the goal. Resorting to crime is functional for people who believe that they can't achieve success through hard work, education, and deferred gratification.

In *ritualism*, people have modest aspirations, but follow customs and rules because they enjoy doing so or they want to keep their jobs. Ritualists aren't criminals, but they're deviant because they've given up on becoming financially successful. Instead, they do what they're told and "go along to get along."

In *retreatism*, people reject both the goals and the means for success. They try to escape their failure by withdrawing—mentally, physically, or both—through alcohol and other drugs, becoming drifters, living in the streets, or otherwise dropping out of society.

In *rebellion*, people feel so alienated that they want to change the social structure entirely by substituting new goals and means for the current ones. Contemporary examples are terrorists and U.S. militia groups that oppose the federal government (see Chapter 3).

### 7-3c Critical Evaluation

A major contribution of functionalism is showing how social structure, not just individual attitudes and behavior, produces or reinforces deviance and crime. Functionalist theories also have weaknesses: (1) The concepts of *anomie* and *strain theory* are limited because they overlook the fact that not everyone in the United States embraces financial success as a major goal in life; (2) the theories don't explain why women's crime rates are much lower than men's, especially because women generally have fewer legitimate opportunities for financial success than men; (3) why crime rates have declined since 2000 despite much poverty and unemployment; and (4) why people commit some crimes (setting fires just for kicks or murdering an intimate partner) that have nothing to do with being successful (Anderson and Dyson, 2002; Williams and McShane, 2004).

The most consistent criticism is that functionalism typically focuses on lower-class deviance and crime.

Conflict theorists have filled this gap by examining middle- and upper-class crime.

## 7-4 CONFLICT PERSPECTIVES ON DEVIANCE

Functionalists ask, "Why do some people commit crimes and others don't?" Most conflict theorists ask, "Why are some acts defined as criminal while others aren't?" (Akers, 1997).

### 7-4a Capitalism and Social Inequality

For conflict theorists, there's a strong association between capitalism, social inequality, and deviance. People and groups with economic and political power view deviance as any behavior that threatens their own interests (Vold, 1958; Turk, 1969, 1976; Kraska, 2004). As a result, the mass media, owned by the affluent, routinely focus on "street crimes" rather than "suite crimes."

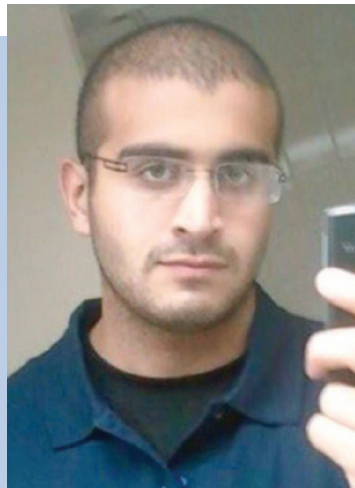
The United States, like many other countries, is a capitalist economy based on the private ownership of property (see Chapter 11). Characterized by personal gain rather than by collective well-being, capitalistic goals include continually maximizing profits, accumulating wealth, and promoting economic self-interest.

From a conflict perspective, capitalism produces crime for several interrelated reasons (Chambliss, 1969;

Quinney, 1980; Snider, 1993). First, greed and self-interest perpetuate deviance. A study of 36 countries found that 42 percent of board directors and senior managers—pressured to increase growth and fearing personal pay cuts—"cooked the books" by overstating revenue, encouraging customers to buy unnecessary stock, and bribing powerful people to begin or continue their business (Ernst & Young, 2013).

Second, capitalism is a competitive system that encourages corporate crime. When only a few firms dominate an industry, they can easily eliminate competitors, conspire to fix prices, falsify financial statements, and commit fraud (see Eavis, 2015).

Third, because capitalism creates considerable social inequality, those at the top can control and exploit lower-level workers. In the financial services/banking industry, almost half



ORLANDO POLICE/The New York Times/Redux

In 2016, 29-year-old Omar Mateen killed 49 people and wounded 53 others at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. Do you think that Merton's strain theory explains Mateen's crime?





Sam Baird/Investigation Discovery/Everett Collection

Investigation Discovery, which debuted in 2008, is one of the country's fastest growing cable television networks, airing in 157 countries and territories (Steel, 2015). The shows re-enact true crime incidents, primarily homicides, but also kidnappings, stalkings, sexual assaults, and intimate partner violence (e.g., *Scorned: Love Kills*, *Deadly Affairs*, *Fatal Vows*, *Wives with Knives*). Why do you think this network is so popular?

of the workers said that illegal or unethical activity was “part and parcel of succeeding in this highly competitive field,” and that their company’s confidentiality policies and procedures bar them from reporting wrongdoing (Tenbrunsel and Thomas, 2015).

The current U.S. tax system allows companies to avoid paying \$135 billion each year in taxes. Such “tax dodging” prevents crucial investments in healthcare, infrastructure, education, family homelessness, and poverty reduction (Oxfam America, 2017).

#### 7-4b **Laws, Power, and Social Control**

From a conflict perspective, criminal laws serve the interests of the capitalist ruling class. The most powerful groups in society control the law, which defines what’s deviant, and who will be punished (Chambliss and Seidman, 1982; Reiman and Leighton, 2010).

Why do so many high-status people commit crimes? Because they can, according to conflict theorists. First, most white-collar and corporate crimes are *not criminalized* (Turk, 1969; Lilly et al., 1995). Generally, the wealthy and powerful make and enforce laws that protect their property. Laws against higher-status criminals are relatively lenient and seldom enforced, whereas laws against lower-status offenders, particularly those who commit property crimes, are harsher and enforced more often (Thio et al., 2012).

Second, the powerful have more *opportunities for deviance*. As you saw earlier, white-collar and

corporate criminals have access to resources and the necessary occupational skills to defraud customers and employees.

Third, powerful individuals and corporations are *rarely prosecuted*. Prosperous corporations pay millions, or billions, “to make cases disappear before any public hearing.” Even in “flagrant corporate law breaking,” and despite repeated promises by the Obama Administration and the DOJ, federal law enforcement agencies rarely prosecute corporate criminals (United States Senate, 2016).

Fourth, there are *few penalties* for high-status crimes because lawmakers and defendants share a common cultural background. Of the senior Wall Street bank executives who played leading roles in the 2008 financial crisis, only one has been convicted of fraud. Offshore banks knowingly shelter U.S. tax evaders because there are no punishments for doing so. Fraud by the rich wipes out 40 percent of the world’s wealth, but no one goes to jail (Taibbi, 2014; “Financial Crime,” 2015).

When U.S. prosecutors bring civil charges, the fines are typically less than half of 1 percent of annual revenue and are passed on to shareholders. Recently, top officials at Goldman Sachs agreed to pay a \$550 million fine to settle accusations of securities fraud that made almost \$52 billion in profits. The fine represented four days of the bank’s revenues (Summers, 2010). If, using a comparable percentage, you made \$100,000 a year illegally and someone paid your \$1,000 fine, would there be a financial incentive for honesty?

#### 7-4c **Critical Evaluation**

Conflict theories explain the linkages between capitalism, laws, power, and social class that benefit those at the top. According to some critics, however, conflict theories (1) exaggerate the importance of capitalism because other industrialized societies (e.g., Japan, Scandinavian countries), which enforce fraud laws, have much lower white collar and corporate crime rates; (2) downplay street crimes even though victim injuries, incarceration, and crime prevention programs are costly to society; (3) overlook the fact that some affluent people, including executives, don’t always get away with crimes; and (4) ignore the ways that crime is functional for society (e.g., provides jobs, affirms law-abiding cultural norms and values) (Leonardsen, 2004; Ernst & Young, 2013; “Jail Bait,” 2016).

Finally, some contend, the most influential conflict theories focus almost entirely on men as both victims and offenders (Moyer, 2001; Belknap, 2007). Feminist theories have been filling this gap.

**Rich Criminals, Lenient Sentences** Ryan LeVin (pictured here), a super-rich heir to a family costume jewelry fortune, killed two men while hurtling down a street at more than 100 miles an hour, then fled the scene. He pleaded guilty to vehicular homicide and faced 30 years in prison. LeVin was sentenced to only 2 years of house arrest, which he served at one of his parents' luxury seaside condos. LeVin never apologized to the victims' families. His major concern was getting back his Porsche (Shepherd, 2011; Mayo, 2012).

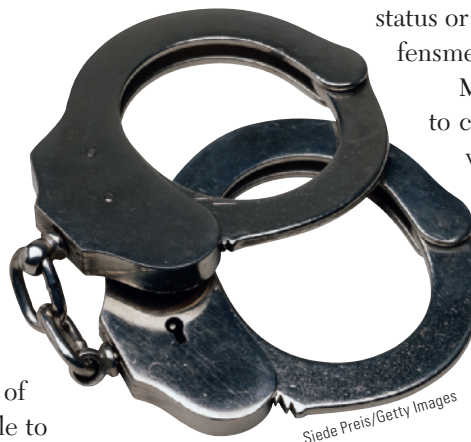
In another recent case, Ethan Couch, 18, killed four people while driving drunk. The defense argued for leniency because Couch suffered from "affluenza," being so rich and spoiled that he was totally unaware of consequences and, thus, not responsible for his actions. The judge sentenced Couch to only 10 years of probation, which he violated 2 years later (Garza and Williams, 2016).



Sun Sentinel/Getty Images

## 7-5 FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON DEVIANCE

Until recently, most sociological research on deviance focused almost entirely on males. Nearly all sociologists were men who saw women as not worthy of much analytical attention or assumed that explanations of male behavior were equally applicable to females (Flavin, 2001; Belknap, 2007). Feminist scholars' analyses of female offenders and victims have greatly enriched our understanding of deviance.



Siede Preis/Getty Images

status or financial profits (England, 2005; Stefensmeier et al., 2013; see also Chapter 4).

Men are much more likely than women to commit violent crimes (*Table 7.3*), but women's arrest rates have increased for some offenses. Between 2006 and 2016, male arrests dropped for all offenses except larceny-theft; female arrests rose 26 percent for larceny-theft and 20 percent for property crimes (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016).

Why? More women have white-collar occupations (e.g., bank tellers, accountants,

### 7-5a Women as Offenders

Crime is still generally a male activity. Men constitute about half of the U.S. population, but 73 percent of all arrests. Overall, and across 28 offenses, men commit more crimes and more serious crimes than women (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016). Among the top arrests, embezzlement is the only crime with no gender gap, and prostitution is the only female-dominated crime (*Table 7.3*).

Socialization explains some of the gender gaps in arrest rates. Compared with males, females have more responsibilities from an earlier age and are supervised more closely, expected to behave, and discouraged from risk-taking behavior. When women take risks, they're likely to do so to protect loved ones rather than to gain

**Table 7.3 Top Six Reasons for Arrests, by Sex, 2015**

Percentage of females arrested for ...		Percentage of males arrested for ...	
Prostitution	64	Sex offenses (except rape and prostitution)*	92
Embezzlement	50	Weapons	91
Larceny-theft	43	Murder or non-negligent manslaughter	89
Fraud	39	Robbery	86
Property crime	38	Burglary, arson, or drunkenness	81 (each)
Forgery or counterfeiting	35	Violent crime	80

\*97 percent of rape arrestees were male.

Source: Based on Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016, Table 42.

sales managers) that present opportunities for fraud, theft, and embezzlement. Because women, on average, are in low-income jobs, some resort to crime—especially shoplifting, petty theft, and prostitution—to survive financially or to support a family. Even at managerial levels, women are much more likely than men to commit fraud because of financial difficulties due to divorce or family problems rather than “generally unscrupulous or shrewd behavior” (Abrahams, 2015; Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, 2016).

Almost 9 percent of all individuals arrested are adolescents. Like adults, boys account for more arrests (70 percent) than girls, but girls’ arrests have increased dramatically—from 17 percent in 1980 to 30 percent in 2015 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016).

The higher arrest rates are due to a combination of factors: Policy changes, including more aggressive policing; parents’ and school officials’ greater likelihood of calling the police to deal with girls’ (especially black girls’) disruptive behavior; and a substantial increase in juvenile females committing crimes that range from drug abuse to assaulting family members or intimate partners (Levintova, 2016; Morris and Perry, 2017).

## 7-5b Women as Victims

Many of the serious crimes (murder and robbery) are committed by men against men. Women and girls, however, are almost always the victims of sexual assault, rape, intimate partner violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, female infanticide, and other crimes that degrade and terrorize women.

Feminist scholars offer several explanations for women’s victimization. First, **patriarchy**—a social system in which men control cultural, political, and economic structures—produces violence against women. In patriarchal societies, including the United States, because women have less access to power, they’re at a disadvantage in creating and implementing laws that protect females (Price and Sokoloff, 2004; DeKeseredy, 2011). Such inequity diminishes women’s control over their lives and increases their invisibility as victims.

Second, gender roles reinforce inequality: “Girls are rewarded for passivity and feminine behavior, whereas boys are rewarded for aggressiveness and masculine behavior” (Belknap, 2007: 243). As early as middle school, girls experience physical and sexual harassment in hallways, classrooms, and gym classes. Although the incidents are upsetting, girls often dismiss the boys’ unwanted



David R. Frazier/Photolibrary, Inc./Alamy Stock Photo

In 2016, Stanford University student Brock Turner was found guilty of raping an unconscious woman outside a fraternity party. Turner’s father wrote the judge that his son was paying a “steep price” for “20 minutes of action,” and should get probation. Rape carries a penalty of 2 to 14 years in state prison, but Turner was sentenced to six months in county jail and three years’ probation. He was released after three months for good behavior (Golshan, 2016). Does this incident exemplify rape culture?

behavior as “only joking” (Espelage et al., 2016). In effect, then, both sexes internalize the belief that female victimization is normal. Because patriarchal societies rarely punish men who victimize women, or give them light sentences, many female victims feel trapped.

A third reason for women’s abuse is living in a **rape culture**, an environment in which sexual violence is prevalent, pervasive, and perpetuated by the media and popular culture (Parrott and Parrott, 2015). Here are a few examples of the pervasiveness of rape and sexual assaults in U.S. culture:

- ▶ During their lifetimes, 3 percent of men and 17 percent of women have been victims of an attempted or completed rape (Rape Crisis Center, 2014);
- ▶ 27 percent of college women have experienced an attempted or completed rape (Lauerman, 2013);
- ▶ 12,214 active-duty military members reported sexual assaults during

**patriarchy** a social system in which men control cultural, political, and economic structures.

**rape culture** an environment in which sexual violence is prevalent, pervasive, and perpetuated by the media and popular culture.



2014 and 2015 (Department of Defense, 2016).

The actual number of attacks is much higher because only 15 percent of service members and 33 percent of other victims report rapes and sexual assaults to police (Protect Our Defenders, 2016; Gramlich, 2017).

Across 77 countries, the number of rapes reported to the police ranges from fewer than 1 per 100,000 people in Japan, 37 in the United States, to 51 in England and Wales. Rape statistics vary considerably depending on the legal definition, recording practices, and other factors. Nonetheless, the variation across countries shows that sexual violence is preventable (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017; see also Roden, 2017).

### 7-5c Critical Evaluation

Feminist sociologists have been at the forefront of raising awareness of crimes like date rape, intimate partner violence, and international sex trafficking. Some critics contend, however, that feminist explanations (1) don't show, specifically, *how* patriarchy victimizes women; (2) focus primarily on male but not female violence and crime, and (3) don't address the interdependent effects of gender, age, social class, and race/ethnicity (Friedrichs, 2009; Hunnicutt, 2009; Dao, 2013).

## 7-6 SYMBOLIC INTERACTION PERSPECTIVES ON DEVIANCE

For symbolic interactionists, deviance is socially constructed because it's in the eye of the beholder. For instance, only 47 percent of French people believe that extramarital affairs are immoral, compared with 84 percent of Americans and 94 percent of Palestinians and Turks ("Extramarital Affairs," 2014). Interactionists offer many explanations of deviance, but two of the best known are differential association theory and labeling theory.

**differential association theory** asserts that people learn deviance through interaction, especially with significant others.

**labeling theory** posits that society's reaction to behavior is a major factor in defining oneself or others as deviant.

### 7-6a Differential Association Theory

**Differential association theory** asserts that people



Steve Cole/Photodisc/Getty Images

learn deviance through interaction, especially with significant others like family members and friends. People become deviant, according to sociologist Edwin Sutherland, if they have more contact with significant others who violate laws than with those who are law-abiding. In effect, people learn techniques for committing criminal behavior, along with the values, motives, rationalizations, and attitudes that reinforce such behavior (Sutherland and Cressey, 1970). That is, deviance isn't inherent but learned through interaction with others.

Sutherland emphasized that differential association doesn't occur overnight. Instead, people are most likely to engage in crime if they're exposed to deviant values (1) early in life, (2) frequently, (3) over a long period of time, and (4) by significant others and reference groups (e.g., parents, siblings, close friends, and business associates).

Considerable research supports differential association theory. Almost 47 percent of state prisoners have a parent or other close relative who has also been incarcerated. Even before age 13, children who associate with peers who smoke, use drugs, or commit crimes are more likely to do so themselves because they learn these behaviors from their friends (Adamson, 2010; Roman et al., 2012; Huizinga et al., 2013). Thus, according to differential association theory, we're products of our socialization.

### 7-6b Labeling Theories

Have you ever been accused of something wrong that you didn't do? What about getting credit for something that you and others know you didn't deserve? In either case, did people start treating you differently? The reactions of others are the crux of **labeling theory**, which holds that society's reaction to behavior is a major factor in defining oneself or others as deviant. Some of the earliest sociological studies found that teenagers who misbehaved were tagged as delinquents. Such labeling changed the child's self-concept and resulted in more deviance and criminal behavior (Tannenbaum, 1938). During the 1950s and 1960s, two influential sociologists—Howard Becker and Edwin Lemert—extended labeling theory.

### BECKER: DEVIANCE IS IN THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDER

According to Howard Becker (1963: 9), "The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied;

*deviant behavior is behavior that people so label*" (emphasis in original). That is, it's not an act that determines deviance, but whether and how others react.

Some people are never caught or prosecuted for crimes they commit, and thus aren't labeled deviant. In other cases, people may be falsely accused (e.g., cheating on taxes) and stigmatized. In effect, then, deviance is in the eye of the beholder because societal reaction, rather than an act, labels people as law-abiding or deviant. Moreover, labeling can lead to secondary deviance.

## LEMERT: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DEVIANCE

Edwin Lemert (1951, 1967) developed labeling theory by differentiating between primary and secondary deviance. **Primary deviance** is the initial act of breaking a rule. Primary deviance can range from relatively minor offenses, like not attending a family member's funeral, to serious offenses, like rape and murder.

Even if people aren't guilty of primary deviance, labeling can lead to **secondary deviance**, rule-breaking behavior that people adopt in response to others' reactions. A teenager who's caught trying marijuana may be labeled a "druggie." If the individual is rejected by others, he or she may accept the label, associate with drug users, and become involved in a drug-using subculture. According to Lemert, a single deviant act will rarely result in secondary deviance. The more times a person is labeled, however, the higher the probability that she or he will accept the label and engage in deviant behavior.

There's considerable evidence that labeling affects people's lives. For example, those who have been jobless for a year or longer report stigmas in job searches: Employers assume that they're lazy, don't really want to work, or there's something wrong with them. Some companies have explicitly barred the long-term unemployed from certain job openings, telling them outright in job ads that they need not apply (see Chapter 11).

## THE MEDICALIZATION OF DEVIANCE

In 1952, the American Psychiatric Association published the first edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, which describes mental health disorders. The number of disorders increased from 106 in 1952 to nearly 400 in 2013, and increased in size from "a spiral-bound pamphlet" to "a tome of

nearly 1,000 pages" (Tavris, 2013: C5). Some of the new disorders include "binge eating" and "bereavement" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The *DSM's* ever-changing diagnoses and labels are an example of the **medicalization of deviance**, diagnosing and treating a violation of social norms as a medical disorder. The *DSM* has far-reaching effects, according to one of the past editors: "Anything you put in that book . . . has huge implications not only for psychiatry but for pharmaceutical marketing, research, for the legal system, for who's considered to be normal or not, for who's considered disabled. *And it has huge implications for stigma because the more disorders you put in, the more people get labels*" (Carey, 2010: 1, emphasis added; Chapter 14 discusses the costs of medicalizing deviance).

## 7-6c Critical Evaluation

Interaction theories help us understand deviance, but critics point to several weaknesses. Differential association theory doesn't explain (1) impulsive crimes

triggered by rage or fear; (2) crimes committed by people who have grown up in law-abiding families; (3) why only a minority of children who grow up in disadvantaged communities join gangs and/or commit crimes; and (4) why only one sibling

raised in the same family environment may commit juvenile or adult crime (Williams and McShane, 2004; Graif and Sampson, 2009; Breining et al., 2017).

Critics have faulted labeling theory for not explaining why (1) people are deviant before labeling occurs; (2) crime rates are higher in some parts of the country or at particular times of the year (as before holidays); and (3) labeling doesn't necessarily increase deviant behavior (Colvin and Pauly, 1983; Schurman-Kaufman, 2000; Benson, 2002). Conflict theorists, in particular, criticize symbolic interactionists for ignoring structural factors—like poverty and low-paid jobs—that create or reinforce deviance and crime (Currie, 1985).



Do you think that this arrest is the result of primary or secondary deviance? Why?

**primary deviance** the initial act of breaking a rule.

**secondary deviance** rule-breaking behavior that people adopt in response to others' reactions.

**medicalization of deviance** diagnosing and treating a violation of social norms as a medical disorder.



Davis Barber/PhotoEdit

**Does Labeling Deter Deviance?** Not always. Despite federal laws, 45 states allow teachers accused of sexually abusing students to quit instead of notifying the police or education agencies. This practice, known as “passing the trash,” allows sex predators to be re-hired for other teaching jobs. Administrators don’t want to tarnish a school’s reputation, to spend thousands in legal fees to fire tenured teachers or on potential lawsuits by the victims’ families, or to tangle with teachers’ unions that defend teachers accused of sexual abuse (Skinner, 2014; Reilly, 2016).

## 7-7

# CONTROLLING DEVIANCE AND CRIME

Most of us conform to laws and cultural expectations. We usually conform, however, not because we’re innately good, but because of **social control**, techniques and strategies that regulate people’s behavior in society. The purpose of social control is to eliminate, or at least reduce, deviance.

## 7-7a Control Theory and Types of Social Control

**Control theory** proposes that deviant behavior decreases when people have strong social bonds with others. The

**social control** the techniques and strategies that regulate people’s behavior in society.

**control theory** proposes that deviant behavior decreases when people have strong social bonds with others.

**criminal justice system** government agencies that are charged with enforcing laws, judging offenders, and changing criminal behavior.

bonds that strengthen our self-control are based on (1) *attachment* to other people (e.g., family, friends, and coworkers), (2) *commitment* to conformity (e.g., participating in community activities), (3) *involvement* in legitimate activities (e.g., getting an education, holding a job), and (4) *belief* in

social norms and values (e.g., being moral, obeying laws) (Hirschi, 1969).

Most conformity is due to the internalization of norms during the powerful socialization process. Because most of us care about the opinions of family members, friends, and teachers, we try to live up to their expectations (see Chapter 4). Thus, we conform because of *informal social controls* that we learn and internalize during childhood.

*Formal social control*, which also regulates social behavior, exists outside of the individual. For example, a college dean might threaten a student with suspension or expulsion, a business might install security cameras, or a police officer might arrest someone.

## 7-7b The Criminal Justice System and Social Control

Social institutions such as the family, education, and religion try to maintain *social* control over behavior; the criminal justice system has the *legal* power to control crime and punish offenders. The **criminal justice system** is made up of government agencies—including the police, courts, and prisons—that enforce laws, judge offenders, and try to decrease criminal behavior. The criminal justice system relies on three major strategies to control crime: prevention and intervention, punishment, and rehabilitation. Punishment, as you’ll see, is the least effective approach.

### PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Structural inequality—in employment, housing, education, and other areas—is the best predictor of violence and crime (Basken, 2016; Carpenter et al., 2016; Light and Ulmer, 2016). It costs U.S. taxpayers, annually, about \$34,000 per inmate compared with \$12,000 per K-12 public school pupil. A 10 percent increase in high school graduation rates decreases arrest rates by 9 percent. From 1979 to 2013, however, U.S. spending on prisons grew three times faster than on education (“The Right Choices,” 2015; Kena et al., 2016; Stullich et al., 2016).

Crime prevention is much less expensive than punishment. Among adults, the average annual cost per outpatient for alcohol or drug abuse treatment is \$4,700, compared with \$24,000 for incarceration (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2012). Nearly 28 percent of state and federal inmates are age 50 and older, and many have serious health problems. An older offender’s annual medical costs can exceed \$100,000 (Johnson and Beiser, 2013; Carson and Anderson, 2016).

Nationally, states with the most firearms and fewest restrictions have the highest gun-related violence, homicide, and suicide rates, but gun control laws are



controversial. Many Americans (85 percent) support background checks, but only a majority (55 percent) wants stricter gun control laws. Advocating for harsher laws often surges after high-profile shooting incidents but then subsides again (Fleegler et al., 2013; Anestis and Anestis, 2015; Doherty, 2015; Newport, 2016; Parsons and Weigand, 2016).

**Social Service Agencies and Community Outreach Programs.** Many organizations—federal and state agencies, law enforcement professionals, social workers, and nonprofit groups—try to prevent and decrease crime (e.g., CrimeSolutions.gov), but some programs are more successful than others.

Compared with police-only interventions, when police and local social service workers respond together to an incident of intimate partner violence, victims experience significantly less violence immediately after the episode and months later. Why? The collaborative partnership provides victims with more protective strategies and resources (e.g., getting medical attention and protection orders, going someplace where a partner can't find them) (Messing et al., 2014).

Programs like “Scared Straight” are organized visits to prisons and face-to-face interaction with adult inmates to deter juvenile delinquency. Evaluations of scared-straight programs have concluded, however, that they may increase rather than deter adolescent deviance. The reasons are unclear, but may be due to the program participants’ imitating the inmates’ “brutal and vulgar” language and crimes. Still, the tours continue to be popular (Robinson and Slowikowski, 2011; Petrosino et al., 2013).

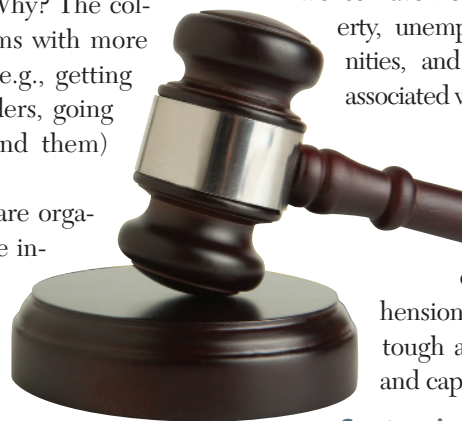
**Police.** The primary role of the police is to enforce society’s laws, but can they prevent crimes? Police can deter some deviance by cruising high-risk areas in patrol cars or having more officers on foot patrols who return to the same street several times during a shift (“Policing Philadelphia . . .,” 2013). Concentrating on *hot spots*, areas of high criminal activity, reduces crime only temporarily, however, because criminals simply move to other parts of the city (U.S. Department of Justice, 1996; Braga, 2003).

Compared with 42 percent of whites and 31 percent of Latinos, just 14 percent of blacks have “a great deal” of confidence in their local police (Morin and Stepler, 2016). Negative views have spiked since 2015, after white police officers shot and killed unarmed black men during routine law enforcement encounters in Louisiana, Missouri, Minnesota,

and several other states. The deaths sparked protests in some cities, and violence and riots in Baltimore (see Chapter 16).

Minorities, particularly African Americans, accuse police of discrimination, *racial profiling* (using race to stop and detain someone suspected of having committed a crime), and brutality. Many police officers (72 percent) say that the black men’s deaths are isolated incidents. Only 27 percent have ever fired their weapons while on duty, but they become aggressive because a “well-armed population” makes their jobs unpredictable and dangerous, and many suspects fight and resist arrest. Racial profiling is justified, according to some officers, because a high proportion of blacks and Latinos commit crimes. An overwhelming 83 percent of Americans say they understand the risks that police face, but only 14 percent of officers agree, and believe that they’re scapegoated for social problems (“Police Culture,” 2015; Morin et al., 2017).

Police have no control over macro-level factors—poverty, unemployment, limited educational opportunities, and neighborhood deterioration—that are associated with high crime rates.



Andrey Burmakin/Shutterstock.com

## PUNISHMENT

Those who endorse a **crime control model** believe that crime rates increase when offenders don’t fear apprehension or punishment. This model endorses a tough approach in sentencing, imprisonment, and capital punishment.

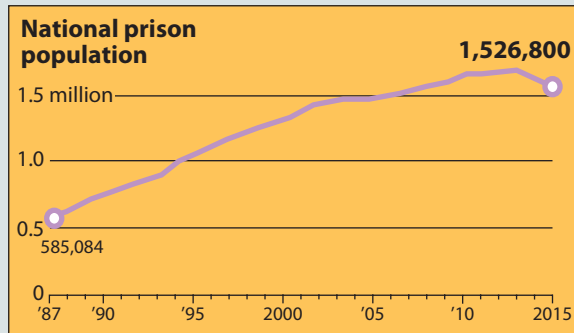
**Sentencing.** After someone has been found guilty of a crime or has pleaded guilty, a judge (and sometimes a jury) imposes a *sentence*, or penalty. A sentence can be a fine, *probation* (supervision instead of serving time in jail), incarceration, or the death penalty. Offenders who receive *parole* are released from prison before the end of their full sentence on condition that they check in regularly with an officer and obey the law.

Of the 6.8 million adults in the corrections system in 2015, 56 percent were on probation, 13 percent were parolees, and the rest were in a local jail or a state or federal prison. Since 2007, the number of parolees has increased slightly, while the number on probation and in jails and prisons has declined (Kaeble and Glaze, 2016; Kaeble and Bonczar, 2017).

Why? In 2016, only 14 percent of Americans said that the criminal justice system wasn’t “tough enough,” down from 65 percent in 2003, and 38 percent described drug crime sentences as “too tough” (McCarthy, 2016). It’s not

**crime control model** proposes that crime rates increase when offenders don’t fear apprehension or punishment.

**Figure 7.3** The Number of U.S. Prisoners Has Nearly Tripled Since 1987



Sources: Based on Pew Center on the States, 2010, and Carson and Anderson, 2016.

clear whether (or how much) people's opinions affect the criminal justice system, but as budgets shrink, even states with reputations for being tough on crime are embracing more lenient policies. Some have begun to shorten the average number of years on probation and parole, which decreases supervision costs. Others are reducing the number of people sent to prison: It costs an average of \$79 a day to keep an inmate in prison but only about \$3.50 a day to monitor the same person on probation (Richburg, 2009; Porter, 2016).

**Incarceration.** The number of U.S. prisoners has surged since 1987 (Figure 7.3). Since 2008, and for the first time in history, 1 in every 100 American adults is in prison. The United States has less than 5 percent of the world's population, but more than 20 percent of the planet's prisoners, the majority of whom are incarcerated for nonviolent drug offenses. Besides the sheer number of inmates, the United States is the second highest (after Seychelles, Africa) in per capita inmates (698 per 100,000 population), and well ahead of Russia (445), Cuba (510), China (119), Germany (78), and India (33) (Walmsley, 2016).

Of all state and federal prisoners, 93 percent are men, but imprisonment rates vary by race/ethnicity. As Figure 7.4 shows, incarceration rates are highest for African Americans, both women

**IT'S TEMPTING TO ASSUME THAT THE MORE PEOPLE BEHIND BARS, THE LOWER THE CRIME RATE.**

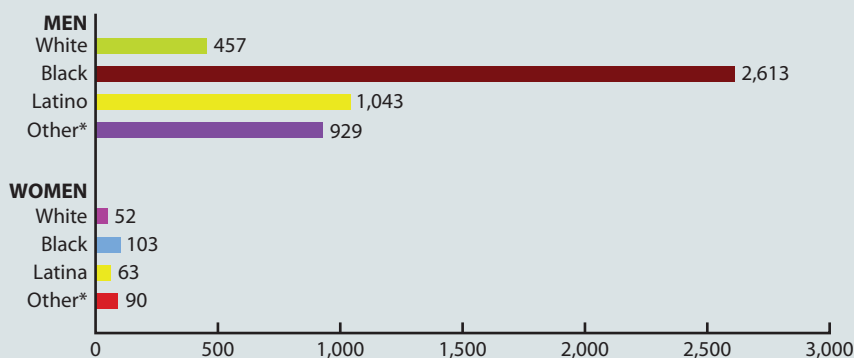
and men. If current trends continue, 1 of every 3 black males born in 2013 can expect to go to prison in his lifetime, as can 1 of every 6 Latino males—compared with 1 of every 17 white males. A major reason is arrest disparities. For example, white adolescents are 30 times more likely than black youth to use cocaine and other “hard drugs,” but blacks are almost twice as likely to be arrested for drug offenses (The Sentencing Project, 2013; Rovner, 2016; Welty et al., 2016).

The imprisonment rate has been dropping since 2007 (Carson and Anderson, 2016). Arrest rates have declined, as you saw earlier, but prison counts have dropped primarily because of economic reasons. Driven by overcrowding and budget crises, many states are releasing low-level offenders before they serve their sentences. Releasing prisoners early has been controversial, but state officials maintain that their budgets can't afford the high incarceration costs (Goode, 2013; Kearney et al., 2014).

It's tempting to assume that the more people behind bars, the lower the crime rate. State spending on corrections surged from \$17 billion in 1990 to \$57 billion in 2015 (The Sentencing Project, 2017). However, *recidivism* (being

**Figure 7.4** U.S. Prisoners by Race/Ethnicity and Sex, 2015

**Imprisonment Rate per 100,000 U.S. Population**



\*Includes American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asians, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and persons of two or more races.

Source: Based on Carson and Anderson, 2016, Appendix Table 4.

arrested for committing another offense after being released) has barely changed since 1999: Of those released from state prisons, 68 percent are arrested for a new crime within 3 years, and 77 percent within 5 years (Durose et al., 2014).

**Capital Punishment.** About half of Americans support *capital punishment* (the death penalty), down from 80 percent in 1994 (Oliphant, 2016). By mid-2015, more than two-thirds of the world's nations, including many developing countries, had abolished the death penalty or suspended executions. Thirty-one states have the death penalty, but the number of executions fell from 98 in 1999 to 10 in 2017 (Amnesty International, 2017; Death Penalty Information Center, 2017).

There are several reasons for fewer executions: (1) homicide rates have declined sharply since 1980; (2) the death penalty doesn't deter crime; (3) public support for the death penalty has waned; (4) hundreds of false convictions have been overturned; (5) black males, especially if the victims are white, are substantially more likely to be executed than white males who murder blacks; and (6) most juries can now impose life sentences without the possibility of parole. Some also argue that the death penalty is a waste of money because inmates can spend 15 to 20 years appealing a sentence. In California, for example, it costs taxpayers \$137 million annually for inmates who appeal a death sentence compared with \$12 million for those serving life sentences (McPhate, 2016; Oliphant, 2016; Amnesty International USA, 2017; Death Penalty Information Center, 2017).

## REHABILITATION

*Rehabilitation*, a third approach to controlling deviance, maintains that appropriate treatment can change



Jim West/Alamy Stock Photo

About 700,000 U.S. prisoners have jobs. Whether they work for the government or private businesses that have contracts with local correctional authorities, their earnings range from nothing to as little as 12 to 40 cents an hour (Vongkiatkajorn, 2016; "Prisons," 2017). Would paying inmates much higher wages decrease recidivism?

offenders into productive, law-abiding citizens. Federal and state inmates produce more than \$2 billion worth of products a year. They make everything from redwood canoes to specialty motorcycles and saddles. They also raise fish, milk cows and goats, teach dogs obedience, and manage vineyards at prison-run facilities (Alsever, 2014; "Prisons," 2017).

Are rehabilitation programs successful? Only if they provide employment after release. Other effective rehabilitation efforts include learning a trade while in prison, earning a high school diploma or college degree while in prison or after release, and receiving services that address several needs (e.g., housing, employment, *and* medical services) rather than just one (e.g., drug abuse counseling) (Cumberworth, 2010; Kelly, 2016).

## STUDY TOOLS 7

### READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you've read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.



# 8

## Social Stratification: United States and Global



GWB Alkash/Panos

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 8-1 Explain and illustrate social stratification systems and bases.
- 8-2 Describe the U.S. class structure and explain how and why social classes differ.
- 8-3 Describe poverty and explain why people are poor.
- 8-4 Compare the different types of social mobility, describe recent trends, and explain what factors affect mobility.
- 8-5 Describe global stratification, its variations and consequences, and the theoretical models that explain why inequality is universal.
- 8-6 Compare and evaluate the theoretical explanations of social stratification.

After finishing  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 158** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**

In 2012, American multi-billionaire Larry Ellison—founder of Oracle, the world’s biggest database company—bought the Hawaiian island of Lanai for \$500 million. The same year, 17 percent of Hawaii’s residents were living in poverty (*Hawai’i Free Press*, 2012; Kroll and Dolan, 2013). Many people in the United States and around the world are struggling to survive while others enjoy astonishing wealth. This chapter examines social stratification and why there are haves and have-nots.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Americans who are poor just aren’t working hard enough.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree						strongly disagree

8-1

## SOCIAL STRATIFICATION SYSTEMS AND BASES

**Social stratification** is a society’s ranking of people based on their access to valued resources such as wealth, power, and prestige. All societies are stratified, but some more than others. Sociologists distinguish among stratification systems based on the extent to which they’re open or closed. Before reading further, take the True/False quiz to see how much you know about U.S. economic inequality.

### 8-1a Closed and Open Stratification Systems

In a *closed stratification system*, movement from one social position to another is limited by ascribed statuses. An *open stratification system* allows movement up or down because people’s achievements affect mobility. Closed stratification systems are considerably more fixed than open ones, but neither is completely open or closed.

Two closed stratification systems exist today: slavery and castes. In a **slavery system**, people own others as property and have almost total control over their lives. The slaves have been kidnapped, inherited, or given as gifts to pay a debt. They’re bought and sold as commodities, sometimes multiple times. The United Nations banned all forms of slavery worldwide in 1948, but

## True or False?

### HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT U.S. ECONOMIC EQUALITY?

1. A majority of Americans are middle class.
2. The most prestigious occupations have the highest incomes.
3. Americans age 65 and older have the highest poverty rates.
4. Immigration helps many native-born Americans move up the economic ladder.
5. Many Americans are poor, but poverty has decreased since the 1980s.
6. Among developed countries, the United States has one of the highest economic equality levels.

The answer for 4 is true; the rest are false. You’ll see why as you read this chapter.

almost 36 million people are living as slaves across the globe. About 61 percent are in just five countries—India, China, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Russia—but modern slavery is also prevalent in parts of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia (Walk Free Foundation, 2014).

In a **caste system**, a second type of closed stratification system, people’s positions are ascribed at birth and largely fixed. Their places in the hierarchy are primarily determined by inherited characteristics such as race, skin color, gender, family background, or nationality (see Chapter 5). People must marry

**social stratification** a society’s ranking of people based on their access to valued resources such as wealth, power, and prestige.

**slavery system** people own others as property and have almost total control over their lives.

**caste system** people’s positions are ascribed at birth and largely fixed.



within their caste; there are severe restrictions in their choice of occupation, residence, and social relationships; and people rarely move from one caste to another.

A good example is India, where a caste system has existed for more than 3,000 years. At the top were the Brahmins. On the bottom rung were the Dalits (formerly called “untouchables”), who performed the most menial and unpleasant jobs, including collecting human waste and cleaning streets. Fearing being “polluted,” higher castes wouldn’t interact with the Dalits (Mendelsohn and Vicziany, 1998).

India outlawed the caste system in 1949, but social distinctions are deeply entrenched, particularly in rural areas, and about 90 to 95 percent marry within their own castes (“Marriage in India,” 2015). In 1950, India set up a quota system that reserves nearly half of government jobs and public college slots for members of the most disadvantaged castes. Some claim that the quota system is unfair because it benefits less qualified candidates. Others maintain that such complaints come primarily from groups who fear losing some of their deep-rooted privileges (Barstow and Raj, 2015; McCarthy, 2015).

In a **class system**—a relatively open stratification structure—people’s positions are based on both birth and achievement. Because achieved characteristics (e.g., education, work skills, occupation) can change, people in open stratification systems can move from one social class to another. A **social class** is a group of people who have a similar standing or rank in a society based on wealth, education, power, prestige, and other valued resources. A large majority of Americans (60 percent) believe that hard work leads to success (Kohut, 2015), but is this really the case?

## 8-1b The Bases of Stratification

**class system** people’s positions are based on both birth and achievement.

**social class** people who have a similar standing or rank in a society based on wealth, education, power, prestige, and other valued resources.

**wealth** economic assets that a person or family owns.

**income** the money a person receives, usually through wages or salaries, but can also include other earnings.

Although 40 percent of 18- to 34-year-olds still receive financial support from their parents, 28 percent expect to become millionaires in their lifetimes (Wile, 2015). Even if some become multimillionaires, and income is an important stratification factor, it’s not the only one. Sociologists use a multidimensional approach that includes wealth, prestige, and power (Weber, 1946).

## WEALTH

**Wealth** refers to the economic assets that a person or family owns. It includes money, property (e.g., real estate), stocks and bonds, retirement and savings accounts, personal possessions (e.g., cars and jewelry), and income. **Income** is the money a person receives, usually through wages or salaries, but it can also include rents, interest on savings accounts, stock dividends, royalties, or business proceeds. Income and wealth differ in several important ways:

- ▶ Wealth is *cumulative*. It increases over time, especially through investment, whereas income is usually spent on everyday expenses.
- ▶ Because wealth is accumulated over time, much of it can be *passed on to the next generation*. Inheritances and other monetary gifts offer opportunities to start a business, buy a first (or vacation) home, pursue college without debt, and increase assets (e.g., savings and stocks).
- ▶ Passing on wealth to the next generation *preserves privilege*. Wealthy people tend to have the greatest amount of *economic capital* (income and other monetary assets like property), *cultural capital* (advanced degrees and assets such as style of speech, table manners, and physical appearance), and *social capital* (networks comprised of influential people). Differential access to all three types of capital reinforces and reproduces the existing class structure and inequality (Bourdieu, 1984).

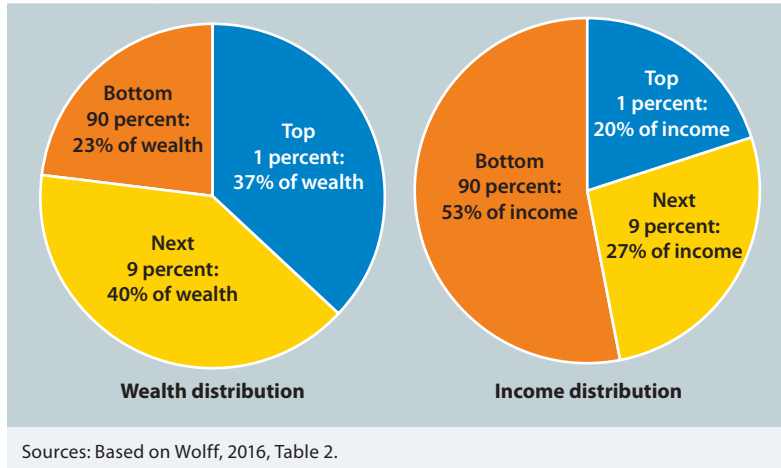
U.S. wealth and income inequality is staggering. As *Figure 8.1* shows, the top 1 percent of Americans own 37 percent of all wealth and 20 percent of all income—the highest levels ever recorded, and wealth



India’s Dalits still perform unpleasant tasks such as burning corpses and removing garbage and human waste.



**Figure 8.1 Who Has the Biggest Piece of Pie?**



and income gaps have *increased*. In 2013, the wealthiest 10 percent of households held 77 of the country's wealth, up from 67 percent in 1989. The wealth of the bottom 90 percent fell by more than 3 percent; in 2013, this group owned only 23 percent of all wealth, about as much as in 1940 (Congressional Budget Office, 2016; Zucman, 2016).

Over the past three decades, the racial wealth divide has increased. Between 1983 and 2013, ultra-wealthy people in the top 0.001 percent, the Forbes 400, increased their wealth by 736 percent—from \$700 million to \$5.8 billion—while black and Latino wealth rose only modestly (Figure 8.2). To put this extreme inequality in perspective, this page would have to be more than half a mile long to show the Forbes 400 wealth to scale (Asante-Muhammad et al., 2016).

Although racial wealth gaps have widened since the 1980s, Asians' wealth has increased significantly since 1989. Researchers predict that Asian wealth levels will soon surpass those of whites: Asian families already have the highest median household income, high educational levels, diversified assets, little or no credit card debt, and save money every year (Emmons and Noeth, 2015; see also Chapter 10).

Regardless of how the economy is doing, the rich keep getting richer. Since 1980, the average annual income of the bottom half of Americans (around \$16,000) has barely changed, while that of the top 1 percent (nearly \$1.4 million a year) grew 300 percent. In 2014, the average annual income of almost 235 million adults was only \$64,600, compared with \$1.3 million for the top 1 percent (2.4 million people) and \$6 million for the top one-tenth of the top 1 percent (234,400 people). In early 2017, the United States had 536 billionaires (up from 413 in 2011) whose average net worth was \$3.6 billion

(Piketty et al., 2016; Saez, 2016; Kroll and Dolan, 2017).

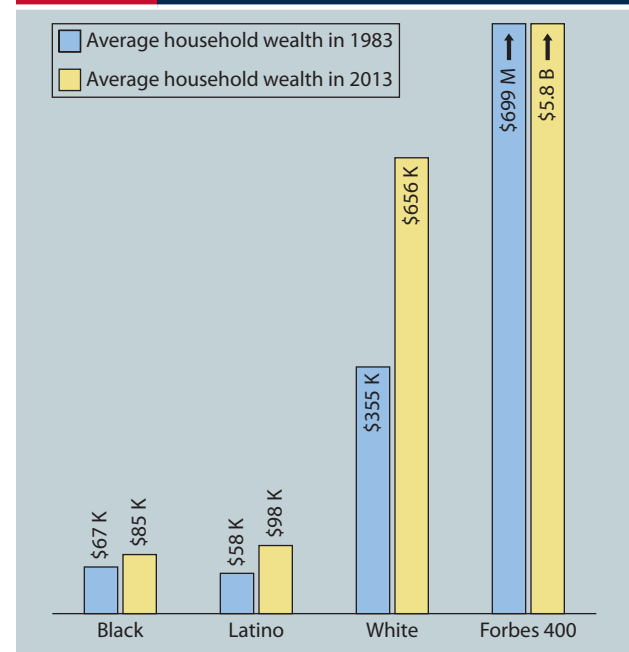
## PRESTIGE

A second basis of social stratification is **prestige**—respect or recognition attached to social positions. Prestige is based on many criteria, including wealth, family background, power, and accomplishments. Regarding accomplishments, for example, every college convocation acknowledges students who graduate *cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, and *summa cum laude*.

We typically evaluate people according to the kind of work they do. Higher prestige occupations include physicians, lawyers, pharmacists, college professors, architects, dentists, and teachers. Legislators, police officers, actors, librarians, realtors, and firefighters are examples of jobs at a medium prestige level. Occupations at the lower prestige level consist of janitors, carpenters, bartenders, garbage collectors, truck drivers, and food servers (Smith et al., 2011).

**prestige** respect or recognition attached to social positions.

**Figure 8.2 The Color of Wealth**



Note: In 2013, 95 percent of the Forbes 400 were white.

Source: Asante-Muhammad et al., 2016, 12.

The most prestigious occupations have several characteristics:

- ▶ They *require more formal education* (college or postgraduate degrees) and/or extensive training. Physicians, for example, must fulfill internship and residency requirements after receiving a medical degree.
- ▶ They're primarily *non-manual and require more abstract thought*. All jobs have some physical activity, but an architect must use more imagination in designing a building than a carpenter, who usually performs very specific tasks.
- ▶ They *are paid more*, even though there are some exceptions. A realtor or a truck driver may earn more than a registered nurse, but registered nurses are likely to earn more over a lifetime because they have steady employment, health benefits, and retirement programs.
- ▶ They're *seen as socially more important*. An elementary school teacher may earn less than the school's janitor, but the teacher's job is more prestigious because teachers contribute more to a society's well-being.
- ▶ They *involve greater self-expression, autonomy, and freedom from supervision*. A dentist has considerably more freedom in performing her or his job than a dental hygienist. In effect, then, higher prestige occupations provide more privileges.

## POWER

A third basis of social stratification is **power**—the ability to influence or control the behavior of others despite opposition. Wealthy people generally have more power than others in dominating top government and economic positions. Even if they don't hold a political office or a corporate position, the most powerful people make the nation's important decisions.

People who experience *status consistency* are about equal in terms of wealth, prestige, and power. A Supreme Court justice, for instance, is usually affluent, enjoys a

**power** the ability to influence or control the behavior of others despite opposition.

**socioeconomic status (SES)** an overall ranking of a person's position in society based on income, education, and occupation.



Lee Lorenz/The New Yorker Collection/The Cartoon Bank

great deal of prestige, and wields considerable power. In many cases, however, there's *status inconsistency* (see Chapter 5) if a person ranks differently on stratification factors. Consider funeral directors. Their prestige is relatively low, but most have higher incomes than college professors, who are among the most educated people in U.S. society and have relatively high prestige.

We've looked at stratification systems and their

bases, but how, specifically, do people in different social classes act? And how does social class affect our behavior?

## 8-2

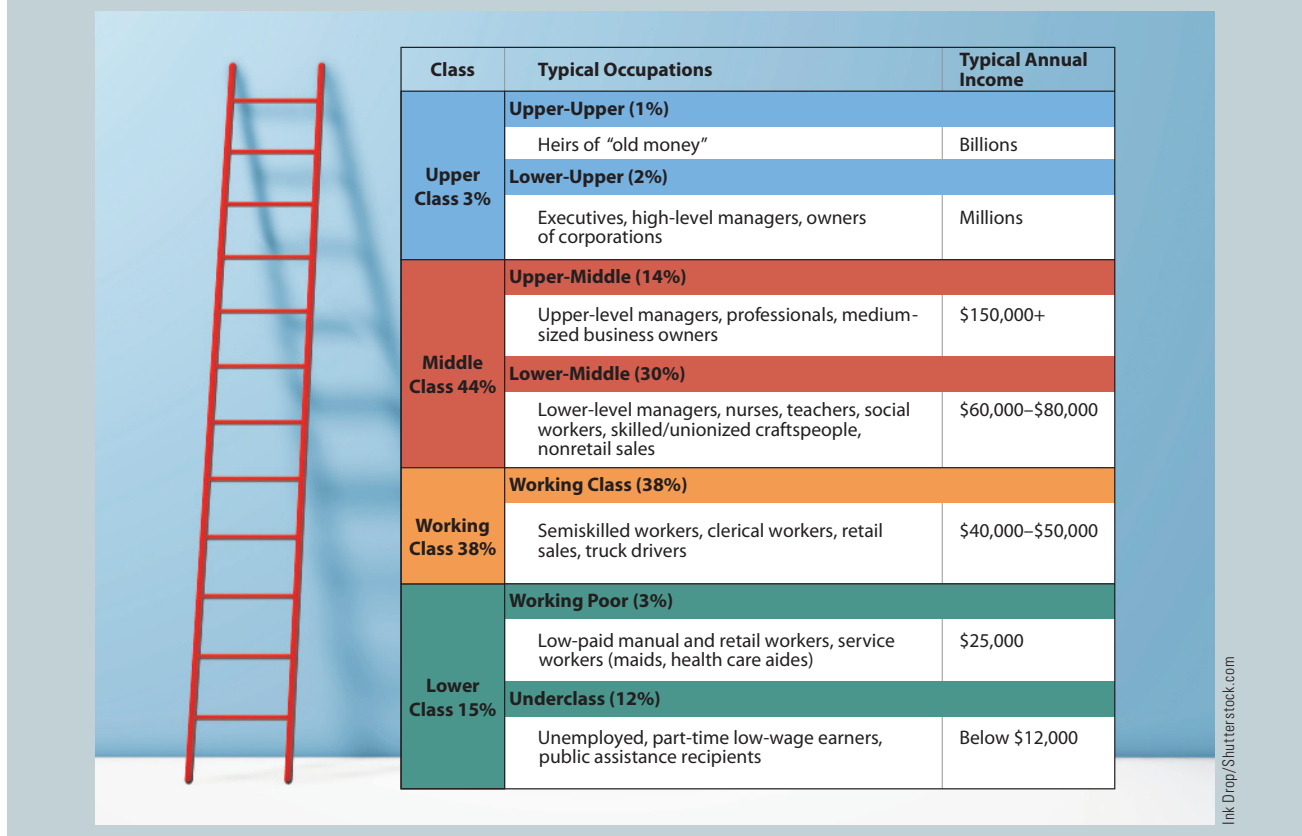
## SOCIAL CLASS IN AMERICA

Social class is a more important divider than race, ethnicity, gender, age, or other characteristics. To measure social class, sociologists typically use **socioeconomic status (SES)**—an overall ranking of a person's position in society based on income, education, and occupation. Some researchers ask people to identify the social classes in their communities (*reputational approach*), some ask people to place themselves in one of a number of classes (*subjective approach*), but most use SES indicators (*objective approach*).

In measuring social class, national surveys tend to use the subjective approach and closed-ended questions (see Chapter 2). Because the choices differ, so do respondents' self-identification. In a recent Gallup poll in which two of the five categories included the words "middle class," 62 percent of Americans identified themselves as upper-middle or middle class (Newport, 2017). In another national survey, however, where three of the five categories included the words "middle class," fully 87 percent said that they were upper-middle, middle, or lower-middle class (Doherty and Tyson, 2015).

Because there are different ways of measuring social class, sociologists don't always agree on the number of social classes. There's consensus, however, that there are four general classes: upper, middle, working, and lower. Except for the working class, many sociologists divide these classes further into more specific strata. There aren't rigid dividing lines, but *Figure 8.3* provides an overview of the U.S. social class structure. Besides income, education,

**Figure 8.3** The American Class Structure



Sources: Based on U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey . . . , 2013; Wysong et al., 2014; and BLS Reports, 2017.

and occupation, social classes also differ in values, power, prestige, social networks, and *lifestyles* (tastes, preferences, and ways of living).

## 8-2a The Upper Class

Two percent of Americans say they’re upper class (Newport, 2017). Their self-identification doesn’t necessarily reflect their actual SES, however, because the upper class comprises the *upper-upper class* and the *lower-upper class*.

### THE UPPER-UPPER CLASS

Upper-upper-class people are the *old rich* who have been wealthy for generations. Because they value their privacy, upper-upper-class members rarely appear on the lists of wealthiest individuals published by *Forbes* or other sources.

An inherited fortune brings power. Upper-upper-class white males, in particular, shape the economic and political climate through a variety of mechanisms: Dominating the upper levels of business and finance, holding top political positions in the federal government,

underwriting thousands of think tanks and research institutes that formulate national policies, and shaping public opinion through the mass media (Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, 2006; Hacker and Pierson, 2010).

### THE LOWER-UPPER CLASS

The lower-upper class—which is much more diverse than the upper-upper class—is the *nouveau riche*, those with “new money.” Some, like the Kennedys, amassed fortunes several generations ago. Others, like politician and businessman Jeb Bush, are augmenting their vast inheritances through a combination of speaking fees, corporate board memberships, investments, and consulting contracts that pay millions each year (O’Keefe et al., 2015). Many of the new rich—Oprah Winfrey, Beyoncé, and Mark Zuckerberg—worked for their income rather than inherited it.

Besides business entrepreneurs, the lower-upper class also includes high-level managers of international corporations, those who earn at least a million dollars a year, and some highly paid athletes and actors, but the lifestyles vary considerably. Some lower-upper class members live modestly, but many flaunt their new



Conspicuous consumption isn't limited to the super-rich. Many upper-middle-class people, in particular, use status symbols to show that they've made it by buying "almost rich" cars (like a Mercedes Benz that starts at \$32,000), upscale kitchen appliances, designer handbags, expensive jewelry, and by taking lavish vacations.



wealth. Sociologist Thorstein Veblen (1899/1953) coined the term *conspicuous consumption*, a lavish spending on goods and services to display one's social status and enhance one's prestige.

Most of the *nouveau riche* are extremely wealthy. If Bill Gates spent \$1 million every single day, it would take him 218 years to spend all his money (Oxfam, 2014). Because they lack the "right" ancestry and have usually made their money by working for it, however, lower-uppers aren't accepted into "old money" circles that have strong feelings of in-group solidarity. Still, they engage in lifestyles and rituals that parallel those of the upper-upper class, such as having personal chefs, taking exotic vacations (often in private planes), and joining country clubs (Sherwood, 2010).

## 8-2b The Middle Class

For about 89 percent of Americans, being middle class means having a secure job and being able to save money for the future. This may help explain why—whether they earn \$22,000 or \$200,000 a year—people identify themselves as middle class (Brown, 2016; Grobart, 2016). There's no agreement on exactly where the middle class begins and ends, but there are some major differences between the *upper-middle class* and the *lower-middle class*.

### THE UPPER-MIDDLE CLASS

Upper-middle-class members, although rich, live on earned income rather than accumulated or inherited wealth. The occupations of this group usually require a Ph.D. or advanced professional degree. People in this class include corporate executives and managers (but not those at the top), high government officials, owners of large businesses, physicians, and successful lawyers and stockbrokers. A higher level of education is associated with greater occupational prestige and autonomy, as well as job quality and security, but people in these occupations are three times more likely than those in the general population to work 50 or more hours per week (Dewan and Gebeloff, 2012).

### THE LOWER-MIDDLE CLASS

The lower-middle class, more diverse than the upper-middle class, is composed of people in nonmanual occupations that require some training beyond high school, and professional occupations that require a college degree. Nonmanual jobs include office staff, low-level managers, owners of small businesses, medical and dental technicians, secretaries, police officers, and sales workers (e.g., insurance and real estate agents). Examples of professional occupations are nursing, social work, and teaching. Most families in the lower-middle class rely on two incomes to maintain a comfortable standard of living.

Unlike the upper-middle class, those in the lower-middle class have less autonomy and freedom from supervision, and there's little chance for advancement. Except for some retirement funds, most have only modest savings to cover emergencies. Many buy used or inexpensive late-model cars, eat out at middle-income restaurants, and take occasional vacations, but they rarely have the income to buy luxury products without going deeply into debt.

## 8-2c The Working Class

About 30 percent of Americans identify themselves as working class (Newport, 2016). This group includes skilled and semiskilled laborers (e.g., construction and assembly-line workers, truck drivers, auto mechanics, electricians). The semiskilled jobs typically require little training, are mechanized, and closely supervised. Most of the occupations are blue-collar, but some—clerks and retail sales workers—are white collar. The jobs don't require a college education, but offer little or no opportunity for advancement.

Working-class homeowners may experience foreclosure because of delinquent payments. Many use credit cards but then can barely pay the monthly minimum, don't have enough money to cover a \$500 repair bill, and all of their savings may amount to only about four months of income. Debts become overwhelming when borrowers suffer setbacks like divorce, illness, or job loss (Bell, 2015; PEW Charitable Trusts, 2015).

## 8-2d The Lower Class

Only 8 percent of Americans identify themselves as lower class (Newport, 2016). People in this group are at the bottom of the economic ladder because they have little education, few occupational skills, work in minimum wage jobs, or are often unemployed. Most of the lower



Jose Cabezas/AFP/Getty Images

Among America's working poor are hotel housekeepers. On average, those employed even at expensive hotels earn less than \$19,000 a year working full time. The working poor do dirty and often demeaning work for next to nothing, barely scrape by, and live in constant fear of being fired (Wing and Schwartz, 2014).

class is poor, but sociologists distinguish between the *working poor* and the *underclass*.

## THE WORKING POOR

Almost 9 million Americans are the **working poor**—people who work at least 27 weeks a year but whose wages fall below the official poverty level. Women are more likely than men to be among the working poor. Blacks and Latinos are more than twice as likely as Asians and whites to be in this group. Full-time workers are less likely than part-time workers to be working poor, but almost 4 percent of people usually employed full time are among the working poor, primarily because of low earnings (BLS Reports, 2017).

## THE UNDERCLASS

The **underclass** are people who are persistently poor, residentially segregated, and relatively isolated from the rest of the population. Most are chronically unemployed or drift in and out of jobs. They may work erratically or part time, but their lack of skills, low education levels, and mental or physical disabilities make it difficult for them to find full-time jobs. Members of the underclass may have some earnings, but are often dependent on government programs, including Social Security, Medicaid, and veterans' benefits. Some also have income from criminal activities (Gilbert, 2011; see also Chapter 7).

### 8-2e How Social Class Affects Us

Social class, more than any other single variable, affects practically all aspects of our lives. Max Weber referred to

the consequences of social stratification as *life chances*—opportunities to access social and economic resources that improve one's quality of life (e.g., food, housing, education). People's life chances vary across institutions. Regarding health, for example:

- ▶ Poor children are two times more likely than children in affluent families to have serious emotional or behavioral problems, and are more likely to be unhealthy in adulthood. Unhealthy adults earn less, spend less time in the labor force, and must often retire earlier (Reuben and Pastor, 2015; see also Chapter 14).



Glovatskiy/Shutterstock.com



Shkvarato/Shutterstock.com

- ▶ Living in a chronically disadvantaged neighborhood and experiencing violence increases anxiety and long-term stress, accelerating the onset of diseases (Harrell et al., 2014; Schanzenbach et al., 2016).
- ▶ Compared with the upper class, the lower class is four times more likely to be unhealthy, three times more likely to be unhappy, and twice as likely to be frequently stressed and depressed (Morin and Motel, 2012; Graham, 2015).
- ▶ The wealthiest Americans are now living 10 to 15 years longer than the poorest (Dickman et al., 2017).

## 8-3 POVERTY

There are two ways to define poverty: absolute and relative. **Absolute poverty** is not having enough money to afford the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, and shelter ("what I need"). **Relative poverty** is not having enough money to maintain an average standard of living ("what I want").

**working poor** people who work at least 27 weeks a year but whose wages fall below the official poverty level.

**underclass** people who are persistently poor and seldom employed, residentially segregated, and relatively isolated from the rest of the population.

**absolute poverty** not having enough money to afford the basic necessities of life.

**relative poverty** not having enough money to maintain an average standard of living.

## Six Ways the Poor Pay More

**FOOD:** Not having a car to get to a supermarket chain or discount store means getting groceries at the corner store where staples are more expensive, produce is limited, and some products are stale.

**TRANSPORTATION:** About 45 percent of American households don't have access to public transportation. Old cars break down, can be expensive to fix, use a lot of gas, and can cost people a job.

**DOING BUSINESS:** Most neighborhood stores charge more for products because real estate and insurance are more expensive. Poor people also pay more for financial services. Banks are scarce and "check-cashing stores" charge up to 10 percent of a check's value to cash it.

**CREDIT:** Because poor people don't have credit, they must rely on "cash advance" stores if they can prove that they get a regular paycheck. If poor people qualify for such a loan, they pay an annual percentage rate of about 825 percent.

**EVERYDAY HASSLES:** The poor are hassled almost every day by bill collectors because of overdue payments, deal with Laundromat trips, carry groceries long distances, and contend with violence in high-crime areas.

**WAITING:** Poor people spend much of their time waiting—in food pantry lines, at blood banks to sell their blood, at bus stops to get to work, and for apartments in safer neighborhoods.

Sources: Brown, 2009; Bass and Campbell, 2013; Johnson, 2014 "Tackling Poverty," 2015.

### 8-3a The Poverty Line

The **poverty line** (also called the *poverty threshold*) is the minimal income level that the federal government considers necessary for basic subsistence. To determine the poverty line, the Department of Agriculture (DOA) estimates the annual cost of food that meets minimum nutritional guidelines and then multiplies this figure by three to cover the minimum cost of clothing, housing, health care, and other necessities. The poverty line, which in 2016 was \$24,339 for a family of four (two adults and two children), is adjusted every year to include cost-of-living increases. If a family makes more than the poverty line, it's usually not eligible for public assistance (Semega et al., 2017).

Is the poverty line realistic? Some contend that the poverty line is too high. They argue, for example, that many people aren't as poor as they seem because the poverty threshold doesn't include the value of noncash benefits such as food stamps, medical services (primarily Medicare and Medicaid), public housing subsidies, and unreported income (Eberstadt, 2009; Haskins, 2015).

Others claim that the poverty line is too low because it doesn't include



Spencer Platt/Getty Images

One in three poor Americans live in the suburbs. Compared with central cities, many suburbs offer safer streets, better schools, and a greater number of low-paying jobs (e.g., retail sales, landscaping, restaurants). Rents are rising, however, and many of the suburban poor worry about the costs of maintaining a car to get to work (Kneebone and Berube, 2014; Kneebone, 2016).

child care and job transportation costs or the cost-of-living expenses, particularly housing, that vary considerably across states, regions, and urban-rural areas. According to some economists, a family of four needs almost \$60,000 a year to cover basic necessities, a considerably higher amount than the official poverty line of just over \$24,000. Some also argue that poverty estimates

**poverty line** the minimal income level that the federal government considers necessary for basic subsistence (also called the *poverty threshold*).



exclude millions of Americans who live above the poverty line but rely on food banks, soup kitchens, and clothing thrift stores to survive (Fremstad, 2012; DeGraw, 2014).

### 8-3b Who Are the Poor?

In 2016, almost 13 percent of Americans (40.6 million people) were living in poverty, down from 15 percent in 2012. Between the ages of 25 and 60, 62 percent of Americans will experience at least one year of poverty (Rank and Hirschl, 2015; Semega et al., 2017). Both historically and currently, the poor share some of the following characteristics.

#### AGE

Children under age 18 make up only 23 percent of the U.S. population, but 33 percent (13.3 million) of the poor, up from a low of 16 percent in 2001. Americans aged 65 and older make up about 15 percent of the total population, but 9 percent (4.6 million) of the poor. The poverty rate of older Americans is at an all-time low, and lower than that of any other age group, because government programs, particularly Medicare and Medicaid, have generally kept up with the rate of inflation. In contrast, many programs for poor children have been reduced or eliminated since 1980 (Children's Defense Fund, 2014; Semega et al., 2017).

#### GENDER AND FAMILY STRUCTURE

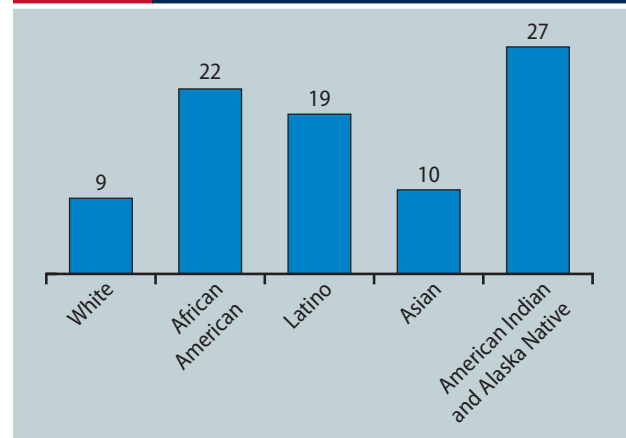
Women's poverty rates are higher than men's (14 and 11 percent, respectively), but family structure is an important factor. In 2016, 5 percent of married-couple families, 13 percent of male-headed families, and 27 percent of female-headed families lived in poverty (Semega et al., 2017).

**Feminization of poverty** refers to the disproportionate number of the poor who are women. Because of increases in divorce, nonmarital childbearing, and low-paying jobs, single-mother families are four to five times more likely to be poor than married-couple families that have two wage earners, and more likely to be extremely poor over many years (Shriver, 2014; Irving and Loveless, 2015).

#### RACE AND ETHNICITY

In absolute numbers, there are more poor whites (17.3 million) than poor Latinos (11.1 million), blacks (9.2 million), or Asians (1.9 million) (Semega et al., 2017). Proportionately, however, and as *Figure 8.4* shows, whites and Asian Americans are less likely to be poor than other racial-ethnic groups.

**Figure 8.4** Percentage of Americans Living in Poverty, by Race and Ethnicity, 2016



Sources: Based on "American Indian and Alaska Native...", 2016; and Semega et al., 2017, Table 3.

#### EDUCATION

Increasingly, education separates the poor from the non-poor. In 2016, just 5 percent of college graduates were poor, compared with 13 percent of high school graduates and 25 percent without a high school diploma (Semega et al., 2017).

The more risk factors, the more likely that someone will experience poverty. For example, being a young, black, unmarried female with young children and little education increases the odds of both poverty and extreme poverty (living below the bottom 10 percent of the income distribution) (Rank and Hirschl, 2015; Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015).

### 8-3c Why Are People Poor?

Social scientists have a number of theories about poverty (see Cellini et al., 2008, for a nontechnical summary). Regarding two of the most common explanations, one blames the poor themselves, and the other emphasizes societal factors.

#### BLAMING THE POOR: INDIVIDUAL FAILINGS

More than a third of Americans believe that people are poor because they don't work hard enough. Republicans are more likely than Democrats (56 and 19 percent, respectively) to say that poverty is due to lack of effort rather than circumstances beyond people's control (Smith, 2017).

Such attitudes reflect a still influential *culture of poverty* perspective, which contends that people are poor because they're personally "deficient" or

**feminization of poverty** the disproportionate number of the poor who are women.



In 2016, almost 550,000 Americans were homeless on a given night, down by 15 percent since 2007. Most (68 percent) stayed in residential programs, 35 percent were people in families, and 22 percent were children under the age of 18. Unemployment, poverty, and a lack of affordable housing are the main reasons for homelessness (Henry et al., 2016).

“inadequate.” If they worked harder, took initiative, were ambitious, and planned for the future instead of seeking immediate gratification, according to this perspective, poor people could succeed. Instead of being responsible and getting jobs, the poor rely on generous government handouts that erode an incentive to work (Lewis, 1966; Banfield, 1974; Murray, 1984, 2012). Thus, the most effective remedy to poverty is to change people’s attitudes and behavior.

### BLAMING SOCIETY: STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

In contrast to blaming the poor, most sociologists contend that macro-level structural factors create and sustain poverty. Technology, automation, industry relocation, and the growth of a low-wage service sector produce poverty conditions that are difficult for individuals to overcome. As the number of inner-city manufacturing jobs declined, neighborhood businesses collapsed, middle classes—both white and black—moved to the suburbs, and the poor became more isolated and welfare-dependent (Oliver and Shapiro, 1995; Wilson, 1996; Conley, 1999). Thus, the most effective remedy to poverty is changing structural forces like unemployment and very low wages.

Which perspective is more accurate, blaming the poor or blaming society? Some people are poor because they’re lazy and would rather get a handout than a job. Others “compound their misfortune by self-medicating or engaging in irresponsible, self-destructive behavior” (Kristof, 2016: SR1). Most people are poor, however, because of economic factors (low wages, job loss, lack of affordable housing, inability to afford health insurance), which, in turn, can result in acute health and employment problems.

Temporary assistance for the nation’s poorest families has fallen well below the poverty line in

every state. In 16 states, a family of three receives less than \$336 a month. Millions of poor Americans don’t seek any help for food, shelter, or utilities because they don’t know about the programs or have transportation and childcare difficulties in meeting some of the job-training requirements (Rodrigue and Reeves, 2015; Stanley et al., 2016).

Between 2014 and 2015, the poverty rate declined by 1.2 percent primarily because employers created more jobs, especially in the service sector, and raised minimum wages that attracted low-skill workers. For instance, a 32-year-old man, who had survived on odd jobs, lifted his family out of poverty when he became an assistant manager at a pizzeria with an annual salary of \$40,000 and health benefits (Cohen, 2016).

On the other hand, and despite personal failings and deficiencies, millions of middle class Americans get government aid through programs for the disabled, veterans, college students, older people, and the unemployed. Wealthy farmers receive generous federal subsidies, and for every taxpayer dollar that helps poor families, six dollars benefit the rich who avoid paying taxes (Rampell, 2014; Eckhoff, 2015; Buchheit, 2015; Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2016).

## 8-4

## SOCIAL MOBILITY

**Social mobility** is movement from one social class to another. Is the American dream of moving up the economic ladder a reality? About 62 percent of Americans, compared with 53 percent in 2012, believe that people can get ahead by working hard (Newport, 2016). Are they right?

### 8-4a Types of Social Mobility

**Intragenerational mobility** is movement up or down a social class over one’s lifetime. If Ashley begins as a nurse’s assistant, becomes a registered nurse,

**social mobility** movement from one social class to another.

**intragenerational mobility** movement up or down a social class over one’s lifetime.

and then a physician's assistant (PA), she experiences intragenerational mobility. **Intergenerational mobility** is movement up or down a social class over two or more generations. If Ashley's parents were blue-collar workers, her upward movement to the middle class is an example of intergenerational mobility. Intragenerational and intergenerational mobility can be downward or upward.

## 8-4b Recent Trends in Social Mobility

Only 50 percent of Americans born in the 1980s, compared with 90 percent born in the 1940s, are economically better off than their parents. About 40 percent of children born in the lowest or highest fifth of the income distribution will still be there as adults. For those born in the bottom 10 percent in the 1980s, 30 percent are worse off than their parents, five times as many as for children born in the 1940s (Chetty, Grusky, et al., 2016; Reeves and Joo, 2016).

The middle class has been shrinking. Since 1971, the upper- and lower-income brackets have expanded, while the middle bracket has dropped from 61 to 50 percent (*Figure 8.5*). Because of such changes, some analysts describe the middle class as “eroding,” “squeezed,” and “sinking” (Galston, 2013; Porter, 2013; Trumbull, 2015).

Most social mobility moves are short because social classes are fairly rigid (Wysong et al., 2014). A child

from a working-class family, for example, is more likely to move up to the lower-middle class than to jump to the lower-upper class. The same is true of downward mobility: Someone from the middle class is more likely to slide into the working class than to drop to the underclass. Upward intergenerational mobility has become more limited because the rungs of the economic ladder have grown further apart (Chetty et al., 2014). As you saw earlier, income inequality has increased, making it more difficult for even upper-middle class people to move up.

Across 24 middle- and high-income countries, the United States ranks only 16th in upward generational mobility and only slightly ahead of some developing countries, like Brazil and Chile (Corak, 2016). Countries with the greatest income inequality, such as the United States, are the most likely to have limited upward mobility (Greeley, 2013).

## 8-4c What Affects Social Mobility?

Upward mobility doesn't always reflect people's talents, intelligence, or hard work. Instead, much social mobility depends on structural, demographic, and family background factors, all of which are interrelated.

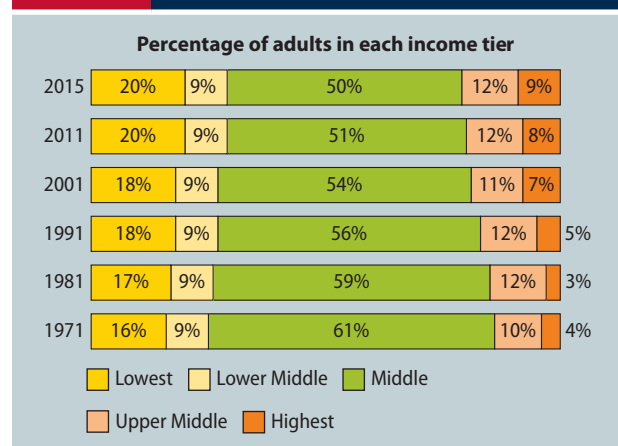
### STRUCTURAL FACTORS

Macro-level variables, over which people have little or no control, affect social mobility in several ways. First, *changes in the economy* spur upward or downward mobility. During an economic boom, the number of jobs increases, and many people have an opportunity to move up. During recessions, such as the Great Recession, long-term unemployment leads to downward mobility (see Chapters 11 and 12).

Second, *government policies and programs* affect social mobility. Unlike the United States, countries that have promoted equality (e.g., Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway) have the highest upward mobility rates. They have universal health care, which reduces the chance of people falling into poverty because of medical emergencies or poor health; provide affordable housing; and fund technical schools where young people learn a high-paying trade (Foroohar, 2011; Deparle, 2012).

Third, *immigration* fuels upward mobility. Because many recent immigrants take low-paying jobs, groups that are already in a country often move into higher-paying occupations (Haskins, 2008).

**Figure 8.5** The Middle Class Has Been Shrinking



Note: For 2015, the income for “lowest” was <\$31,402; \$31,402–\$41,868 for “lower middle”; \$41,869–\$125,608 for “middle”; \$125,609–\$188,412 for “upper middle”; and >\$188,412 for “upper.”

Source: Based on Pew Research Center, 2015, “The American Middle Class is Losing Ground...,” pp. 7, 16.

**intergenerational mobility**  
movement up or down a social class over two or more generations.



## DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Demographic factors also affect social mobility. Four of the most important are education, gender, race, and ethnicity, but place also has an effect.

**Education.** Higher education promotes upward mobility. Especially when the economy is slumping, people with a high school education or less often face long and frequent bouts of unemployment, must get by with temporary work, and may move down the socioeconomic ladder (Kochhar and Fry, 2015; Chetty et al., 2017).

**Gender.** Women's massive entry into the labor force since the 1980s has increased family income and many women's upward mobility. You'll see in later chapters that men's labor participation rates have been dropping, and women's educational attainment has risen faster than men's, but men's mobility is less affected than women's by a divorce, nonmarital children, or widowhood.

**Race and ethnicity.** Black and Latino middle classes have grown since the 1970s, but both groups still lag significantly behind whites and Asian Americans (see Chapters 10 and 11). Of black children born into the bottom 20 percent of the income distribution, about half will still be there as adults, compared to less than one-quarter of white children. Economic, cultural, and



AP Images/Kirsty Wigglesworth

social capital account for most of this mobility gap. Since the slavery era, white parents could accumulate skills and wealth that, with every generation, gave their children far better chances than black children of moving up (Collins and Wanamaker, 2017; Matthew and Reeves, 2017).

J. K. Rowling worked as a teacher. After a divorce, she lived on public assistance, writing *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* during her daughter's naps. The book was published in 1997; by 2007, Rowling, a billionaire and one of the world's richest women, was considerably wealthier than the Queen of England.

**Place.** Where one lives can stimulate or dampen upward mobility. For example, the probability of a child born into the poorest fifth of the population in San Jose, California, making it to the top fifth is 13 percent compared with only 4 percent for a child born in Charlotte, North Carolina. These upward mobility disparities in different parts of the country are correlated with four factors: residential segregation (whether by income or race), the quality of schooling, how many children live with only one parent, and parents' social capital (Chetty et al., 2014; Berube and Holmes, 2015).

The longer that children live in better environments, the greater their chances of upward mobility. For example, children below age 13 whose parents move to lower-poverty neighborhoods are more likely to attend college, more likely to have substantially higher incomes



MCT/Tribune News Service/Getty Images

Children raised in poor families can be upwardly mobile. Sonia Sotomayor, whose parents were born in Puerto Rico, is the first Latina to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. Her family first lived in a South Bronx tenement and later a working-class housing project. Sotomayor's father, an alcoholic, had a third-grade education, didn't speak English, and was a tool and die worker. He died when Sotomayor was nine years old. Her mother—a telephone operator and later a practical nurse—stressed the value of education. Sotomayor excelled in school, received a full scholarship to Princeton University, and put in long hours to catch up with her peers' academic knowledge.

as adults, and less likely to become single parents (Chetty and Hendren, 2016; Smeeding, 2017).

## FAMILY BACKGROUND FACTORS

Family wealth affects social mobility. About 60 percent of all U.S. household wealth is inherited; most of it grows, spreads through families and dynasties, and endures for generations. Whether people inherit wealth or amass it themselves, children who grow up in high-income households can experience considerable upward mobility (Alvaredo et al., 2017; Roth, 2017).

In contrast, nearly half of U.S. adults don't have enough money to cover a \$400 car repair or any other unexpected expense. Not having savings increases chronic stress. Constantly struggling to solve the crisis of the day makes it difficult to plan for the future, including saving for college (Larimore et al., 2016; Graham, 2016).

Only 7 of the 45 U.S. presidents came from the lower-middle class or below. Although Abraham Lincoln was born in a log cabin, his father was one of the wealthiest people in the community. President Donald Trump joined his father's thriving real estate company after college. He started his business with a \$14 million loan from his father, received other monetary gifts from him over the years, and relied on his successful father's connections to build his own empire (Kessler, 2016). About a third of the students with low grades at Ivy League universities wouldn't be there if their parents weren't celebrities, well-known politicians, or others who donate millions to the school (see Chapters 11 and 13).

Our socialization affects what French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) called *habitus*—the habits of speech and lifestyle that determine where a person feels comfortable and knowledgeable. Upper-class parents cultivate flexibility, autonomy, and creativity because they expect their children to step into positions that require such characteristics. Poor and working-class parents stress obedience, honesty, and appearance—traits that many employers expect. High-income parents have social connections to jobs and admission to particular schools or colleges. Because of such resources, children of top earners are likely to grow up to be top earners themselves (Khan, 2012; Corak, 2013).

Many low SES households are resilient, but meager incomes limit upward mobility. Unlike high SES parents, low-income parents have less time, health, and job flexibility to read to their children every day, take them to museums, or attend school events. Children in high-earning families also benefit from high-quality

schools, mentoring connections, enriching extracurricular activities, and skills for navigating bureaucracies that will help them succeed in schools and workplaces (Mitnik and Grusky, 2015; Putnam, 2015; Corak, 2016; see also Chapter 4).

8-5

## GLOBAL STRATIFICATION

**Global stratification** refers to worldwide inequality patterns that result from differences in wealth, power, and prestige. All societies are stratified, but more than 75 percent of the world's population lives in countries where economic inequality has widened, increasing the possibility of social class tension and conflict (United Nations Development Program, 2013; World Economic Forum, 2013).

### 8-5a Wealth and Income Inequality

In 2016, global wealth reached \$256 trillion, but how is it distributed? Among the world's richest,

- ▶ 1 percent own more wealth than the rest of the planet;
- ▶ 10 percent own 89 percent of all global wealth; and
- ▶ 8 people (6 of whom are Americans) own as much wealth as “half the human race” (Shorrocks et al., 2016; Hardoon, 2017).

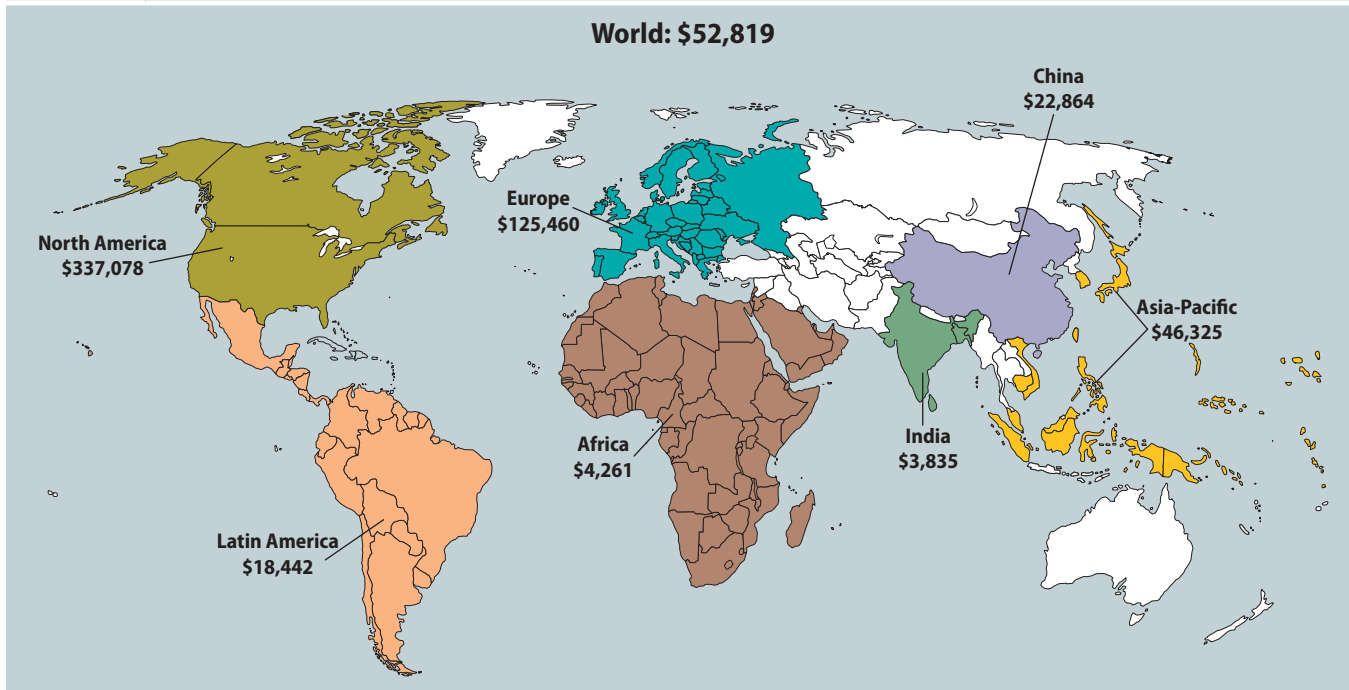
There are enormous wealth disparities across regions (Figure 8.6), and the inequalities have swelled. The incomes of the top 1 percent have increased 60 percent since 1990, and the income growth of the ultra-rich 0.01 percent has been even greater. Even in more economically egalitarian countries like Norway and Sweden, the share of income going to the richest 1 percent increased by more than 50 percent between 1980 and 2012 (Oxfam, 2013; Fuentes-Nieva and Galasso, 2014).

Worldwide, income inequality is also pervasive. Across 131 countries, the richest 3 percent hold 20 percent of all income. The median per capita incomes in the wealthiest populations are more than 50 times those in the 10 poorest populations, all of which are in sub-Saharan Africa, but there's considerable economic stratification within countries. In oil-rich Nigeria, for instance, the richest 6 percent hold 40 percent of the country's total income (Phelps and Crabtree, 2013, 2014).

#### global stratification

worldwide inequality patterns that result from differences in wealth, power, and prestige.

**Figure 8.6** Wealth per Adult, by Region and Selected Countries, 2016



Source: Based on Shorrocks et al., 2016, Table 1.

Living in a wealthy country doesn't mean that people enjoy income equality. Among 35 high-income countries, the United States ranks 33rd in income equality—far behind other industrialized nations and just above some developing countries like Turkey and Mexico (OECD, 2016).

### 8-5b The Plight of Women and Children

Historically, currently, and across *all* nations, women and children experience the greatest inequality. An important measure of a country's health is its **infant mortality rate**, the number of babies under age 1 who die per 1,000 live births in a given year. The infant mortality rate ranges from a high of 97 in some low-income African nations to a low of 3 in affluent Western European countries (Kaneda and Bietsch, 2016).

Children's deaths have declined worldwide since 1990, but every year nearly 6 million poor children die before their fifth birthday; most of the deaths continue to be concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa. Malnutrition—which makes children more vulnerable

**infant mortality rate** the number of babies under age 1 who die per 1,000 live births in a given year.

to severe diseases—is the underlying factor in 45 percent of all child deaths (World Health Organization, 2016).

There's a strong association between high infant and child mortality rates and women's low education levels. Investing in women's education reduces unwanted and unplanned births; lowers infant, child, and maternal mortality; increases women's labor force participation; and can help lift a family out of poverty (World Bank and Collins, 2013; World Economic Forum, 2013).

Education doesn't guarantee women's greater economic equality, however. In both rich and poor countries, women are less likely than men to be employed because of cultural attitudes about women's roles and child rearing responsibilities. When women work outside the home, their average earnings are about half those of men: \$11,000 and \$20,000, respectively (World Economic Forum, 2016). Gender pay gaps vary across countries, but in all nations, women are paid less than men for similar work (see Chapters 9, 11, and 12).

### 8-5c Other Consequences of Global Stratification

Worldwide, 11 percent of the population (766 million people) live in *extreme poverty* (on less than \$1.90 a day), but this is down from 35 percent (1.8 billion people) in 1990. This unprecedented decline is due, largely, to China's and India's economic growth, which has





benefited the rich and the poor. Despite such progress, extreme poverty rates have increased in sub-Saharan Africa, which now accounts for half of the world's extremely poor (World Bank, 2017).

Because of severe destitution, almost one in ten people worldwide suffer from chronic hunger and undernourishment. China and India have reduced their hunger rates, but in other developing regions (e.g., sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, which includes Pakistan and Bangladesh), the number of undernourished people has increased. Some of the consequences include recurring illness, reduced work capacity, delayed physical and mental development, and stunted growth. For females, stunted growth can result in low birth weight babies and high child mortality rates (Martins, 2011; FAO, IFAD, and WFP, 2015).

People in poor countries report high levels of unhappiness, physical and mental health problems, and have little chance to escape poverty. Economic inequality has other costs: The world's richest 1 percent use their wealth to get political favors, including bypassing environmental laws; diminish other people's opportunities for upward mobility; and have a global network of tax havens worth almost \$8 trillion within their own countries and offshore. Why should we care about tax havens?

Taxing the income of the top 1 percent would (among other benefits) end extreme poverty, decrease political corruption, and ensure access to high-quality education and health care for all social classes (Helliwell et al., 2013; Lipton and Cresswell, 2016; Hardoon, 2017).

## 8-5d Why Is Inequality Universal?

Many theories try to explain why inequality is universal, but three of the most influential have been modernization theory, dependency theory, and world-system theory.

*Modernization theory* claims that low-income countries are poor because their leaders don't have the attitudes and values that lead to experimentation and using modern technology. Instead, policy makers adhere to traditional customs that isolate and prevent them from competing in a global economy. In effect, modernization theory blames poor nations for their poverty and other problems. After the key foundations of modernity and capitalism are in place, this perspective maintains, low-income countries will prosper.

*Dependency theory* contends that the main reason why low-income countries are poor is because they're pawns that high-income countries exploit and dominate. Rich nations wield an enormous amount of power by exporting jobs overseas, manipulating foreign aid, draining less powerful countries of their resources, penetrating other countries with multinational corporations, and coercing national governments to comply with corporate economic and political interests. In effect, according to dependency theorists, high-income countries benefit because the poor provide cheap labor and aren't powerful enough to protest even though they work in hazardous conditions and earn less than \$1 a day.

More recently, *world-system theory*, similar to dependency theory, argues that "the economic realities of the world system help rich countries stay rich while poor countries stay poor" (Bradshaw and Wallace, 1996: 44). Countries like the United States that dominate the world economy control the economies of low-income countries because their workers depend on external markets for jobs.



We hear about the booming economies of India and China, but not everyone has benefited. A tent city in India houses many of the workers who earn about \$1.30 a day building new office towers for the affluent. In China, a man in Shanghai begs as wealthier residents pass by.

High-income countries can extract raw materials (e.g., diamonds and oil) with little cost. They can also set prices, regardless of market values, for agricultural products that low-income countries export. Doing so forces many small farmers to abandon their fields because they can't pay for labor, fertilizer, and other costs (Carl, 2002; Alvaredo et al., 2013).

## 8-6 SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS: WHY THERE ARE HAVES AND HAVE-NOTS

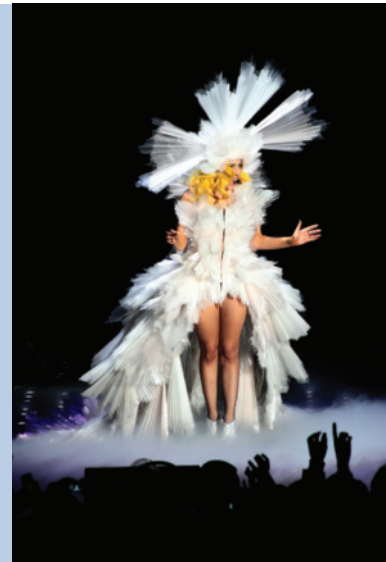
Why are societies stratified? *Table 8.1* summarizes the key points of the four theoretical perspectives. Let's begin by looking at a long-standing debate between functionalists and conflict theorists on why there are haves and have-nots.

### 8-6a Functionalist Perspectives: Stratification Benefits Society

**Davis–Moore thesis** the functionalist view that social stratification benefits a society.

Functionalists see stratification as both necessary and inevitable: Social class provides each individual a place in the social world,

Singer Lady Gaga had an estimated net worth of \$275 million in 2016. Do her earnings reflect her contribution to society, especially compared with teachers, physicians, trash collectors, computer scientists, and others?



ChinellatoPhoto/Shutterstock.com

and motivates people to contribute to society. Without a system of unequal rewards, functionalists argue, many important jobs wouldn't be performed.

### THE DAVIS–MOORE THESIS

Sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (1945) developed one of the most influential functionalist perspectives on social stratification that persists today. The **Davis–Moore thesis**, as it's commonly called, asserts that social stratification benefits society. The key

**Table 8.1** Sociological Explanations of Social Stratification

PERSPECTIVE	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS	KEY POINTS
Functionalist	Macro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fills social positions that are necessary for a society's survival</li> <li>Motivates people to succeed and ensures that the most qualified people will fill the most important positions</li> </ul>
Conflict	Macro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourages workers' exploitation and promotes the interests of the rich and powerful</li> <li>Ignores a wealth of talent among the poor</li> </ul>
Feminist	Macro and micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constructs numerous barriers in patriarchal societies that limit women's achieving wealth, status, and prestige</li> <li>Requires most women, not men, to juggle domestic and employment responsibilities that impede upward mobility</li> </ul>
Symbolic Interactionist	Micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shapes stratification through socialization, everyday interaction, and group membership</li> <li>Reflects social class identification through symbols, especially products that signify social status</li> </ul>

arguments of the Davis–Moore thesis can be summarized as follows:

- 1. Every society must fill a wide variety of positions and ensure that people accomplish important tasks.** Societies need teachers, doctors, farmers, trash collectors, plumbers, police officers, and so on.
- 2. Some positions are more crucial than others for a society's survival.** Doctors, for example, provide more critical services to ensure a society's continuation than do lawyers, engineers, or bankers.
- 3. The most qualified people must fill the most important positions.** Some jobs require more skill, training, or intelligence than others because they're more demanding, and it's more difficult to replace the workers. Pilots, for example, must have more years of training and aren't replaced as easily as flight attendants.
- 4. Society must offer greater rewards to motivate the most qualified people to fill the most important positions.** People won't undergo many years of education or training unless they're rewarded by money, power, status, and/or prestige. If doctors and nurses earned the same salaries, there wouldn't be much incentive for people to spend so many years earning a medical degree.

According to the Davis–Moore thesis and other functionalist perspectives, then, stratification and inequality are necessary to motivate people to work hard and to succeed. For functionalists, social stratification is based on **meritocracy**—people's accomplishments. That is, people are rewarded for what they do and how well, rather than their ascribed status.

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Sociologist Melvin Tumin (1953) challenged the Davis–Moore thesis. First, he argued, societies don't always reward the positions that are the most important for the members' survival. If the multimillionaire professional athletes, actors, and pop musicians went on strike, many of us would probably barely notice. If, on the other hand, those with much lower income—whether they're doctors, garbage collectors, teachers, truck drivers, or mail carriers—refused to work, society would grind to a halt. Thus, according to Tumin, there's little association between earnings and the jobs that keep a society going.

Second, Tumin claimed, Davis and Moore overlook the many ways that stratification limits upward mobility. Where wealth is differentially distributed, access to education, especially higher education, depends on family

wealth. As a result, large segments of the population are likely to be deprived of the chance to discover what their talents are, and society loses.

Third, Tumin criticized Davis and Moore for ignoring the critical role of inheritance. In upper classes, sons and daughters don't have to work because their inherited wealth guarantees a lifetime income and perpetuates privileges over generations.

Functionalist theories also don't explain why (1) upward social mobility is more limited in the United States than in other industrialized (and even some developing) countries; (2) so many college graduates can find only low-paying jobs; and (3) racial/ethnic income and wealth gaps persist across all social classes (Legatum Prosperity Index, 2013; McKernan et al., 2013).

## 8-6b Conflict Perspectives: Stratification Harms Society

Like Tumin, conflict theorists maintain that social stratification is dysfunctional because it hurts individuals and societies. Karl Marx's (1934) analysis of social class and inequality has had a lasting impact on modern sociology, especially conflict theory.

### CAPITALISM BENEFITS THE RICH

Marx was aware that a diversity of classes can exist at any one time, but he predicted that capitalist societies would ultimately be reduced to two social classes: the capitalist class, or bourgeoisie, and the working class, or proletariat. The **bourgeoisie**, those who own and control capital and the means of production (e.g., factories, land, banks, and other sources of income), can amass wealth and power. The **proletariat**, workers who sell their labor for wages, earn barely enough to survive.

**meritocracy** a belief that social stratification is based on people's accomplishments.

**bourgeoisie** those who own and control capital and the means of production.

**proletariat** workers who sell their labor for wages.



Olivier Le Moal/Shutterstock.com



For conflict theorists, the economic struggles of the U.S. middle and working classes since the late 1970s weren't primarily the result of globalization and technological changes but, instead, a long series of government policies that overwhelmingly favored the rich. This policy of **corporate welfare** consists of an array of subsidies, tax breaks, and assistance that the government has created for businesses. For example:

- ▶ Taxpayers paid \$7 trillion to bail out mismanaged financial institutions. The companies' executives still receive multimillion-dollar annual salaries and benefits (Ivry et al., 2015; Kiel and Nguyen, 2015; see also Chapter 11).
- ▶ Each household pays about \$10,000 per year to subsidize corporations. Companies benefit enormously from the taxpayer-supported highways they use, law enforcement and judicial systems that protect their intellectual and physical property, public education that provides their workforce, and military personnel who safeguard corporate assets abroad. Other costs include corporations' unpaid taxes, oil producers' pollution and environmental disaster clean-ups, and taxpayer-funded research that results in patent-protected technology that reaps massive corporate profits (Buchheit, 2015, 2017).
- ▶ Among the most profitable 258 U.S. corporations, 18 paid no taxes between 2008 and 2015 (e.g., General Electric, Priceline.com), 24 paid zero taxes in four of the eight years, and 48 paid between 0 and 10 percent—well below the average employee's 30 percent tax rate (Frankel, 2017; Gardner et al., 2017).

Considerable data support conflict theorists' contention that growing inequality is dysfunctional for society. Among other social problems, ongoing economic inequity intensifies poverty, undermines people's trust in political and economic institutions, and, consequently, erodes national solidarity.

Whether their concern is driven by self-interest or a sense of justice, even powerful financiers and conservative economists have begun to worry about economic inequality. They fear that the increasing income and wealth gaps and low wages have made the United States less productive, have narrowed the consumer spending base, and have discouraged many people from entering or staying in the labor force. They also wonder if the

**corporate welfare** subsidies, tax breaks, and assistance that the government has created for businesses.

**gender stratification** unequal access to wealth, power, status, prestige, and other valued resources because of one's sex.

huge gulf between the top 1 to 5 percent and the rest of society may lead to "oppressive taxes" on the super-rich, widespread social unrest, and even a revolution (Dumaine, 2015; Hightower, 2015).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Conflict theories have their limitations. First, and despite Marx's prediction, even though corporate wealth has surged during the past 100 years while many people have become poorer, there have been some protests but no revolutions in capitalist countries. Americans aren't demanding greater economic equality, and many go into debt to purchase luxury items like TVs, jewelry, and pet supplies, and to replace expensive smartphones and other high-tech hardware every few years. Thus, according to critics, conflict theorists are exaggerating the existence and effects of economic inequality.

Second, some critics point out that conflict theorists overlook the fact that government programs have cut poverty by 40 percent since the 1960s. About 46 percent of American households pay no federal income taxes (and these tax breaks have nearly doubled since 1975) because they receive public assistance, get deductions for raising children under age 18, or don't report income. Moreover, the United States spends far more, per capita, than do many other wealthy countries on pensions, health care, education, unemployment, housing assistance, and similar benefits (Kirkegaard, 2015; "Inequality," 2017).

## 8-6c Feminist Perspectives: Stratification Benefits Primarily Men

For feminist scholars, functionalist and conflict theories are limited because they typically focus on men in describing and analyzing stratification and social class. As a result, women are largely invisible.

## GENDER STRATIFICATION AND INEQUALITY

**Gender stratification**—unequal access to wealth, power, status, prestige, and other valued resources because of one's sex—contributes to systemic inequality. At the top rungs, only 13 percent of the world's billionaires are women, and 83 percent have inherited their fortunes. Only 16 percent of the top 1 percent of Americans are women. "The higher up you move in the income distribution," according to an influential economist, "the lower the proportion of women" (Piketty et al., 2016; Frank, 2017: BU3; Wealth-X, 2017).

In rich and poor countries, gender stratification leads to discrimination in the economy, politics, and access to medical services. Especially in low-income



In 2013, more than 1,100 workers were killed and 2,000 were injured when an unsafe garment factory collapsed in Bangladesh. The country exports \$20 billion in clothes annually to European and U.S. retailers, including Walmart. The \$38-a-month minimum wage (for a six-day workweek) barely covers living expenses. More than 80 percent of the 4 million workers in Bangladesh's garment industry are women, mostly young and with little schooling (Al-Mahmood, 2013; Hammadi, 2013; Srivastava, 2013).



countries, almost 4 million girls and women are “missing” each year because of high death rates. About 20 percent are aborted because of a preference for sons, and more than a third die of childbirth and pregnancy complications. Besides excessive deaths, many women do much of the unpaid work (such as household chores and child rearing), earn less than men across all jobs, and hold only a minority of decision-making positions in public and private institutions (United Nations, 2015).

More than 100 countries ban women from certain jobs, accessing financial services, owning businesses, or conducting legal affairs. And a “global pandemic” of violence against females affects one in three worldwide, including young girls who become sex slaves (UN Women, 2014).

Feminist theorists contend that, in a patriarchal system, men dominate the stratification system: They control a disproportionate share of wealth, prestige, and power, and the feminization of poverty results in women's downward mobility. Women must often overcome economic inequities as well as juggle domestic and workplace responsibilities (see Chapters 11 and 12). The gender gaps in wealth, income, and household burdens make it harder for women to build a strong future for themselves and their families.

### CRITICAL EVALUATION

Some critics point out that feminist theorists often focus only on poor women in showing how patriarchy affects

stratification and social class (see Kendall, 2002). Another criticism is that many feminist scholars don't explain why so many women succeed despite patriarchal barriers. Third, feminist theories don't account for some striking cross-cultural variations. For example, women have greater wage equality and political power in some patriarchal and developing countries (e.g., Bolivia, Burundi, Cuba, Rwanda) than in many presumably more egalitarian industrialized nations (e.g., Australia, Canada, Denmark, United States) (World Economic Forum, 2016).

### 8-6d Symbolic Interaction Perspectives: People Create and Shape Stratification

Symbolic interactionists focus on how people create, change, and reproduce social classes. They address micro-level issues such as how people learn their social positions in everyday life and how such learning affects their attitudes, behavior, and lifestyles.

### SOCIAL CONTEXTS SHAPE SOCIAL CLASS

People across social classes interact with and socialize their children differently. By age 2, children from higher-income homes know 30 percent more words than those from low-income homes. Early vocabularies increase reading comprehension and proficiency as early as kindergarten (Fernald et al., 2013).

Children as young as 4 years old are aware of and enact their social class. Among preschoolers, upper-middle-class children speak, interrupt, ask for help, and argue more often than do working-class children. Such behavior receives more adult attention and gives upper-middle-class children more opportunities to develop their language skills (Streib, 2011).

Social contexts also affect mobility. The social classes into which children are born affect their aspirations, the skills they value and can access, and their networks and resources. Doctors' children, for example, are more likely to become physicians themselves because they're exposed to medical discussions at home, are encouraged to pursue medicine as an occupation, and are embedded in social networks that provide medical school contacts (Jonsson et al., 2009).

You've seen that U.S. economic inequality is at its highest level since the 1930s, yet many Americans are relatively unconcerned. Fully 62 percent are satisfied with their opportunities to get ahead, and only 47 percent say that the rich–poor gap is a problem (DeSilver, 2014; Newport, 2016).

Why are so many people content instead of challenging policies that benefit primarily the top 1 percent? The average American knows very little about economic inequality (e.g., whether it's increasing or decreasing), where she or he is on the income spectrum, and believes (incorrectly) that there's more upward than downward

mobility. Also, what people think they know is often wrong (Gimpelson and Treisman, 2015; Kraus and Tan, 2015). Thus, and because popular culture reinforces the idea that inequality is normal and inevitable, many people don't see the connection between structural inequality and their personal situation.

Many Americans aren't angry about rising inequality, moreover, because they embrace “mobility optimism”—a belief in the American Dream that anyone can succeed, and that they (or their children) will be rich someday (Manza and Brooks, 2016; see also Davidai and Gilovich, 2015). Political speeches and social media, particularly, fan beliefs that the American Dream is achievable.

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Symbolic interaction theories help us understand the everyday processes that underlie social stratification, but there are several weaknesses. First, interactionism, unlike the other perspectives, doesn't explain *why* stratification exists. Second, the theories don't explain why—despite the same family background, resources, and socialization—some siblings are considerably more upwardly mobile than their brothers and sisters. Third, conflict theorists, especially, fault symbolic interactionists for ignoring structural factors—like the economy, government policies, and educational institutions—that create and reinforce inequality.

## STUDY TOOLS 8

### READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you've read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.





# 9

# Gender and Sexuality



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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 9-1 Differentiate between sex and gender and describe societal reactions to LGBTs.
- 9-2 Explain how gender stratification affects the family, education, workplace, and politics.
- 9-3 Describe contemporary sexual attitudes and practices, including sexual scripts and double standards.
- 9-4 Summarize abortion and same-sex marriage trends and explain why both issues are controversial.
- 9-5 Describe and illustrate gender and sexual inequality across cultures.
- 9-6 Compare and evaluate the theoretical explanations of gender and sexuality.

After finishing  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 180** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**

Women pay more than men, and sometimes twice as much, for many things, including cars, mortgages, health care, high-end jeans from the same designer, and similar grooming products like moisturizers, deodorants, and even razors (Hill, 2015; Ngabirano, 2017). Why? This chapter examines how gender and sexuality affect our lives. First, however, take the True or False quiz to see how much you know about these topics.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Today, women have more employment advantages than men.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree			strongly disagree			

9-1

## SEX, GENDER, AND CULTURE

Some differences between women and men are biological; others are social creations. Both biology and social factors shape a person's identity, but sex and gender aren't synonymous.

### 9-1a How Sex and Gender Differ

Many people use *sex* and *gender* interchangeably, but they're not the same. **Sex** refers to the biological characteristics with which we are born—chromosomes, anatomy, hormones, and other physical and physiological attributes. These attributes influence our behavior (e.g., shaving beards, wearing bras), but *don't determine* how we think or feel. Whether we see ourselves and others as feminine or masculine depends on gender, a more complex concept than sex.

**Gender** refers to learned attitudes and behaviors that characterize women and men. Gender is based on social and cultural expectations rather than on physical traits. Thus, most people are *born* either male or female, but we *learn* to be women or men because we internalize behavior patterns expected of each sex. In many societies, for example, women are expected to look young, thin, and attractive, and men are expected to amass as much wealth as possible.

## True or False?

### HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT GENDER AND SEXUALITY?

1. About 10 percent of the U.S. population is gay.
2. On average, Americans have sexual intercourse for the first time at about age 16.
3. Women make up about 20 percent of Congress.
4. Dating is dead on most college campuses.
5. U.S. abortion rates have declined since 1990.
6. Fathers now do almost as much child care and housework as mothers.

The answers to #3 and #5 are true; the others are false. You'll see why as you read this chapter.

### 9-1b Sex: Our Biological Component

Physical characteristics like breasts and beards indicate whether someone is a male or female, but sex isn't always clear-cut. Our cultural expectations dictate that we are female or male, but a number of people are "living on the boundaries of both sexes" (Lorber and Moore, 2007: 141). For example, **intersexuals** are people whose sex at birth isn't clearly either male or female. About 1 in 2,000 to 4,000 children born each year are classified as intersex because they're born with both male and female external genitals or an incomplete development of internal reproductive organs. Some parents seek surgery; others wait until a

**sex** the biological characteristics with which we are born.

**gender** learned attitudes and behaviors that characterize women and men.

**intersexuals** people whose sex at birth isn't clearly either male or female.



child is old enough to decide what to do (Bendavid, 2013).

## SEXUAL IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Our **sexual identity** is an awareness of ourselves as male or female and how we express our sexual values, attitudes, and feelings. Our sexual identity incorporates a **sexual orientation**—a preference for sexual partners of the same sex, of the opposite sex, of both sexes, or neither sex:

- ▶ **Homosexuals** (from the Greek root *homo*, meaning “same”) are sexually attracted to people of the same sex. Male homosexuals prefer to be called *gay*, female homosexuals are called *lesbians*, and both gay men and lesbians are often referred to, collectively, as *gays*. *Coming out* is a person’s public announcement of a gay or lesbian sexual orientation.
- ▶ **Heterosexuals**, often called *straight*, are attracted to people of the opposite sex.
- ▶ **Bisexuals**, sometimes called *bis*, are attracted to more than one gender.
- ▶ **Asexuals** lack any interest in or desire for sex.

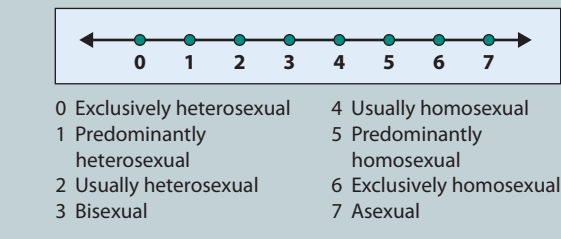
Sexual orientation, like biological sex, isn’t as clear-cut as many people believe. Alfred Kinsey (1948) and his associates’ classic study found that most people weren’t exclusively heterosexual or homosexual. Instead, they fell somewhere along a continuum in terms of sexual desire, attractions, feelings, fantasies, and experiences. Researchers have recently added *asexual* to Kinsey’s classification (Figure 9.1).

Most people’s sexual identity corresponds with their biological sex, sexual attraction, and sexual behavior, but not always. Among Americans ages 15 to 44, for example, 86 percent *identify themselves* as straight, but 23 percent have had *same-sex experiences* (Moore, 2015).

## HOW MANY AMERICANS ARE LGBT?

Since 2012, the share of adults identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) has

**Figure 9.1 Sexual Orientation Continuum**



Sources: Kinsey et al., 1948, p. 638; and Kinsey Institute, 2011.

increased from 3.5 percent to 4.1 percent. Women are more likely than men to identify as LGBT. Asians and Latinos are the most numerous and account for the largest increases since 2012 (Table 9.1).

The LGBT population may have actually increased since 2012, but there are other explanations for the higher numbers. Because 63 percent of Americans (an all-time high) say that gay and lesbian relations are acceptable, people are more willing to identify as LGBT. Age is another factor: Millennials (people born between 1982 and 2004) are significantly more likely than older generations to reject traditional either/or categories (such as “man/woman” and “gay/straight”), to have LGBT friends, and to openly identify as LGBT (GLAAD, 2017; Jones, 2017; Steinmetz, 2017).

## WHAT DETERMINES OUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

A Hong Kong billionaire offered \$65 million to any man who succeeded in marrying his daughter after she eloped with her female partner. The offer attracted 20,000 suitors, but none were successful (Nichols, 2014). Like this father, 30 percent of Americans (but down from 56 percent in 1978) believe that being gay or lesbian is a “personal choice” or due to a person’s upbringing (Jones, 2015).

Culture shapes people’s sexual attitudes and behavior, but no one knows why we’re straight, gay, bisexual, or asexual. Sexual orientation must have biological roots, according to some researchers, because homosexuality exists in all societies and, across cultures, the gay population is roughly the same—about 5 percent (Barash, 2012).

There’s also growing scientific consensus that biological factors, particularly the early influence of sex hormones after conception and around childbirth, have a strong effect on sexual orientation (see LeVay, 2011, for a comprehensive summary of the studies). Other researchers speculate that a combination of genetic and cultural factors influence our sexual orientation (Slater, 2013).

**sexual identity** an awareness of ourselves as male or female and how we express our sexual values, attitudes, and feelings.

**sexual orientation** a preference for sexual partners of the same sex, of the opposite sex, of both sexes, or neither sex.

**homosexuals** those who are sexually attracted to people of the same sex.

**heterosexuals** those who are sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex.

**bisexuals** those who are sexually attracted to more than one gender.

**asexuals** those who lack any interest in or desire for sex.

**Table 9.1 U.S. Adults Identifying as LGBT, by Selected Characteristics, 2012 and 2016**

	% LGBT	Estimated Number of LGBT	% BY GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY					
			Male	Female	White	Black	Latino	Asian
2012	3.5	8.3 million	3.4	3.5	3.2	4.4	4.3	3.5
2016	4.1	10.1 million	3.7	4.4	3.6	4.6	5.4	4.9

Source: Based on Gates, 2017.

### 9-1c Gender: Our Cultural Component

Gender doesn't occur naturally, but is socially constructed. This means that gender aspects may differ across time, cultures, and even groups within a society. Let's begin with gender identity.

#### GENDER IDENTITY

People develop a **gender identity**, a perception of themselves as either masculine or feminine, early in life. Many Mexican baby girls but not boys have pierced ears, for example, and hairstyles and clothing for American toddlers differ by sex. Gender identity, which typically corresponds to a person's biological sex, is part of our self-concept and usually remains relatively fixed throughout life.

**Transgender** is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and behavior don't correspond with their birth sex. They comprise about 0.6 percent (1.4 million) of U.S. adults (Flores et al., 2016).

Because transgender is independent of sexual orientation, people may identify as heterosexual, gay, bisexual, or asexual. Facebook users can now choose their gender identity from more than 50 possibilities, but here are

some of the most common transgender categories (American Psychological Association, 2014):

- ▶ *Transsexuals* are people whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex. Some, but not all, undergo hormone treatment or surgery to change their physical sex to resemble their gender identity.
- ▶ *Cross-dressers* wear clothing that's traditionally or stereotypically worn by another gender in their culture. People who cross-dress are usually comfortable with their assigned sex and don't wish to change it.
- ▶ *Genderqueer* are people who identify their gender as falling somewhere on a continuum between female and male, or a combination of gender identities and sexual orientations.

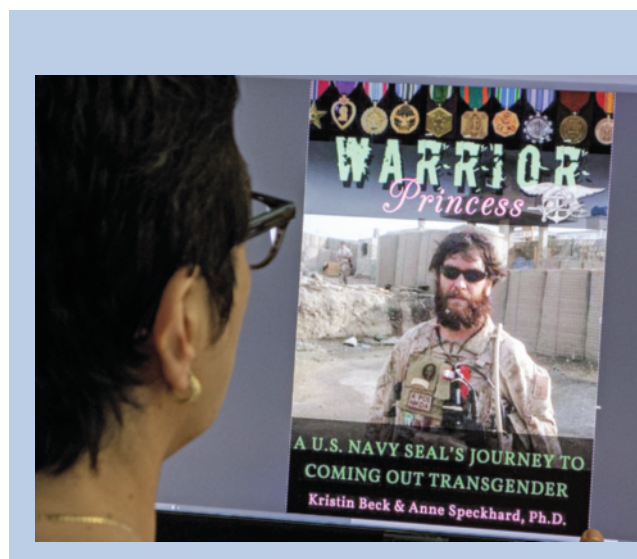
**gender identity** a perception of oneself as either masculine or feminine.

**transgender** people whose gender identity and behavior don't correspond with their birth sex.

#### Gender expression

is how a person communicates gender identity to others and includes

**gender expression** how a person communicates gender identity to others.



PAUL J. RICHARDS/Getty Images



Olivier Douliery/Abaca Press/Washington/USA/Newscom

Christopher Beck, who received multiple military awards and decorations, retired from the elite U.S. Navy SEALs in 2011. A few years later, he became openly transgender, changing his name to Kristin Beck.

**How Do Gender Roles Differ?** While the world scrutinized Michelle Obama's gowns, dresses, shoes, jewelry, and hairdos, President Obama wore the same tuxedo and shoes during their eight years in the White House (Feldman, 2017).



Mike Thelmer/Getty Images News/Getty Images

behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice, or body characteristics. Cross-dressing, girls' frilly dresses, and men's business suits are all examples of gender expression. Even if a person's gender identity is constant, gender expression can vary from situation to situation and change over time. For example, between 2010 and 2014, the number of men's eyelid, facelift, and breast reduction cosmetic surgeries increased by 33 to 44 percent; half of American men now routinely use moisturizers, facial creams, or self-tanning lotions and sprays; and some of the National Basketball Association's "toughest players" have promoted products for Dove, La Mer, and other skin-care companies (Boyle, 2013; Holmes, 2013; American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 2015).

## GENDER ROLES, GENDER STEREOTYPES, AND SEXISM

**Gender roles** are the characteristics, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that society expects of females and males. As you saw in Chapter 4, a major purpose of socialization, which begins at birth, is to teach people appropriate gender roles. As a result, we learn to become male or female through interactions with family members, teachers, friends, and the larger society.

**gender roles** the characteristics, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that society expects of females and males.

**gender stereotypes** expectations about how people will look, act, think, and feel based on their sex.

**sexism** an attitude or behavior that discriminates against one sex, usually females, based on the assumed superiority of the other sex.

Americans are more likely now than in the past to pursue jobs and other activities based on their ability and interests rather than their sex. For the most part, however, our society still has fairly rigid gender roles and widespread **gender stereotypes**—expectations about how people will look, act, think,

and feel based on their sex. We tend to associate stereotypically female characteristics with weakness and stereotypically male characteristics with strength. Consider, for example, how often we describe the same behavior differently for women and men:

- ▶ He's firm; she's stubborn.
- ▶ He's good with details; she's picky.
- ▶ He's honest; she's opinionated.
- ▶ He's raising good points; she's "bitching."
- ▶ He's experienced; she's "been around."
- ▶ He's enthusiastic; she's shouting.

Gender stereotypes fuel **sexism**, an attitude or behavior that discriminates against one sex, usually females, based on the assumed superiority of the other sex. In the late 1990s, and after receiving numerous rejections, a publisher finally accepted J. K. Rowling's manuscript of her Harry Potter book. Rowling followed the publisher's advice to sell the book under her initials, not her first name, Joanne. Even today, particularly for new science fiction and mystery authors, publishers instruct women to use male pseudonyms because "men prefer books written by men" (Cohen, 2012: D9).

A majority of women (63 percent), compared with 41 percent of men, believe that sexism makes it much harder for women to get ahead. Perhaps surprisingly, 62 percent of men aged 18 to 34, compared with 54 percent of those age 65 and older, say sexist obstacles that prevent women from succeeding "are now largely gone" (Fingerhut, 2016).

Men also experience sexism. Here's what one of my students wrote during an online discussion of gender roles:

*Some parents live their dreams through their sons by forcing them to be in sports. I disagree with this but*



Colin McConnell/Toronto Star/Getty Images

At an early age, sex-appropriate activities prepare girls and boys for future adult roles. As a result, there are few male ballet dancers and female auto mechanics.



want my [9-year-old] to be “all boy.” He’s the worst player on the basketball team at school and wanted to take dance lessons, including ballet. I assured him that this was not going to happen. I’m going to enroll him in soccer and see if he does better.

Is this mother suppressing her son’s natural dancing talent? We’ll never know because she, like many parents, expects her son to fulfill sexist gender roles that meet with society’s approval.

## 9-1d Societal Reactions to LGBTs

People’s attitudes toward LGBTs are mixed. There’s been greater acceptance in some countries, but considerable repression in others.

### GREATER ACCEPTANCE, BUT ...

Australian passports and birth certificates designate male, female, and transgender. In India, the 2011 national census for the first time offered three options: male, female, or a “third sex” that includes LGBTs. In Thailand, which has the world’s biggest transsexual population, an airline recruits “third sex” flight attendants. In the United States, in 2017 Oregon was the first state to allow residents to mark their sex as “not specified” on a driver’s license.

In the United States, many jurisdictions, corporations, and small companies now extend more health care and other benefits to gay employees and their partners than to unmarried heterosexuals who live together. The U.S. Supreme Court and a growing number of states have legalized same-sex marriages, and large numbers of Americans support equal rights for LGBTs in the workplace and elsewhere (Von Drehle, 2014).

In 2012, the Army promoted the first openly gay female officer to brigadier general. In 2013, the Pentagon added benefits for same-sex partners, including services on U.S. military bases. Federal workers and Medicare recipients are now eligible for sex-change operations (Mach and Cornell, 2013; “Transgender Rights,” 2015). And, since the mid-1990s, many LGBT characters have appeared in leading and supporting roles in popular TV programs (e.g., *Transparent*, *Modern Family*, *Gotham*, *This Is Us*, *Empire*, and *Game of Thrones*).

There’s greater LGBT acceptance. However, Americans are about evenly divided on two issues: whether wedding-related businesses (like caterers and florists) should be required to serve same-sex couples and whether transgender people should be able to use public restrooms that correspond to their current gender identity rather than their birth sex (Masci, 2016; McCarthy, 2017).



In mid-2013, the Washington Wizards’ Jason Collins appeared on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. “I’m a 34-year-old NBA center, I’m black, and I’m gay,” he announced. Collins said that his teammates were supportive, but he retired a year later. In a recent survey, just 4 percent of LGBT adults described professional sports leagues as “friendly” toward LGBTs (Lipka, 2014).

### ... ALSO WIDESPREAD INTOLERANCE

According to one scholar, what makes gay people different from others is that “we are discriminated against, mistreated, [and] regarded as sick or perverted” (Halperin, 2012: B17). **Heterosexism**, a belief that heterosexuality is the only legitimate sexual orientation, pervades societal practices, laws, and institutions. For example, 13 percent of Americans—including judges, religious leaders, and politicians—want to undo recently achieved rights like gay marriage (McCarthy, 2016). Heterosexism can trigger **homophobia**, a fear and hatred of lesbians and gays.

Homophobia often takes the form of *gay bashing*: threats, assaults, or acts of violence directed at LGBTs. Of the nearly 5,900 hate crimes reported to the police in 2015, 18 percent of the victims were LGBT, but much gay bashing isn’t reported (see Chapter 7).

In high school, gay, lesbian, and bisexual students are three times more likely than straight students to be raped and skip school more often because they feel unsafe. At least a third have been bullied, and they’re twice as likely as their heterosexual counterparts to be threatened or injured with a weapon while on school property. Among transgender people, 41 percent have attempted suicide sometime in their lives—nearly nine times the national average—due primarily to rejection by family and friends, and to harassment and violence at school, at work, and by police (Haas et al., 2014; Kann, Olsen et al., 2016).

Without warning, in mid-2017 President Trump

**heterosexism** belief that heterosexuality is the only legitimate sexual orientation.

**homophobia** a fear and hatred of lesbians and gays.

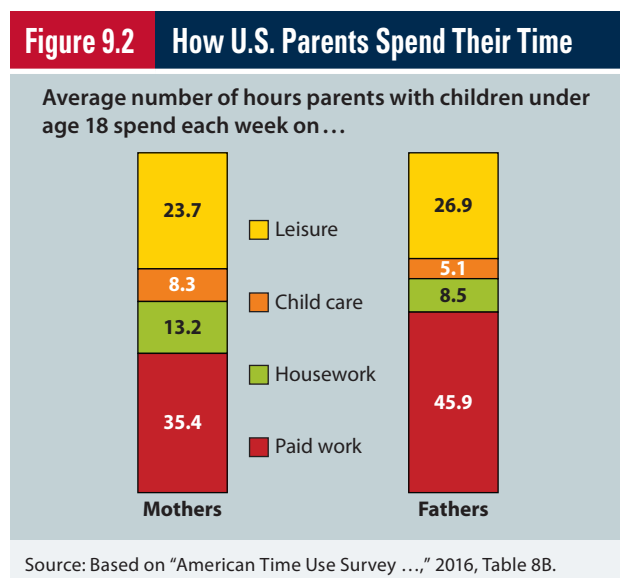
tweeted that the government “will not accept or allow transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military.” If the president’s ban is implemented, 18 countries will still allow openly transgender individuals to be members of their armed forces (LeBlanc, 2017).

## 9-2 CONTEMPORARY GENDER INEQUALITY

A recent study concluded that “it will take until 2085 for women to reach parity with men in leadership roles in government/politics, business, entrepreneurship, and nonprofit organizations” (Klos, 2013). You saw in Chapter 8 that there’s still widespread gender stratification because of sex. *Gendered institutions* are social structures that enable and reinforce gender stratification. Let’s begin with the family, remembering that institutions are interrelated (see Chapter 6).

### 9-2a Gender and Family Life

About 56 percent of married adults—with and without children—say that sharing household chores is “very important” to a successful marriage (Geiger, 2016). Men do more at home than they used to, but not as much as they say. Fathers spend more hours each week in paid work than do mothers, do less child care and housework, and have more leisure time (*Figure 9.2*), and many household chores are still gendered. On average, men are three times more likely to do home maintenance (e.g., repairing cars, lawn care); women are three times more likely to do the cooking, cleaning, and laundry (“American Time Use Survey ...,” 2016).



About 58 percent of both mothers and fathers say that parenting is “extremely important” to their identity, but parenting tasks are also gendered. Women do less housework than they used to, but devote twice as much time as men to child care. Fathers tend to do more of the enjoyable tasks (e.g., reading to children, playing with them, taking them to games), and are much more likely to “join in” with child care than to “take over” from mothers. In contrast, mothers do most of the daily, nonstop tasks like picking children up from school or day care and feeding, bathing, and putting them to bed. Compared with fathers, mothers’ greater investments in children result in less happiness, more stress, and greater fatigue (Craig, 2015; Musick et al., 2016; Parker and Livingston, 2016).

Every year, the media feature and applaud stay-at-home dads, but their numbers are negligible. In 2016, 209,000 fathers (0.2 percent of all fathers) cared for children while their wives worked outside the home. A stay-at-home dad is usually a temporary role that’s due to unemployment or health problems. In some cases, however, white, college-educated, upper-middle class men choose to be stay-at-home dads because their partners or wives have high incomes (Kane, 2015; “Father’s Day ...,” 2017).

### 9-2b Gender and Education

Despite substantial progress, there are gender differences at all educational levels. In public K–12 schools, as rank and pay increase, the number of women decreases. Among all full-time teachers, 76 percent at the elementary level are women; the number falls to 58 percent in high school. Among principals, the number of women drops from

**Table 9.2 As Rank Increases, the Number of Female Faculty Decreases**

RANK	PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE FACULTY MEMBERS
Instructor	57
Assistant Professor	50
Associate Professor	44
Professor	31

Note: Of the almost 791,400 full-time faculty in 2013, 45 percent were women.

Source: Based on Snyder et al., 2016, Table 315.20.

64 percent at elementary schools to 30 percent in high schools (Bitterman et al., 2013; Snyder et al., 2016).

Because women across all racial and ethnic groups are more likely than men to finish college, some observers have described this phenomenon as “the feminization of higher education.” Even when women earn doctoral degrees in male-dominated STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields, they’re less likely than men to be hired (see Chapter 13). Once hired, women are less likely to be promoted. Since 2000, 45 percent of all Ph.D. degree recipients have been women (Snyder and Dillow, 2013), but as the academic rank increases, the number of female faculty decreases (Table 9.2). Such data contradict the description of higher education as feminized.

## 9-2c Gender and the Workplace

There has been progress toward greater workplace equality, but we still have a long way to go. In the United States (as around the world), many jobs are segregated by sex, there are ongoing gender pay gaps, and numerous women experience sexual harassment.

### OCCUPATIONAL SEX SEGREGATION

**Occupational sex segregation** (sometimes called *occupational gender segregation*) is the process of channeling women and men into different types of jobs. As a result, a number of U.S. occupations are filled almost entirely by either women or men. Between 95 and 98 percent of all child care workers, secretaries, dental hygienists, and preschool and kindergarten teachers are women. Between 96 and 99 percent of all pilots, mechanics, plumbers, and firefighters are men. Women have made progress in a number of the higher-paying occupations, but 74 percent of chief executives, 80 percent of software developers, and 90 percent of engineers are men (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).



Of the nearly 3.1 million U.S. teachers at elementary and middle schools, only 22 percent are men. A major reason is low salaries compared with other occupations, but gender stereotypes are also a factor (Rich, 2014; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

The issue isn’t women and men working in different spaces or locations, but that male-dominated occupations usually pay higher wages. And, as in education, women are much less likely than men to move up the occupational ladder (see Chapters 8 and 11).

### THE GENDER PAY GAP

On average, full-time, year-round working women earn 80 to 81 cents for every dollar men earn (BLS News Release, 2017). To state this differently, *the average woman must work almost nine extra weeks every year to make the same wages as a man.*

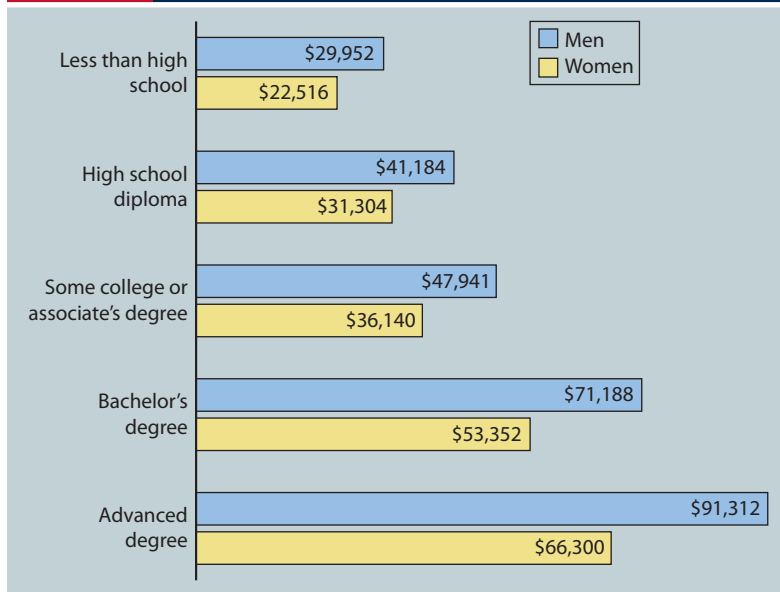
This earnings difference between women and men is the **gender pay gap** (also called the *wage gap*, *pay gap*, and *gender wage gap*). Among year-round full-time workers, Asian women earn 91 percent as much as white men, white women earn 81 cents for every dollar a white man earns, and Latinas and black women earn about 63 percent as much as white men. Across occupations, the gender pay gap ranges from 59 percent for financial advisors to zero for police patrol officers. Lower wages and salaries reduce women’s savings, purchasing power, and quality of life, and they receive less income from Social Security and pensions after retirement (AAUW, 2017; BLS News Release, 2017; BLS Reports, 2017).

**occupational sex segregation** (sometimes called *occupational gender segregation*) the process of channeling women and men into different types of jobs.

**gender pay gap** the difference between men’s and women’s earnings (also called the *wage gap*, *pay gap*, and *gender wage gap*).



**Figure 9.3** Gender Pay Gap, by Education, 2017



Note: These are median annual earnings of year-round full-time workers age 25 and older.

Source: Based on BLS News Release, "Usual Weekly Earnings . . .," 2017, Table 5.

Not only do women earn less than men at all educational levels, the higher the education level, the bigger the gender pay gap (Figure 9.3). Note that, as a group, women with advanced degrees earn less than men with a college degree.

Why is there a gender pay gap? Women tend to choose fields with lower earnings (e.g., health care and education), whereas men are more likely to major in higher paying fields (e.g., engineering and computer science). Women on average also work fewer hours than men, primarily to care for children or other family members. However, there's a pay gap after controlling for a number of variables—including occupation, hours worked, GPA, age, experience, and marital status. Between ages 25 and 45, the gender pay gap for college graduates, which begins close to zero, widens by 55 percentage points (AAUW, 2013; Blau and Kahn, 2016; Goldin et al., 2017).

A year after they graduate, women with Ph.D.s in science and engineering earn 31 percent less than do men. The pay gap disappears when women receive doctorates in better-paid fields (engineering versus mathematics or chemistry), and work in industry rather than government or higher education, and don't marry

(to avoid moving because of a husband's job), and don't have children (Buffington et al., 2016; Goldin et al., 2017).

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

**Sexual harassment** is any unwanted sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or other conduct of a sexual nature that makes a person uncomfortable and interferes with her or his work. It includes *verbal behavior* (e.g., pressure for dates and the threat of rape), *nonverbal behavior* (e.g., indecent gestures, display of sexually explicit posters, photos, or drawings), and *physical contact* (e.g., pinching, touching, or rape).

Sexual harassment occurs at all occupational levels. Female employees at the National Park Service have reported being groped, propositioned, verbally abused, and threatened with retaliation if they refused or reported incidents to supervisors. Female firefighters across the country have found their shampoo bottles filled

with urine and semen on their bunks. Millions of female restaurant and home care workers and hotel room attendants are vulnerable to sexual harassment, and 60 percent of high-tech female workers in Silicon Valley have experienced unwanted sexual advances (Vassallo et al., 2015; Nguyen, 2016; Parker, 2016; Schrobsdorff, 2016).

About 25 percent of women have been sexually harassed at work, but 71 percent didn't file complaints: They feared being labeled as "difficult" or "too sensitive," and worried about retaliation and job security. Many employment contracts now have arbitration clauses that prevent workers from suing companies for sexual harassment (Ahn and Ruiz, 2015; Dias and Dockterman, 2016).

## 9-2d Gender and Politics

Unlike dozens of other countries, the United States has never had a woman serving as president or even vice president. In the U.S. Congress, 81 percent of the members are men. In other important elective offices (governor, mayor, state legislator), only a handful of the decision makers are women (Table 9.3). These numbers haven't changed much since the early 1990s.

Women's voting rates in the United States have been higher than men's since 1984. Why, in contrast, are there so few women in political office? There's a combination of reasons: (1) Women run for office at a far lower rate than

**sexual harassment** any unwanted sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or other conduct of a sexual nature that makes a person uncomfortable and interferes with her or his work.

**Table 9.3 U.S. Women in Elective Offices, 2017**

POLITICAL OFFICE	TOTAL NUMBER OF OFFICE HOLDERS	PERCENTAGE WHO ARE WOMEN
Senate	100	21
House of Representatives	435	19
Governor	50	10
State Legislator	7,383	25
Attorney General	50	14
Secretary of State	50	26
State Treasurer/ Chief Financial Officer	50	16
Mayor (100 largest cities)	100	20

Source: Based on Center for American Women and Politics, 2017.

men with similar credentials because women don't consider themselves qualified; (2) they have to do more than their male counterparts to prove themselves; (3) U.S. presidents appoint more men than women to important positions; and (4) there's a lingering sexism, among both men and women, that female politicians are both less feminine and compassionate than the average woman, and lack the leadership traits associated with male politicians (e.g., confident, assertive) (Schneider and Bos, 2014; Parker and Horowitz, 2015; see also Chapter 11).

## 9-3 SEXUALITY

In the movie *Annie Hall*, a therapist asks two lovers how often they have sex. The man rolls his eyes, and complains, "Hardly ever, maybe three times a week!" The woman exclaims, "Constantly, three times a week!" *Sexuality* is considerably more complex than just having sex, however, because it's a product of our sexual identity, sexual orientation and sexual scripts, and includes desire, expression, and behavior.

### 9-3a Contemporary Sexual Attitudes and Practices

Sex doesn't "just happen." It typically progresses through a series of stages such as approaching, flirting, touching, or asking directly for sex. Sexual attitudes and behavior can

vary from situation to situation and change over time, including why we have sex.

### WHY WE HAVE SEX

People have sex to reproduce and to experience physical pleasure, but there are other reasons. For example, almost a third of Americans aged 15 to 24 believe it's all right for unmarried 16-year-olds to have sexual intercourse "if they have strong affection for each other." Although the message is contradictory, parents reinforce the association between attraction and sex by telling teenagers "Don't have sex, but use condoms" (Mollborn, 2015; Daugherty and Copen, 2016).

Nationwide, 3 percent of male and 10 percent of female high school students have been physically forced to have unwanted sexual intercourse. Teenagers are also more likely to engage in sex at any early age if they use alcohol or other drugs or experience domestic violence (Kann, McManus et al., 2016). A study of nearly 2,000 college students identified 237 reasons for having sex that ranged from the physical (stress reduction) to the spiritual (to get closer to God) and from the altruistic (to make the other person feel good) to the spiteful (to retaliate against a partner who had cheated) (Meston and Buss, 2007).

### SEXUALITY THROUGHOUT THE LIFE COURSE

Contrary to some stereotypes, adolescents aren't sexually promiscuous and older people aren't asexual. On average, Americans have sexual intercourse for the first time at about age 17, but don't marry until their mid-20s. Just 16 percent have had sexual intercourse by age 15, 30 percent by 16, 44 percent by 17, and almost 60 percent by age 18 (Guttmacher Institute, 2016).

Among teenagers aged 15 to 19, the percentage who ever had sexual intercourse declined from 51 percent in 1988 to 45 percent in 2013. By 2008, however, almost half of teens in this age group had had oral but not vaginal sex (Chandra et al., 2011; Martinez the Abma, 2015).

Adolescents who have oral sex prior to vaginal intercourse do so because it's "not really sex." Instead, they see it as a way to delay vaginal intercourse, to maintain one's virginity (especially among those who are religious), and to avoid the risk of pregnancy and STDs (Regnerus and Uecker, 2011; Copen et al., 2012).

By age 44, 93 percent of Americans have had vaginal intercourse, 87 percent have had oral sex, and 39 percent have had anal sex with an opposite-sex partner. Fewer than 4 percent of Americans identify as LGBT, but among



*"Don't you have any sexual fantasies that don't involve me cleaning?"*

people aged 18 to 44, 17 percent of women and 6 percent of men have had same-sex contact (Copen et al., 2016). Thus, as noted earlier, sexual identity, attraction, and behavior overlap.

A majority of adults ages 45 and older agree that a satisfying sexual relationship is important, but it's not their top priority. Marital sexual frequency may decrease because concerns about earning a living, making a home, and raising a family become more pressing than love-making. Others may be going through a divorce, dealing with unemployment, helping to raise grandchildren, or caring for aging parents—all of which sap people's sexual interest (ConsumerReports.org, 2009; Twenge et al., 2017).

As people age, they experience lower levels of sexual desire and some sexual activities, but a third of men and women age 70 and older report having sex at least twice a month. Poor health and inability to find a partner, rather than just advancing age, are more closely linked to declining sexual activity (Lee et al., 2015). Many couples in their seventies and eighties emphasize emotional intimacy and companionship, and are satisfied with kissing, cuddling, and caressing (Heiman et al., 2011; Lodge and Umberson, 2012).

### 9-3b Sexual Scripts and Double Standards

**sexual script** specifies the formal and informal norms for acceptable or unacceptable sexual behavior.

**sexual double standard** a code that permits greater sexual freedom for men than women.

We like to think that our sexual behavior is spontaneous, but all of us have internalized sexual scripts. A **sexual script** specifies the formal and informal norms for acceptable or unacceptable

sexual behavior. Social scripts can change over time and across groups, but are highly gendered in two ways—women's increasing hypersexualization and a persistent sexual double standard.

### THE "SEXY BABES" TREND

Sexualized social messages are reaching ever younger audiences, teaching or reinforcing the idea that girls and women should be valued for how they look rather than their personalities and abilities. For example, there are "bikini onesies" for infant girls, sexy lingerie for girls 3 months and older, and padded bras for 7- and 8-year-olds (that's right, for 7- and 8-year-olds!).

Many girls are obsessed about their looks, and from an early age, for a variety of reasons, including their mothers' role modeling. By age 9, girls start imitating the clothes, makeup, and behavior of mothers who dress and act in highly sexualized ways (Starr and Ferguson, 2012).

For many girls, constantly seeking "likes" and attention on social media is like being a contestant in a never-ending beauty pageant. The boom in selfie culture has increased girls' sexualization because validation is only a tap away, and "one of the easiest ways to get that validation is by looking hot. Sex sells, whether you're 13 or 35" (Sales, 2016: 26).

Media images also play a large role in girls' hypersexualization. Girls and boys see cheerleaders (with increasingly sexualized routines) on TV far more than they see female basketball players or other athletes. Women are now represented in more diverse TV roles—as doctors, lawyers, and criminal investigators—but they're often sexy ("hot"). Also, top female athletes regularly pose naked or semi-naked for men's magazines.

Who benefits from girls' and women's hypersexualization? Marketers who convince girls (and their parents) that being popular and "sexy" requires the right clothes, makeup, hair style, and accessories, create a young generation of shoppers and consumers who will increase business profits more than ever before (Lamb and Brown, 2007; Levin and Kilbourne, 2009).

### THE SEXUAL DOUBLE STANDARD

Some believe that the **sexual double standard**—a code that permits greater sexual freedom for men than women—has faded. Others argue that it persists. Among U.S. adolescents, the higher the number of sexual partners, the greater the boy's popularity. In contrast, girls who have more than eight partners are far less popular than their less-experienced female peers. By age 44, many more men (21 percent) than women (8 percent)



report having had at least 15 sex partners. And, over a lifetime, men are more likely than women to have sex outside of marriage (19 percent and 14 percent, respectively) (Kreager and Staff, 2009; Chandra et al., 2011; Drexler, 2012).

Another example of the sexual double standard is *hooking up*—which can mean anything from kissing to sexual intercourse. The prevalence of hooking up has increased only slightly since the late 1980s, but is now more common than dating at many high schools and colleges (Monto and Carey, 2014; Luff et al., 2016).

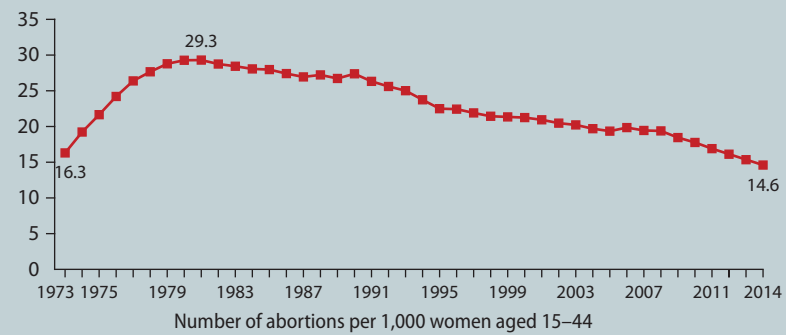
Hooking up has its advantages. Many men prefer hookups because they're inexpensive compared with dating. For women, hookups offer sex without becoming involved in time-consuming relationships that compete with schoolwork, dealing with boyfriends who become demanding or controlling, and experiencing breakups (Bogle, 2008; Rosin, 2012).

Hooking up also has disadvantages, especially for women, because it reinforces a sexual double standard. For example, men are more likely than women to perform sexual acts that a partner doesn't like; more than twice as many men as women experience an orgasm because the men typically don't satisfy a woman sexually; and women who hook up may get a reputation as "sluts" (England and Thomas, 2009; Armstrong et al., 2010, 2012). About half of women, compared with only 25 percent of men, have regretted having casual sex (Galperin et al., 2013).

Galia Slayen built a life-sized Barbie to show what she would look like if she were a real woman. (Slayen used a toy for the head because she wasn't able to create a proportional head) ("Life Size Barbie...", 2011).



**Figure 9.4** U.S. Abortion Rates Have Decreased



Source: Based on Guttmacher Institute, 2014, and Jones and Jerman, 2017.

## 9-4

## SOME CURRENT SOCIAL ISSUES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Most Americans see sex as a private act, but others believe that the government should control some sexual behavior and decisions. People disagree about social policies on sex-related topics such as teenagers' birth control, prostitution, reproductive technologies (see Chapter 16), and teen pregnancy (see Chapter 12). Two of the most controversial and politically contested issues continue to be abortion and same-sex marriage.

### 9-4a Abortion

**Abortion** is the expulsion of an embryo or fetus from the uterus. It can occur naturally—in *spontaneous abortion* (miscarriage)—or be induced medically. Abortion was outlawed in the nineteenth century, but has been legal since the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* ruling in 1973.

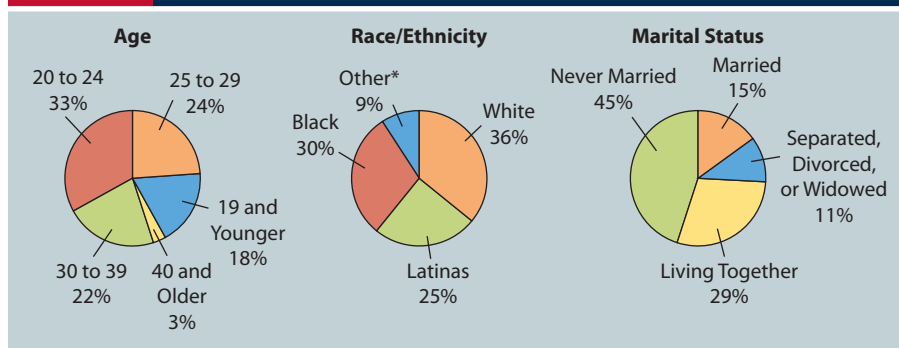
### TRENDS

Every year, 40 percent of unintended pregnancies end in abortion. Over a lifetime, 33 percent of women have an abortion by age 45 (Guttmacher Institute, 2014). The *abortion rate*, or the number of abortions per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44, increased during the 1970s, then decreased, and has dropped to its lowest point since 1973 (Figure 9.4).

Why have abortion rates decreased? At least half of the states have restricted access to abortion, but most of the decline has been due to

**abortion** expulsion of an embryo or fetus from the uterus.

**Figure 9.5** Who Has Abortions?



\*Other refers to Asian/Pacific Islanders, American Indians, and Alaska Natives.

Sources: Based on Guttmacher Institute, 2013, 2014.

an overall drop in pregnancy rates, delaying child-bearing, more effective usage of contraceptives, and greater access to emergency contraception that prevents pregnancy (Finer and Zolna, 2016; Dreweke, 2017).

Abortion is most common among women who are young (in their twenties), white, and never married (Figure 9.5). About 20 percent of women who get abortions have at least a college degree, but most are poor: 69 percent have incomes below or near the poverty level, and 74 percent are financially unable to support a baby. Low-income women are also much more likely than higher-income women to have experienced intimate partner violence that included being impregnated against their will. Abortion cuts across all religious groups, but 28 percent of women are Catholic and 37 percent are Protestant (including born-again/evangelical Christians) (Jones et al., 2013; Guttmacher Institute, 2014; Reeves and Venator, 2015).

## WHY IS ABORTION CONTROVERSIAL?

Since its legalization, abortion has been one of the most persistently contentious issues in U.S. politics and culture. More Americans describe themselves as “pro-choice” (50 percent) than “pro-life” (44 percent), and 6 percent aren’t sure. Both anti- and pro-abortion groups agree on some issues, such as requiring a patient’s informed consent, but 28 percent want abortion to be illegal under all circumstances (Fingerhut, 2017).

Antiabortion groups believe that the embryo or fetus isn’t just a mass of cells but a human being from the time of conception and, therefore, has a right to life. In contrast, abortion rights advocates point out

that, at the moment of conception, the organism lacks a brain and other specifically and uniquely human attributes, such as consciousness and reasoning, and that a pregnant woman—not legislators—should decide whether or not to bear children.

Antiabortion groups maintain that abortion is immoral and endangers a woman’s physical, mental, and emotional health. Whether abortion is immoral is a religious and philosophical

question. On a physical level, a legal abortion in the first trimester (up to 12 weeks) is safer than driving a car, playing football, motorcycling, getting a penicillin shot, or continuing a pregnancy. There’s also no evidence that having an abortion increases the risk of breast cancer or causes infertility (Sheppard, 2013; Pazol et al., 2014; Holloway, 2015).

What about mental and emotional health? Anti-abortion activists argue that abortion leads to postabortion stress disorders, depression, and even suicide. National studies have consistently found that abortion poses no hazard to an adolescent or adult woman’s mental health, doesn’t increase emotional problems like depression or low self-esteem, and doesn’t lead to drug or alcohol abuse or suicide. An unwanted pregnancy or being denied an abortion, not abortion, increases the risk of mental health problems (Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, 2011; Steinberg and Finer, 2011; Biggs et al., 2017).

A large majority (63 percent) of Americans want to keep abortion legal, but it’s almost impossible for many women to get legal abortions in 89 percent of all U.S. counties. Since 2010, states have enacted 338 new abortion restrictions that cut public funding for low-income women, passed licensing requirements that closed abortion clinics, and limited access to medication abortion (“abortion pills”) that legally ends a pregnancy in the first nine weeks. On the other hand, federal and state funding support thousands of “crisis pregnancy centers,” usually next to abortion clinics, which distribute false medical information (e.g., abortion causes breast cancer, infertility, and suicide) and pressure women to continue an unwanted pregnancy (Daniels et al., 2016; Upadhyay, 2016; Gold and Nash, 2017; Guttmacher Institute, 2017).

**Table 9.4** Why Do Americans Favor or Oppose Same-Sex Marriages?

What do you think? What other reasons can you add for each side of the debate?

**Same-sex marriage should be legal because . . .**

- Gay marriages strengthen families and long-term unions that already exist. Children are better off with parents who are legally married.
- There are no scientific studies showing that children raised by gay and lesbian parents are worse off than those raised by heterosexual parents.
- Every person should be able to marry someone that she or he loves.
- Gay marriages are good for the economy because they boost businesses such as restaurants, bakeries, hotels, airlines, and florists.

**Same-sex marriage should be illegal because . . .**

- Children need a mom and a dad, not two dads or two moms.
- There are no scientific studies showing that children raised by gay and lesbian parents are better off than those raised by heterosexual parents.
- People can love each other without getting married.
- What's good for the economy isn't necessarily good for society, especially its moral values and religious beliefs.

Sources: Bennett and Ellison, 2010; Olson, 2010; Sullivan, 2011; Sprigg, 2011; Whitehead, 2011; Bogage, 2015; Kaufman, 2015.

## 9-4b Same-Sex Marriage

**Same-sex marriage** (also called *gay marriage*) is a legally recognized marriage between two people of the same biological sex and/or gender identity. Although still controversial, same-sex marriage is becoming more acceptable in the United States and some other countries.

### TRENDS

In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling (*Obergefell v. Hodges*) granting same-sex couples a constitutional right to marry. The 5-4 decision gave gay couples nationwide the same legal rights and benefits as heterosexual couples. With the Supreme Court's decision, the United States joined 21 other countries (so far) that allow same-sex marriage.

Prior to the ruling, gay marriage was illegal in 13 states. Some of these states' lawmakers urged their constituents to accept the new law. Others pressed their residents to "stand and fight by seeking a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage" (de Vogue and Diamond, 2015).

Opponents often invoke religion to defy gay marriage laws. For example, Roy Moore, chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, ordered the state's 68 probate judges to refuse to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. He defended his decision as "standing up for God" because "God ordained marriage as the union of one man and one woman." Alabama's judiciary suspended Judge Moore. The following year, a Democrat narrowly defeated Moore in an election for a U.S. Senate seat

(Robertson, 2016; Cason, 2017). We'll examine same-sex marriages and families in Chapter 12, but why is gay marriage such a contentious issue?

### WHY IS SAME-SEX MARRIAGE CONTROVERSIAL?

A large majority (64 percent) of Americans support same-sex marriage (up from 37 percent in 2006). Most of the opposition comes from people who are Republican, white, male, regularly attend religious services, live in the South, are 55 and older, and have conservative views on family issues (McCarthy, 2017; Masci et al., 2017).

Those who favor same-sex marriage argue that people should have the same rights regardless of sexual orientation. Those who oppose same-sex marriage contend that such unions are immoral, weaken traditional notions of marriage, and are contrary to religious beliefs. *Table 9.4* summarizes some of the major pro and con arguments in this ongoing debate.

9-5

## GENDER AND SEXUALITY ACROSS CULTURES

There's considerable variation worldwide regarding gender inequality and sexual oppression. Such variations show that our behavior is learned, not innate.

**same-sex marriage** (also called *gay marriage*) a legally recognized marriage between two people of the same biological sex and/or gender identity.



## 9-5a Gender Inequality

A recent United Nations (2015) report concluded that women continue to face discrimination in access to work, economic assets, and participation in private and public decision making. They're also more likely than men to live in poverty, to be illiterate, and to experience violence.

In many countries, women's progress toward equality has been mixed. For example, Saudi Arabia, one of the wealthiest countries in the world, and which has some of the most educated women in the world (including STEM college and advanced degrees), ranks near the bottom in women's economic and political participation. In *all countries and regions*, the greatest gender gaps are in economic participation and political leadership (World Economic Forum, 2016).

### ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Worldwide, 150 countries have at least one law that treats women and men differently, and 63 countries have five or more. The laws make it difficult for women to own property, open bank accounts, start businesses, and enter certain professions (World Bank, 2017).

Globally, about 75 percent of working-age men participate in the labor force, compared with 50 percent of working-age women, and women earn 24 percent less than men. In 85 percent of countries, women with advanced degrees have higher unemployment rates than men with similar levels of education (United Nations, 2015).

Countries that have closed education gaps and have high levels of women's economic participation—the Scandinavian countries, United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia—have strong economic growth (Worley, 2014). However, gender gaps still persist in senior positions, wages, and leadership. For example, Germany is Europe's No. 1 economy, but also has one of the largest pay gaps in the European Union. Of 191 executives on the management boards of Germany's 30 biggest companies, only 12 are women, a 20 percent decrease from a year before (de Pommereau, 2013; Webb, 2013).

### POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Worldwide, only 23 percent of national legislators are women. Rwanda has 64 percent, followed by nine countries where women hold 40 to 46 percent of the high-level political positions. The power is usually short-lived,



Creastia/Shutterstock.com

however. Of 146 nations, only 56 (38 percent) have had a female head of government or state for at least one year in the past half-century. In 31 of these countries, women typically led for five years or less (Geiger and Kent, 2017; World Bank, 2017).

Of the 197 world leaders who are presidents or prime ministers, only 13 percent are women. Worldwide, women occupy only 22 percent of the positions in decision-making bodies. Of 193 countries, the United States ranks

101st in women's political leadership, well below many African, European, and Asian countries, and even below most of the Arab countries that many Westerners view as repressing women (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017).

## 9-5b Sexual Inequality

Globally, women have fewer rights and opportunities than men. There's been more acceptance of homosexuality in some countries, but heterosexism prevails.

### VIOLENCE AGAINST FEMALES

Violence against women is a persistent problem. Worldwide, 35 percent of women have endured physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or another male (World Health Organization, 2016). The rates are much higher in many countries. For example,

- ▶ In Afghanistan and some African countries, about 80 percent of girls—some as young as 8 years old—are forced into marriages; 87 percent of Afghan women have experienced physical, psychological, or sexual abuse (Peter, 2012; “Child Brides...,” 2014).
- ▶ In Pakistan, 90 percent of women undergo domestic violence in their lifetimes. As many as 5,000 females are victims of “honor killings” every year. An *honor killing* is the murder of a family member, almost always a female, who is considered to have shamed the family by being a rape victim or has been suspected of engaging in premarital or extramarital sex (Sahgal and Townsend, 2014; “Human Rights Violations,” 2015).
- ▶ In the Democratic Republic of Congo, approximately 1,100 women are raped every day by soldiers, strangers, and intimate partners (“Human Rights Violations,” 2015).
- ▶ In India, rape and gang rape are epidemic, but less than a quarter of reported crimes end in conviction. As many as 100,000 women a year are killed over

dowry disputes (the money or goods that a wife brings to her husband at marriage) (Harris, 2013; “Ending the Shame...,” 2013).

*Female genital mutilation/cutting* (FGM/C) is a partial or total removal of the female external genitalia. Most of the more than 200 million girls and women who have undergone FGM/C live in 29 African countries, Indonesia, and the Middle East. The mutilation occurs between 3 and 12 years old. The operator is typically an elderly village woman who uses a knife or other sharp object and doesn’t administer an anesthetic. Countries justify FGM/C on the grounds that it controls a girl’s sexual desires and preserves her virginity, a prerequisite for marriage. Although Nigeria, Egypt, and other countries have outlawed FGM/C, the practice remains widespread and widely accepted (“Female Genital Cutting,” 2016; UNICEF, 2016).

## VIOLENCE AGAINST MALES

You saw earlier that Americans are more accepting of homosexuality, and that more nations are legalizing gay marriage. In contrast, many countries in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East don’t tolerate LGBTs. A vast majority of Africans (e.g., 98 percent in Ghana, 93 percent in Uganda, 88 percent in Kenya) say homosexuality is unacceptable. Gay sex is illegal in 78 nations, including 34 of Africa’s 54 countries. Gay men, particularly, may be legally tortured, stoned, imprisoned, or killed (“Deadly Intolerance,” 2014; “Global Views on Morality,” 2014; Pflanz, 2014; Baker, 2015).



Little girls like this one scream and writhe in pain during FGM/C (see text). Complications include hemorrhaging to death, a rupture that causes continual dribbling of urine or feces for the rest of the woman’s life, severe pain during sexual intercourse, and death during childbirth if the baby can’t emerge through the mutilated organs.

Russia’s parliament recently banned LGBT relationships and forbade distributing material on gay rights. Russians are more accepting of extramarital affairs, gambling, and drinking alcohol (a major cause of men’s death before age 55) than homosexuality (Council for Global Equity, 2014; Poushter, 2014).

There are about 10 million transgender people in Asia and the Pacific. Governments in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan have recognized transgender people as a legal category that has rights, but many—often labelled mentally ill by the public—experience discrimination and violence. In China, the attackers are often the victim’s relatives. In Fiji, 40 percent of *trans women* (male-to-female transsexuals) have been raped. In Australia, 60 percent of *trans men* (female-to-male transsexuals) suffer abuse from their partners (“Knife-edge Lives,” 2016).

9-6

## SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Gender and sexuality affect all people’s lives, but why is there so much variation over time and across cultural groups? The four sociological perspectives answer this and other questions somewhat differently (Table 9.5 summarizes these theories).

### 9-6a Functionalism

Functionalists view women and men as having distinct roles that ensure a family’s and society’s survival. These roles help society operate smoothly, and have an impact on the types of work that people do.

### DIVISION OF GENDER ROLES AND HUMAN CAPITAL

Some of the most influential functionalist theories, developed during the 1950s, proposed that gender roles differ because women and men have distinct roles and responsibilities. A man (typically a husband and father) plays an *instrumental role* of economic provider; he’s competitive and works hard. A woman (typically a wife and mother) plays an *expressive role*; she provides the emotional nurturance that sustains the family unit and supports the father/husband (Parsons and Bales, 1955; Betcher and Pollack, 1993).

Instrumental and expressive roles are complementary, and each person knows what’s expected: If the house is clean, she’s a “good wife”; if the bills are paid, he’s a “good husband.” The duties are specialized, but

**Table 9.5 Sociological Explanations of Gender and Sexuality**

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS	KEY POINTS
Functionalist	Macro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Gender roles are complementary, equally important for a society's survival, and affect human capital.</li><li>Agreed-on sexual norms contribute to a society's order and stability.</li></ul>
Conflict	Macro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Gender roles give men power to control women's lives.</li><li>Most societies regulate women's, but not men's, sexual behavior.</li></ul>
Feminist	Macro and micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Women's inequality reflects their historical and current domination by men, especially in the workplace.</li><li>Many men use violence—including sexual harassment, rape, and global sex trafficking—to control women's sexuality.</li></ul>
Symbolic Interactionist	Micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Gender is a social construction that emerges and is reinforced through everyday interactions.</li><li>The social construction of sexuality varies across cultures because of societal norms and values.</li></ul>

both roles are equally important in meeting a family's needs and ensuring a society's survival.

Such traditional gender roles help explain occupational sex segregation because people differ in the amount of human capital that they bring to the labor market. *Human capital* is the array of competencies—including education, job training, skills, and experience—that have economic value and increase productivity.

From a functionalist perspective, what individuals earn is the result of the choices they make and, consequently, the human capital that they accumulate to meet labor market demands. Women diminish their human capital because they choose lower paying occupations (social work rather than computer science), as well as postpone or leave the workforce for childbearing and child care. When they return to work, women have lower earnings than men because, even in higher paying occupations, their human capital has deteriorated or become obsolete (Kemp, 1994).

### WHY IS SEXUALITY IMPORTANT?

For functionalists, sexuality is critical for reproduction, but people should limit sex to marriage and forming families. Functionalists view sex outside of marriage as dysfunctional because most unmarried fathers don't support their children. The offspring often experience poverty and a variety of emotional, behavioral, and academic problems (Avellar and Smock, 2005).

You might be tempted to dismiss the functionalist view of limiting sex to marriage as outdated. Worldwide, however, sex outside of marriage is prohibited and *arranged marriages*—in which parents or relatives choose their children's future mates—are the norm. Most children agree to arranged marriages because of social custom and out of respect for their parents' wishes. The matches solidify relationships with other families and ensure that the woman's sexual behavior will be confined to her husband, avoiding any doubt about the offspring's parentage (see Benokraitis, 2015).



Arthur Greenberg/Alamy Stock Photo



Some functionalists encourage marrying during one's mid-to-late twenties instead of delaying marriage. The benefits include enjoying more frequent sex, having an easier time getting pregnant, and being able to have more than one child than people who marry in their thirties or later (Wilcox, 2015).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Critics fault functionalist gender role perspectives on three counts. First, even during the 1950s, white middle-class male sociologists ignored almost a third of the labor force that was composed of working-class, immigrant, and minority women who played *both* instrumental and expressive roles. Second, functionalists tend to overlook the fact that many people don't have a choice of playing only instrumental or expressive roles because most families rely on two incomes for economic survival. Third, the human capital model assumes that women have lower earnings than men because they "choose" lower paying occupations. As you saw earlier, however, there's a gender pay gap across *all* occupations, even those that require advanced degrees.

Functionalists tend to reject sexual relationships outside of marriage. Compared with married couples, for example, those who cohabit have poorer quality relationships and lower happiness levels. As you'll see in Chapter 12, however, marriage doesn't guarantee long or happy relationships.

Antigay discrimination, which is legal in 28 states, is dysfunctional. Companies don't attract young and talented LGBT workers, and forbidding transgender people to use a bathroom that corresponds to their gender identity has sparked considerable interpersonal and group conflict (Green, 2016; McCarthy, 2017).

## 9-6b Conflict Theory

For conflict theorists, gender inequality is built into the social structure. In both developing and industrialized countries, men control most of a society's resources and dominate women. Like functionalists, conflict theorists see sexuality as a key component of a society's organization, but they view sexuality as reflecting and perpetuating sexism and discrimination.

## CAPITALISM AND GENDER INEQUALITY

Conflict theorists maintain that capitalism, not complementary roles, explains gender roles and men's social and economic advantages. Women's inequality is largely due to economic exploitation—both as underpaid workers in the labor force and unpaid domestic workers who care for children and aging family members. In effect, gender

roles are profitable for business. Companies can require their male employees to work long hours or make numerous business trips and not worry about workers demanding payment for child care services that can cost up to \$63,000 a year (Carey and Trap, 2014).

Women comprise 51 percent of the U.S. population, but Congress "looks much like the face of corporate America—overwhelmingly wealthy, white, and male" (Weathers, 2015). Women's underrepresentation in political institutions can help explain why occupational sex segregation, gender pay gaps, and sexual harassment persist.

## IS GENDER INEQUALITY LINKED TO SEXUAL INEQUALITY?

From a conflict perspective, gender inequality gives men economic, political, and/or interpersonal power to control or dominate women's sexual lives. Most of the domestic violence and rape victims, in the United States and around the world, are women and girls. In workplace sexual harassment cases, the offender is typically a male supervisor. For example, 40 percent of women in the fast food industry have experienced sexual harassment by a manager, owner, or supervisor at least once a month. In prostitution and sex trafficking, almost all of the victims worldwide are poor women and girls (U.S. Department of State, 2016; Restaurant Opportunities Center United, 2017).

Particularly in the Middle East and some African countries, men dictate how women should dress and whether they can travel, work, receive health care, attend school, or start a business; dismiss women's charges of sexual assaults (including gang rapes); and blame girls for child rape because they're "seducing" older men (Neelakantan, 2006). Many women have internalized such sexism. For example, 25 to 38 percent of women in some African countries, Egypt, Palestine, and Indonesia believe that wives sometimes deserve beatings (e.g., for leaving the house without a husband's permission) (Kaneda and Bietsch, 2015; "The State of Arab Men," 2017).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Critics point out several limitations of conflict theory. First, women aren't as powerless as some conflict theorists claim. Like men, women often barter to increase their economic and political power. Second, conflict theory often ignores women's exploitation of other women. In the United States, women comprise 19 percent of those involved in the sex trafficking industry. The thriving underground sex economy relies heavily on

A group of men recently surrounded a woman at a busy bus station in Nairobi, Kenya. They violently tore off her clothes because she was wearing a miniskirt, accused her of being a jezebel, and left her naked on the street. Bystanders watched. A week later, about 1,000 women (some dressed in miniskirts) protested the rising violence against girls and women, vowing to wear whatever clothes they want. Some men joined the protestors; others threw rocks or shouted lewd comments.



nannies, secretaries, and escort services and brothels owned or operated by females (Dank et al., 2014).

Third, capitalism can discourage sexism. For years, Fox News and Bill O'Reilly, the station's popular political commentator, paid up to \$13 million to settle several sexual harassment lawsuits. Fox fired O'Reilly only after more than 70 corporations dropped their ads—largely in response to social media campaigns—because the companies “couldn’t afford to alienate women and their considerable purchasing power” (Abbey-Lambertz, 2017; Chira, 2017: B7).

### 9-6c Feminist Theories

Feminist scholars agree with conflict theorists that gender stratification benefits men and capitalism, but emphasize that women's subordination also includes their daily vulnerability to male violence (Katz, 2006). Feminist scholars, more than any other group of theorists, are especially concerned about men's controlling women's sexual lives.

#### LIVING IN A GENDERED WORLD

Men comprise 48 percent of the U.S. population age 18 and older, but they account for 98 percent of directors of the 700 top-grossing films since 2007, 97 percent of the televised news media's and ESPN's sports broadcasts, 96 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs, 83 percent of the largest private law firm partners, 81 percent of Congress, 73 percent of college/university presidents, 74 percent of federal and state judges, and 73 percent of generals and admirals (Cooky et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2015; Johnson, 2016; American Bar Association, 2017; Kidder et al., 2017; Merelli, 2017). In many of these sectors, women's representation has decreased or remained about the same for at least a decade.

Women often experience harsher sanctions than men for workplace offenses. In the financial services industry,

for instance, fraud and forgery are punished by demotion or dismissal. Compared with female advisers, males engage in almost three times more fraud and forgery, and are more likely to be repeat offenders. Nonetheless, women are 20 percent more likely to be fired, and 30 percent less likely to find new jobs (Egan et al., 2017).

Sexism is prevalent in almost all workplaces and online environments. Social media has amplified feminist voices, but also silenced them. Once a writer is singled out by an anti-feminist men's group, she's deluged with hateful and threatening messages, both public and private. Males with the fewest skills and lowest status are the most likely to be threatened by and hostile toward an influx of talented women. Regardless of the reasons, some women no longer participate online because of the harassment (Goldberg, 2015; Kasumovic and Kuznekoff, 2015).

Feminist theorists emphasize that gender, race, and social class intersect to form a hierarchical stratification system that shapes people's experiences and behavior. Privileged women have less status than privileged men, but upper-class white men *and* women subordinate lower-class women *and* minority men (Andersen and Collins, 2010). Understanding the interconnections between gender, race/ethnicity, and social class provides a more comprehensive picture of living in a gendered world than does any single variable.

#### SEXUALITY, SOCIAL CONTROL, AND COMMERCIALIZING SEX

Men assert their power and control—across cultures and over time—through rape, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, exploiting women through prostitution and pornography, forcing women to marry against their will, honor killings, FGM/C, and punishing women, but not men, for seeking a divorce or committing adultery (World Health Organization, 2013).

Sex is big business. Men's testosterone levels decline naturally with aging, but are also due to obesity and alcohol. Pharmaceutical companies "have seized on the decline in testosterone levels as pathological and applicable to every man." As a result, sales of testosterone-boosting drugs are surging even though they increase the risk of heart attacks (La Puma, 2014: A21; O'Connor, 2014).

In 2015, the Food and Drug Administration approved the drug flibanserin, marketed as Addyi, to increase premenopausal women's sexual desire. Some women's groups lobbied for the "female Viagra," but a recent study found that flibanserin resulted in "one-half additional satisfying sexual event per month." The medical researchers didn't define "one-half" of a "satisfying sexual event," but concluded that the drug significantly increased the risk of dizziness, sleepiness, nausea, and fatigue. They recommended an "integrative approach" that includes medical, psychiatric, psychological, and couple-relationship treatment (Jaspers et al., 2016: 457, 461).

Pornography, "sex drugs," and the earlier discussion of the "sexy babes" trend are just a few examples of the increasing *commercialization of sex*, making sexuality a commodity that can be sold for financial gain. Commercializing sex demeans both women and men, but the "products" are usually women.

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Feminist explanations are limited for several reasons. First, they pay little attention to parenting problems that many men face (try to find a diaper-changing station in the men's restroom, for example, or take time off from work to care for a sick child). Second, feminist analyses are inclusive, but this strength can also be a weakness. Regarding the gender pay gap, for example, should race, ethnicity, or social class be given priority in implementing change? Third, are feminist scholars overstating women's underrepresentation in some sectors? Since 2010, for instance,



Many sexually healthy people in their 20s to 60s now take drugs like Viagra and Addyi. Are the drugs an example of commercializing sex?

both cable and network shows have featured women in strong leading roles (e.g., *Girls*, *How to Get Away with Murder*, *Scandal*, *Madam Secretary*, *Nurse Jackie*) (O'Keefe, 2014; Blay, 2015). And, like conflict theorists, feminist scholars are sometimes accused of glossing over women's exploitation of others. In Iraq, for example, sex traffickers are often women who target the youngest girls because virgins bring the highest prices (Naili, 2011).

## 9-6d Symbolic Interaction

Whereas functionalist, conflict, and some feminist theories are macro level, symbolic interactionists focus on the everyday processes that produce and reinforce gender roles. We "do" gender, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, by adjusting our behavior and our perceptions depending on the sex of the person with whom we're interacting (West and Zimmerman, 2009). Our sexual expression, similarly, isn't inborn but a product of socialization, and what families and other societal groups deem as appropriate and inappropriate behavior (Hubbard, 1990).

## GENDER IS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

For interactionists, gender is a social creation, and we learn gender roles through everyday social interaction. For example, when teachers tell girls and boys that both are equally capable in math and science, "the difference in performance essentially disappears" (Hill et al., 2010: 2). When, on the other hand, teachers discourage girls from pursuing math and science, girls fare worse than boys on exams, enroll in fewer advanced math and science courses in high school and college, and, consequently, choose lower-paying careers (Lavy and Sand, 2015). Thus, teachers' gender bias can affect occupational choices and earnings in adulthood.

Believing in gender differences can actually *produce* differences. Because men are self-confident about their worth, they're four times more likely than women to ask for a raise. When women do ask for a raise, they ask for 30 percent less than do men. Men in higher-level positions who aren't promoted often threaten to quit and are offered retention bonuses to stay. Women typically decide to work harder and try again next year (Lipman, 2015).

## SEXUALITY IS ALSO A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

For interactionists, sexuality is also socially constructed. As with gender roles, we *learn* to be sexual and to express our sexuality differently over time and across groups because the people around us affect our attitudes and behavior. For example, students who attend conservative





Activists supporting the “kiss of love” campaign in New Delhi, India.

religious high schools are less likely than their public school counterparts to report same-sex attraction or to identify as LGBT in adolescence or young adulthood (Wilkinson and Pearson, 2013).

In many Middle Eastern countries, men have premarital sex but don’t marry women who aren’t virgins (Fleishman and Hassan, 2009). In the United States, as you saw earlier, men who have casual sex are “studs,” whereas women are “sluts.” Thus, sexual double standards are socially constructed.

In China, a university that planned to publicly shame students who engaged in “uncivilized behavior” (e.g., hugging or kissing in public) withdrew the policy after widespread protests. In much of India, people may be beaten for kissing on the street or even holding hands. To protest such moral policing by right-wing groups,

two college students started a “Kiss of Love” campaign on Facebook. Despite arrests, hundreds of people joined the demonstration. Similar protests quickly spread to other cities (Ming, 2011; Bhardwaj, 2014).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

A common criticism is that interactionists ignore the social structures that create, maintain, or change gender roles and gender inequality. Many 18- to 32-year-olds plan to share earning and household/child care responsibilities equally with their future partners. An equal division of labor is unlikely, however, because current workplace and government policies don’t support women’s and men’s balancing work and family life. Since 2001, more than 250,000 female soldiers have served as drivers, as pilots, and in other combat roles in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was only in 2015, however, that the Pentagon ended the formal ban on women in combat jobs, an important criterion for career advancement. Thus, people don’t have as much ability to shape their lives as interactionists claim.

Interactionists emphasize that language, erotic images, and other symbols evoke sexual interest or desire, but they neglect the relationship between biological factors and sexual orientation. Thus, interactionism doesn’t explain why siblings, even identical twins—who are socialized similarly—may have different sexual orientations. A third limitation is that interactionists don’t explain why, historically and currently, women around the world are considerably more likely than men to be controlled and sexually exploited. Such analyses require macro-level analyses that examine religious, political, and economic institutions.

## STUDY TOOLS<sup>9</sup>

### READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you’ve read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.
- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.



# 10

# Race and Ethnicity



Henry J. Kaiser/Getty Images

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 10-1 Describe how and explain why U.S. racial and ethnic diversity has changed.
- 10-2 Define and give examples of race, ethnicity, and racial-ethnic group.
- 10-3 Show how immigration patterns have changed, and describe Americans' reactions to legal and undocumented immigrants.
- 10-4 Distinguish between dominant and minority groups, and describe the most common patterns of dominant-minority group relations.
- 10-5 Describe and illustrate the most common sources of racial-ethnic friction.
- 10-6 Compare the five major minority groups in terms of origins, social class, and achievements.
- 10-7 Compare and evaluate the theoretical explanations of race and ethnicity.
- 10-8 Describe how and explain why interracial and interethnic relationships are changing.

After you finish  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 203** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**



In 2014, Coca-Cola aired an ad during the Super Bowl that portrayed U.S. ethnic diversity by featuring “America the Beautiful” sung in several languages. After the ad, Twitter lit up with criticism. Some of the commenters said that it’s disrespectful to sing “America the Beautiful” in any language other than English, and many disparaged immigrants who don’t learn English. Others pointed out that the song isn’t our national anthem, perhaps it should’ve been sung in one of the American Indian tongues that were here before Europeans arrived, and that we don’t have an official national language (Sahgal, 2014).

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The United States is a melting pot.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree						strongly disagree

Such discourse illustrates our diversity and divisions. This chapter examines the impact of race and ethnicity on our lives, why racial-ethnic inequality is still widespread, and the growth of interracial and interethnic relationships. First, however, take the True or False quiz to see how much you know about these topics.

## 10-1 U.S. RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY

The United States is the most multicultural country in the world, a magnet that draws people from hundreds of nations and is home to millions of Americans who are bilingual or multilingual. Of the nearly 326 million U.S. population, 14 percent are foreign born (up from only 5 percent in 1965), and is expected to reach a historic 19 percent (78.2 million people) in 2065. America’s multicultural umbrella includes at least 150 ethnic or racial groups and 350 languages (U.S. Census Bureau News, 2015; López and Radford, 2017).

By 2025, only 58 percent of the U.S. population is projected to be white—down from 86 percent in 1950 (*Figure 10.1*). By 2044, whites may make up less than half of the total population because Latinos and Asians are expected to double in size, and persons who identify themselves as two or more races will more than triple (Frey, 2014).

## True or False?

### HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT U.S. RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS?

1. Race is determined biologically.
2. The United States has the most foreign-born residents of any country in the world.
3. People who are prejudiced also discriminate.
4. Among Asian Americans, the most economically successful are Asian Indians.
5. About 85 percent of Americans report being only one race.
6. Minority groups are small in number.

The answer to #4 is true; the others are false. You’ll see why as you read this chapter.

## 10-2 THE SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RACE AND ETHNICITY

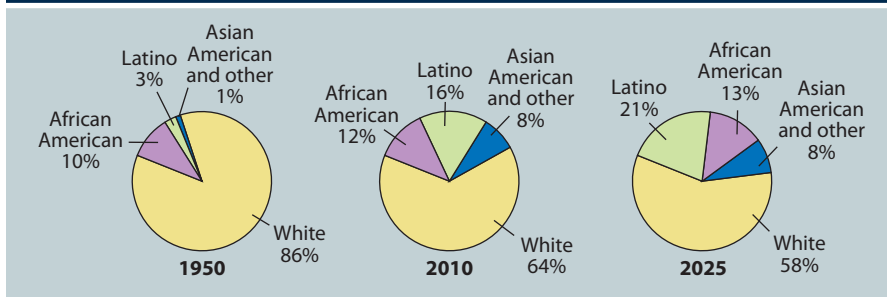
All of us identify with some groups in terms of sex, age, social class, and other factors. Two of the most common and important sources of self-identification, as well as labeling by others, are race and ethnicity.

### 10-2a Race

A **racial group** refers to people who share visible physical characteristics, such as skin color and facial features, that members of

**racial group** people who share visible physical characteristics that members of a society consider socially important.

**Figure 10.1** Racial and Ethnic Composition of the U.S. Population, 1950–2025



Note: “Asian American and other” includes American/Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, some other race, and those who identify themselves with two or more races.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008; Passel et al., 2011.

a society consider socially important. Contrary to the popular belief that race is determined biologically, it’s a *social construction*, a societal invention that labels people based on physical appearance, social class, or other characteristics (see Daniel, 2014).

Possibly only six of the human body’s estimated 35,000 genes determine the color of a person’s skin. Because all human beings carry 99.9 percent of the same genetic material (DNA), the “racial” genes that make us look different are miniscule compared with the genes that make us similar (Graves, 2001; Pittz, 2005).

If our DNA is practically identical, why are we so obsessed with race? People react to the physical characteristics of others, and those reactions have consequences. Skin color, hair texture, and eye shape, for example, are easily observed and mark groups for unequal treatment. As long as we act on the basis of these characteristics, our life experiences will differ in access to jobs and other resources, how we treat people, and how they treat us.

### 10-2b Ethnicity

An **ethnic group** (from the Greek word *ethnos*, meaning “nation”) refers to people who identify with a common national origin or cultural heritage. Cultural heritage includes language, geographic roots, food, customs, traditions, and religion. Ethnic groups in the United States include Puerto Ricans, Chinese, Serbs, Arabs, Swedes, Hungarians, Jews, and many others. Like race, ethnicity can be a basis for unequal treatment, as you’ll see shortly.

**ethnic group** people who identify with a common national origin or cultural heritage.

**racial-ethnic group** people who have distinctive physical and cultural characteristics.

### 10-2c Racial-Ethnic Group

People who have distinctive physical and cultural

characteristics are a **racial-ethnic group**. Some people use the terms *racial* and *ethnic* interchangeably, but remember that *race* refers to physical characteristics with which we’re born, whereas *ethnicity* refers to cultural characteristics that we learn. The term *racial-ethnic* includes both physical and cultural traits.

Describing racial-ethnic groups has become more complex because the U.S. government allows people to identify themselves in terms of both race and ethnicity. In the 2000 and

2010 censuses, for example, Latinos could check off “black” or “white” for race and “Cuban” for ethnic origin. Such choices generate dozens of racial-ethnic categories. People prefer some “labels” to others, and racial and ethnic self-identification varies.

### 10-2d What We Call Ourselves

In 1976, the U.S. government began to use the word *Hispanic* or *Latino* to categorize Americans who trace their roots to Spanish-speaking countries. About 70 percent say that it doesn’t matter if they’re referred to as *Latino* or *Hispanic*. If given a choice, however, 51 percent prefer to identify themselves by the family’s



Jupiterimages/Stockbyte/Getty Images

There’s much variation in skin color across and within groups. People of African descent have at least 35 different shades of skin tone (Taylor, 2003). So, can you determine someone’s race simply by looking at her or him?

country of origin (e.g., Mexican, Cuban, Salvadoran) (Pew Hispanic Center, 2012; Jones, 2013).

Since 1900, the Census Bureau has used *Negro*, *black*, and *African American*. Currently, 65 percent of this group say it doesn't matter whether they're called *black* or *African American*, and this trend hasn't changed much since 1991 (Jones, 2013). Many people, including African American scholars, use *black* and *African American* interchangeably.

We see similar variations in the usage of *Native American* and *American Indian*. These groups prefer their tribal identities (e.g., Cherokee, Apache, Lumbee) to being lumped together under a single term. Among white Americans, in contrast, recent immigrants rarely refer to themselves by their country of origin (e.g., "Armenian" or "Armenian American"). Third and later generations may even be unsure of their ancestors' roots ("My dad's parents were Polish, but I don't know much about my mother's side").



JStaley401/Getty Images

The United States admits more than 1 million immigrants every year—more than any other nation. A major change has been the rise of *undocumented* (also called *unauthorized* and *illegal*) *immigrants*—from 180,000 in the early 1980s to 11.1 million in 2015. They

make up 26 percent of all foreign-born residents, and nearly 4 percent of

the nation's population. Almost 53 percent are from Mexico, 21 percent from Central and Latin America, 13 percent from Asia, and 13 percent from other countries, including Canada, Europe, and Africa (Passel and Cohn, 2016). Most immigrants, legal and undocumented, come to the United States for the same

reasons as in the past—religious and political freedom, economic and

educational opportunities, and escape from wars and natural disasters (see Chapter 15).

Americans have usually opposed admitting large numbers of *refugees*, people who flee their country to escape war, persecution, or death. Since 1980, however, the United States has resettled about 3 million refugees, more than any other country. People from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Myanmar, Iraq, and Somalia accounted for 71 percent of all refugees admitted in 2016. Since 2002, 46 percent of all refugees have been Christian and 32 percent have been Muslim (Connor, 2016; Krogstad and Radford, 2017; Zong and Batalova, 2017).

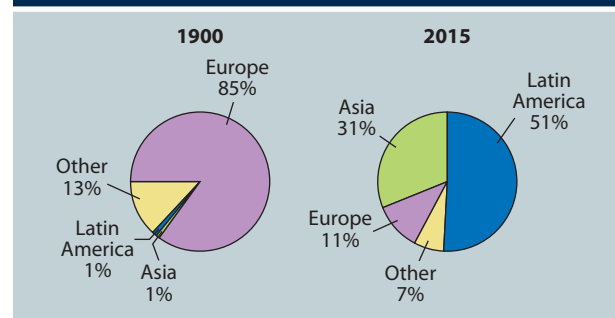
## 10-3 OUR CHANGING IMMIGRATION MOSAIC

The United States, a nation of immigrants, has historically and currently both welcomed immigration and feared its consequences. What fuels public debate is the rising number of foreign-born people in the United States.

### 10-3a The Foreign-Born Population

The Census Bureau's definition of *foreign born* includes naturalized citizens; lawful permanent residents (immigrants); temporary migrants (e.g., foreign students); refugees; and unauthorized migrants (e.g., Mexicans crossing the U.S. border) ("Foreign Born," 2016). The United States has one of the highest foreign-born populations in the world, but there's been a significant shift in their country of origin. In 1900, almost 85 percent of the foreign born came from Europe compared with only 11 percent in 2015 (Figure 10.2). Today, the foreign born come primarily from Asia (mainly China and the Philippines) and Latin America (mainly Mexico) (López and Radford, 2017).

**Figure 10.2** Origins of U.S. Foreign-Born Population: 1900 and 2015



Note: Latin America includes the Caribbean, Central America (including Mexico), and South America.

Sources: Based on U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993, and U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey, Tables SO503–SO506. Accessed June 1, 2017 (factfinder.census.gov).



## 10-3b Americans' Reactions to Immigrants

American attitudes toward immigrants have grown more positive since the mid-1990s, but are still mixed: 63 percent say immigrants strengthen the country because of their hard work and talents; 27 percent believe that immigrants are a burden because “they take our jobs, housing, and health care.” Americans are more divided about immigration levels: 49 percent are satisfied with current levels or believe they should be increased, but 49 percent want to reduce the stream of immigrants. On both issues—whether immigrants are more of a benefit or burden and immigration levels—Republicans, conservatives, older white people, and white working classes have more negative views than do Democrats, liberals, millennials, college-educated, and nonwhites (Jones, 2016; Gates, 2017; López and Bialik, 2017).

Immigrants have made significant contributions. Since the inception of the prestigious Nobel Prize in 1901, more than 100 of the 911 winners in medicine, chemistry, physics, and economics have been U.S. immigrants. Between 1880 and 2000, and although they earned considerably lower wages, immigrants generated more inventions and patents than their native-born counterparts. The inventions paved the way for long-term technological innovations in fields like computer science, engineering, and medicine. Foreign-born Americans have founded or co-founded about 25 percent of U.S. tech companies (including Intel, Yahoo, and Google) and more than 52 percent of the Silicon Valley start-ups between 1995 and 2005 (Najim, 2016; Agress, 2017; Akcigit et al., 2017).

## 10-3c Two Big Questions

Do immigrants take native-born Americans' jobs? And do they burden government budgets?

Of the nation's 161 million people in the labor force, 83 percent are U.S.-born, 15 percent are lawful immigrants, and 5 percent are unauthorized. Regardless of legal status, immigrants work in a variety of jobs and don't make up the majority of workers in any industry, but employment patterns differ markedly. Lawful immigrants are most likely to be in professional,

management, or business and finance jobs (37 percent) or service jobs (22 percent). Unauthorized immigrants, by contrast, are most likely to be in service (32 percent) or construction jobs (16 percent) (López and Bialik, 2017).

About 45 percent of Americans believe the growing number of immigrants has hurt workers overall. Except for high school dropouts who have few skills that employers seek, there's little evidence that immigration has had a negative impact on native-born workers' wages or employment levels. Whether legal or

undocumented, unskilled immigrants are more willing than their native-born counterparts to take grueling but low-paying jobs in service occupations (e.g., child care, maids, cooks), agriculture, and

the seafood industry. “The State of American Jobs,” 2016; Borjas, 2017; Gee et al., 2017).

Do immigrants burden government budgets? The answer is mixed. First-generation immigrants generally cost state and local governments about \$57 billion a year, mainly because of health care and education services. The second generation, better educated and with higher wages and salaries, adds about \$30 billion a year to government finances. The third generation pays almost \$224 billion a year in taxes. Undocumented immigrants pay approximately \$12 billion a year in state and local taxes—about 8 percent of their income compared with just 5 percent that the wealthiest 1 percent pays. Each immigrant, legal or undocumented, generates 1.2 local jobs because businesses need more people to meet the increased demand for goods and services (Hong and McLaren, 2015; Blau and Mackie, 2016; Gee et al., 2017).

On a number of measures, immigrants and their children—both legal and undocumented—outperform native-born Americans. Children of immigrants are more likely than their U.S.-born peers to live in a two-parent household; to have a parent with a secure job; to earn a college degree; to attend religious services regularly; and to be “prodigious job creators.” They're also less likely than their native-born counterparts to be obese, disabled, or to suffer from chronic illnesses; to commit crimes; and to have nonmarital children (Ewing et al., 2015; Waters and Pineau, 2015; Landgrave and Nowrasteh, 2017; Livingston, 2016).



Tim Boyle/Bloomberg/Getty Images



Design Pics Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

In Colorado, Iowa, and other states, refugees and immigrants from Asia, Africa, Mexico, and Central America fill \$15-an-hour jobs that native-born workers spurn. According to a local resident who worked at a pork processing plant for nearly 40 years, “Even if pay were raised to \$20 or \$25 an hour, I don’t think you could get white guys” (Cohen, 2017: A12; Etter and Singh, 2017).

## 10-4 DOMINANT AND MINORITY GROUPS

Race and ethnicity often make people feel like outsiders, or “the other.” Otherness is being different or having characteristics that set you apart from the dominant group (Thorpe-Moscon and Pollack, 2014).

### 10-4a What Is a Dominant Group?

A **dominant group** is any physically or culturally distinctive group that has the most economic and political power, the greatest privileges, and the highest social status. As a result, it can treat other groups as subordinate. In most societies, for instance, men are a dominant group because they have more status, resources, and power than women (see Chapters 8 and 9).

Dominant groups aren’t necessarily the largest in number. From the seventeenth century until 1994, about 10 percent of South Africans were white and had almost complete control of the black population. Because of *apartheid*, a formal system of racial segregation, the black residents couldn’t vote, lost their property, and had minimal access to education and politics. Apartheid ended in 1994, but most black South Africans are still a minority because whites “hold the best jobs, live in the most expensive homes, and control the bulk of the country’s capital” (Murphy, 2004: A4).

### 10-4b What Is a Minority?

Sociologists describe Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, Middle Eastern Americans, and American Indians as minorities. A **minority** is any group that may

be treated differently and unequally because of their physical, cultural, or other characteristics. The characteristics include gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, or skin color. Minorities may be larger in number than a dominant group, but they have less power, privilege, and social status. For example, middle-class African Americans are much more likely than their white counterparts to be called by debt collectors even though both groups have similar debt levels and repayment rates (Ruetschlin and Asante-Muhammad, 2013). *Table 10.1* offers other examples of everyday privileges associated with skin color.

### 10-4c Some Patterns of Dominant-Minority Group Relations

To understand some of the complexity of dominant-minority group relations, think of a continuum. At one end of the continuum is genocide; at the other end is pluralism (*Figure 10.3*).

#### GENOCIDE

**Genocide** is the systematic effort to kill all members of a particular ethnic, religious, political, racial, or national group. By 1710, the colonists in America had killed thousands of Indians, poisoned others, and promoted scalp bounties. In 1851, the governor of California officially called for the extermination of all Indians in the state (de las Casas, 1992;

**dominant group** a physically or culturally distinctive group that has the most economic and political power, the greatest privileges, and the highest social status.

**minority** people who may be treated differently and unequally because of their physical, cultural, or other characteristics.

**genocide** the systematic effort to kill all members of a particular ethnic, religious, political, racial, or national group.

**Table 10.1** Am I Privileged?

Most white people don't feel privileged because they aren't wealthy. Nonetheless, they enjoy everyday benefits, and take them for granted, simply because they're members of the dominant group. Would you add other advantages of being white?

1. I can go shopping and feel fairly sure that I won't be followed or harassed by store detectives.
2. If a traffic cop pulls me over, I can be sure that I haven't been singled out because of my race.
3. I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.
4. I can turn on the television and see people who look like me represented in positive ways and in a wide range of roles.
5. I live in a safe neighborhood with good schools.
6. I never think twice about calling the police when trouble occurs.
7. I can wear a hoodie and not worry about others thinking that I'm up to no good.
8. I don't get dirty looks if I listen to loud music at a gas station.

Sources: McIntosh, 1995; Independent Television Service, 2003; Williams, 2014.

Churchill, 1997). Worldwide, and between 1915 and 1995 alone, well over 74 million people have been victims of genocide in Africa, Cambodia, China, Eastern Europe, and Turkey (United Human Rights Council, 2004).

## SEGREGATION

**Segregation** is the physical and social separation of dominant and minority groups. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* declared *de jure*, or legal, segregation unconstitutional. A variety

**segregation** physical and social separation of dominant and minority groups.

**acculturation** the process of adopting the language, values, beliefs, and other characteristics of the host culture.

of federal laws then prohibited racial segregation in public schools, as well as discrimination in employment, voting, and housing.

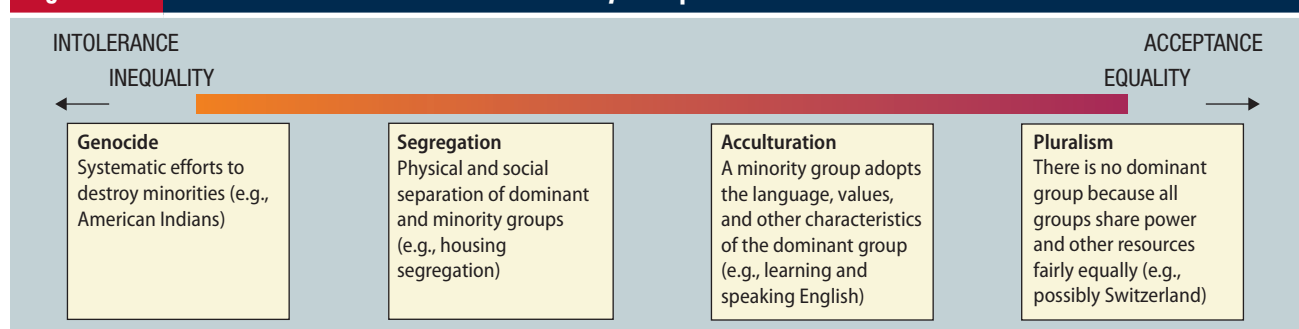
*De facto*, or informal, segregation has replaced *de jure* segregation in the

United States and many other countries. Some *de facto* segregation may be voluntary, as when minorities prefer to live among their own racial or ethnic group. In most cases, however, *de facto* segregation is due to discrimination. In the case of equally qualified homeseekers, for instance, realtors sometimes show minorities fewer homes and apartments than they do whites, restricting their housing options, including access to neighborhoods with higher-performing schools, public playgrounds, and low crime rates (Turner et al., 2013; see also Chapter 15 on residential segregation).

## ACCULTURATION AND ASSIMILATION

Many minority group members blend into U.S. society through **acculturation**, the process of adopting the language, values, beliefs, and other characteristics of the host culture (e.g., learning English, celebrating Thanksgiving). Acculturation doesn't include intermarriage, but the newcomers merge into the host culture in

**Figure 10.3** Continuum of Some Dominant-Minority Group Relations







Based on true events, *Hidden Figures* depicts the lives of three black women who helped pioneer space travel and desegregation at NASA.

most other ways. **Assimilation** involves conforming to the dominant group's culture, adopting its language and values, and intermarrying with that group. Journalists often use *assimilation* and *acculturation* interchangeably, but the former absorbs, rather than just changes, a group culturally.

## PLURALISM

In **pluralism**, sometimes called *multiculturalism*, minority groups maintain many aspects of their original culture—including using their own language and marrying within their own racial or ethnic group—while living peacefully with the host culture. Pluralism is especially evident in urban areas with large racial and ethnic communities (e.g., “Little Italy,” “Greek Town,” “Little Korea,” “Spanish Harlem”). U.S. minorities have numerous ethnic newspapers and radio stations, and the same constitutional rights (such as freedom of speech) as the dominant group. Nonetheless, people of various skin colors and cultures don't always experience the same

social standing, and there can be considerable racial-ethnic friction.

## 10-5 SOME SOURCES OF RACIAL-ETHNIC FRICTION

During a recent trip to Switzerland, Oprah Winfrey asked a clerk at an expensive shop to show her a \$37,000 purse. The clerk refused: “That one will cost too much, you won't be able to afford that.” Winfrey didn't know for sure whether or not the snub was motivated by racism, but said that the incident was what “people with black or brown skin experience every day” (Goyette, 2013). Ahmed Mohamed, a 14-year-old Sudanese-American student in Texas, was arrested and suspended after teachers mistook his homemade digital clock for a bomb. Would people have reacted differently if Winfrey and Mohamed had been white? And were the reactions racist?

### 10-5a Racism

**Racism** refers to beliefs that one's own racial group is inherently superior to other groups. Using this definition, anyone can be racist if she or he believes that another group is inferior. It's a way of thinking about racial and ethnic differences that justifies and preserves the social, economic, and political interests of dominant groups.

Many whites believe that racism has been pretty much “solved.” After all, we've elected an African American president twice,

**assimilation** conforming to the dominant group's culture, adopting its language and values, and intermarrying with that group.

**pluralism** minority groups maintain many aspects of their original culture while living peacefully with the host culture.

**racism** beliefs that one's own racial group is inherently superior to other groups.



A number of colleges and professional teams have replaced their logos, nicknames, and mascots because many American Indians have denounced them as racist. Some exceptions are the Cleveland Indians in baseball (left) and the Washington Redskins in football (right). Why do many people charge that the mascots and team names are demeaning? Why are the Minnesota Vikings and University of Notre Dame's Fighting Irish acceptable?

have a Latina Supreme Court justice, and minorities now own many businesses. In fact, racism is widespread. A few recent examples—and all involving young white men—include the murder of nine African Americans in a black church in South Carolina, and, at several universities, racist slurs and videos about lynching blacks (King, 2015; Schmidt, 2015). Racism fuels both prejudice and discrimination.

## 10-5b Prejudice

**Prejudice** is an *attitude* that prejudges people, usually in a negative way, who are different from “us” in race, ethnicity, religion, or other ways. If an employer assumes, for example, that white workers will be more productive than blacks or Latinos, she or he is prejudiced. Prejudice isn’t one-sided because *anyone* can be prejudiced (“White people can’t be trusted” or “Black women can’t afford expensive purses”). Prejudice is most evident in stereotypes and scapegoating.

A **stereotype** is an oversimplified or exaggerated generalization about a group of people (see, for example, [www.stuff-whitepeoplelike.com](http://www.stuff-whitepeoplelike.com)). Stereotypes can be positive (“African Americans are great athletes”) or negative (“African Americans are violent”). Whether positive or negative, stereotypes distort reality. Some blacks are great athletes and some are violent, just like people in other groups. Whatever the intention,

stereotypes lump people together and reinforce the belief that many traits are biological and fixed. Once established, stereotypes are difficult to change because people often dismiss any evidence to the contrary as an exception (“For an Asian, Jeremy Lin is a terrific basketball player”).

Stereotypes can lead to a displacement of anger and aggression on **scapegoats**, individuals or groups whom people blame for their own problems or shortcomings (“They didn’t hire me because the company wants blacks” or “I didn’t get into

that college because Asians are at the top of the list”). Minorities are easy targets because they typically differ in physical appearance and are usually too powerless to strike back.

At one time or another, almost all newcomers to the United States have been scapegoats. Especially in times of economic hardship, the most recent immigrants often become scapegoats (“Latinos are replacing Americans in construction jobs”). Prejudice, stereotypes, and scapegoating are attitudes, but they often lead to discrimination.

## 10-5c Discrimination

**Discrimination** is *behavior* that treats people unequally because of some characteristic (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation). It encompasses all sorts of actions, ranging from social slights (e.g., not inviting minority coworkers to lunch) to rejection of job applications and racially motivated hate crimes. Discrimination can be subtle (e.g., not sitting next to someone) or blatant (e.g., racial slurs), and it occurs at individual and institutional levels.

**Individual discrimination** is unequal treatment on a one-to-one basis, usually by a dominant group member against someone in a minority group. Nationally, 60 percent of blacks, 52 percent of Latinos, and 30 percent of whites report experiencing discrimination because of their race or ethnicity. A recent study of Uber and Lyft drivers in Boston and Seattle found that blacks had to wait as much as 35 percent longer for some rides, and that drivers were more than twice as likely to cancel the rides of passengers with African-American-sounding names than of passengers with white-sounding names (Ge et al., 2016; “On Views of Race...,” 2016).

In **institutional discrimination** (also called *institutionalized discrimination*, *systemic discrimination*, and *structural discrimination*), minority group members experience unequal treatment because of a society’s everyday laws, policies, practices, and customs. For example, sickle cell disease (SCD) affects three times as many Americans as cystic fibrosis (CF), but government spending on CF is four times higher than SCD. Why? About 90 percent of SCD patients are black, whereas CF affects mostly whites. The CF community has more wealthy and powerful parents and advocates who pressure government to do research and provide treatment, and develop and fund private foundations, which, in turn, underwrite pharmaceutical companies to create



Pedalist/Shutterstock.com

**prejudice** an attitude that prejudges people, usually in a negative way.

**stereotype** an oversimplified or exaggerated generalization about a group of people.

**scapegoats** individuals or groups whom people blame for their own problems or shortcomings.

**discrimination** behavior that treats people unequally because of some characteristic.

**individual discrimination** unequal treatment on a one-to-one basis.

**institutional discrimination** unequal treatment because of a society’s everyday laws, policies, practices, and customs.

drugs, even though a new drug only works for a handful of patients (Butler, 2015). Thus, although individuals may be unprejudiced, institutional policies and processes contribute to racially unequal access to health care.

Discrimination, both individual and institutional, also occurs *within* racial-ethnic groups. A study of New York City's Korean-owned nail salons found an "ethnic caste system." Among Asian manicurists, Koreans earned twice as much as their non-Korean counterparts. The latter frequently worked longer hours, were often forced into less desirable salons that had fewer customers and paltry tips, were told not to chat during their entire 12-hour shifts, and were assigned male customers that manicurists often dread because of the men's "thick toenails and hair-covered knuckles" (Nir, 2015).

## 10-5d Relationship Between Prejudice and Discrimination

Sociologist Robert Merton (1949) created a model showing how the relationship between prejudice and discrimination can vary. His model includes four types of people and their possible response patterns (Table 10.2).

*Unprejudiced nondiscriminators* aren't prejudiced and don't discriminate. They believe in the American creed of freedom and equality for all and cherish egalitarian values. They may not do much, however, individually or collectively, to change discrimination. In contrast, but equally consistent in attitude and action, are *prejudiced discriminators* who are both prejudiced and discriminate. They're willing to defy laws, such as not renting to minorities, because of their beliefs.

*Unprejudiced discriminators* aren't prejudiced but discriminate because it's expedient or in their own

**Table 10.2 Relationship Between Prejudice and Discrimination**

		DOES THE PERSON DISCRIMINATE?	
		Yes	No
IS THE PERSON PREJUDICED?	Yes	Prejudiced discriminator (e.g., a prejudiced person who attacks minority group members verbally or physically)	Prejudiced nondiscriminator (e.g., a prejudiced person who goes along with equal employment opportunity policies)
	No	Unprejudiced discriminator (e.g., an unprejudiced person who joins a club that excludes minorities)	Unprejudiced nondiscriminator (e.g., an unprejudiced employer who hires minorities)

Source: Based on Merton, 1949.



"You look like this sketch of someone who's thinking about committing a crime." David Sipress/The New Yorker Collection/The Cartoon Bank

self-interest to do so. If, for example, an insurance company charges higher automobile insurance premiums to people with low occupational and educational levels (often minorities), agents will implement these policies even though they themselves aren't prejudiced.

*Prejudiced nondiscriminators* are prejudiced, but don't discriminate. Despite their negative attitudes, they hire minorities and are civil in everyday interactions because they believe they must conform to antidiscrimination laws or situational norms. If, for example, most of their neighbors or coworkers don't discriminate, prejudiced nondiscriminators will go along with them.

## 10-6 MAJOR U.S. RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS

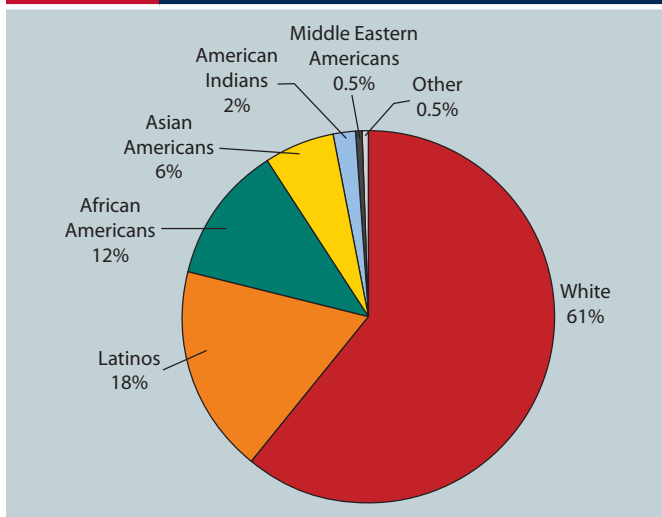
Four states (California, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Texas) and the District of Columbia are now "majority-minority," meaning that minorities make up more than half of the population ("Millennials Outnumber...", 2015). Of the major racial-ethnic groups, some encounter more barriers than others, but all have numerous strengths that enhance U.S. society. Figure 10.4 shows the racial-ethnic makeup of the U.S. population. Let's begin with white ethnic groups whose ancestors are from Europe.

### 10-6a White Americans: A Declining Majority

During the seventeenth century, English immigrants settled the first colonies in Massachusetts and Virginia. Other white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs), who included people from Wales and Scotland, quickly followed. Most of these groups spoke English. Some of the immigrants were affluent, but many were poor or had criminal backgrounds.



**Figure 10.4** Major U.S. Racial and Ethnic Groups



Note: The data are for a single race or ethnicity.

Source: Based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey, Table CP05. Accessed June 14, 2017 (factfinder.census.gov), and "American Indian and Alaska Native..." 2016.

## DIVERSITY

About 53 percent of Americans (170 million people) identify their ancestry as European. The largest groups have ancestors from Germany, Ireland, England, Italy, Poland, France, and the Scandinavian countries (*Figure 10.5*).

## CHARACTERISTICS AND CHANGES

WASPs generally looked down on later waves of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. They viewed the newcomers as inferior, dirty, lazy, and uncivilized because they differed in language, religion, and customs. New England, which was 90 percent Protestant, was particularly hostile to Irish Catholics, characterizing them as irresponsible and shiftless (Feagin and Feagin, 2008).

All the later waves of European immigrants faced varying degrees of hardship in adjusting to the new land because the first English settlers had a great deal of power in shaping economic and educational institutions. In response to prejudice and discrimination, many of the immigrants founded churches,

schools, and recreational activities that maintained their language and traditions (Myers, 2007).

Despite stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination, European immigrants began to prosper within a few generations. They surmounted numerous obstacles and became influential in all sectors. Overall, they now fare much better financially than most other groups. This doesn't mean that all are rich. In fact, in absolute numbers, poor whites outnumber those of other racial-ethnic groups (see Chapter 8).

### 10-6b Latinos: The Largest Minority

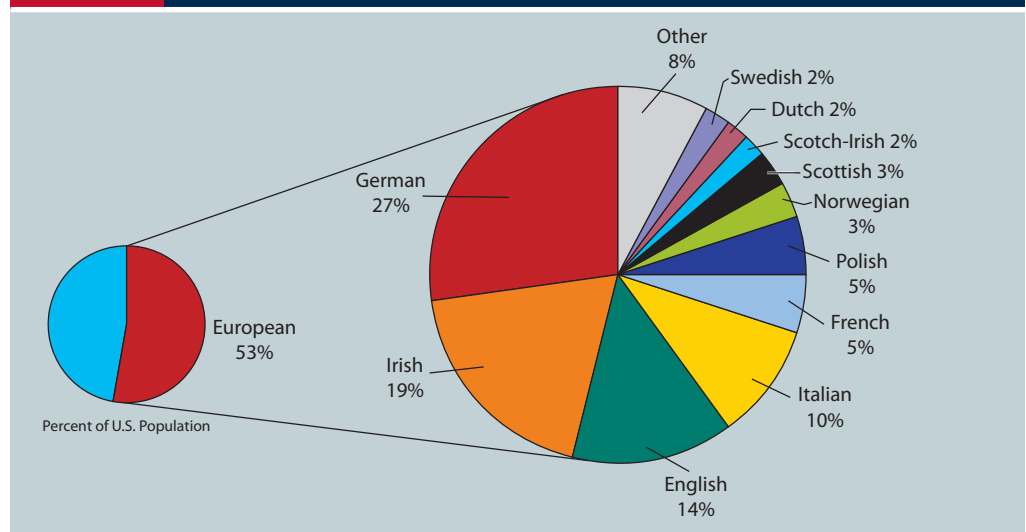
Latinos are the youngest and largest racial or ethnic group, constituting 18 percent of the nation's population. The size and growth of the Latino population this century is due mainly to births in the United States, not recent immigration. On average, Latinas have three births each, one more than white, black, and Asian or Pacific Islander women. Since the Great Recession in 2007, however, Latino immigration and birth rates have declined ("Hispanic Heritage Month..." 2016; Patten, 2016; Stepler and Lopez, 2016).

## DIVERSITY

Worldwide, only Mexico has a larger Latino population (120 million) than the United States (57 million). More persons of Puerto Rican origin now live in the 50 states and the District of Columbia than in Puerto Rico (Cohn et al., 2014; "Hispanic Heritage Month..." 2016).

Some Latinos trace their roots to the Spanish and Mexican settlers who established homes and founded

**Figure 10.5** European Americans by Origin, 2014



Source: Based on U.S. Census Bureau, Selected Social Characteristics in the United States, 2015 American Community Survey, Table DP02. Accessed June 1, 2017 (factfinder.census.gov).



Dominican-born Alfredo Rodriguez is one of numerous successful Latino businessmen who are rebuilding neglected inner-city neighborhoods. In 1985, Rodriguez bought his first grocery store in Queens, New York, with the \$25 a week his mother had been setting aside for him for a decade. In 2002, he purchased a supermarket in Newark, New Jersey, to meet the needs of local Latino shoppers. Five years later, his Xtra Supermarket had annual sales of \$9 million (Rayasam, 2007).

cities in the Southwest before the arrival of the first English settlers on the East Coast. Others are recent immigrants or children of the immigrants who arrived in large numbers at the beginning of the twentieth century. Of the Latinos living in the United States, most are from Mexico (*Figure 10.6*), but Spanish-speaking people from different countries vary widely in their customs, cuisines, and cultural practices.

## CHARACTERISTICS AND CHANGES

About 21 percent of Americans age 5 and older speak a language other than English at home. In this group, 73 percent speak Spanish. The number of U.S. residents who speak Spanish at home increased by

120 percent since 1990, whereas the number who speak Italian, French, German, and other Indo-European languages has declined (Ryan, 2013; “Hispanic Heritage Month . . .,” 2016).

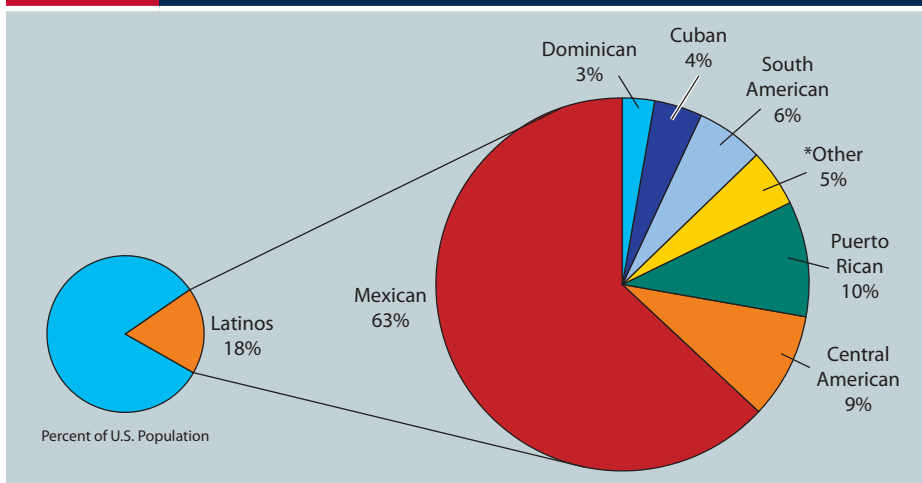
Latino median household income is lower than the national median, but higher than that of American Indians and African Americans (*Figure 10.7*). About 40 percent of Latino families earn \$50,000 a year or more, up considerably from only 7 percent in 1972, but 19 percent live below the poverty line (Semega et al., 2017).

Latinos have among the lowest education levels (*Figure 10.8*), but there’s considerable variation across subgroups. Almost half of Venezuelans have a bachelor’s degree or higher compared with only 8 to 9 percent of those from Guatemala, Mexico, and Salvador (Ogunwole et al., 2012).

As with other groups, Latinos’ socioeconomic status reflects a number of interrelated factors, particularly education, occupation, English language proficiency, and recency of immigration. For example, 21 percent of second-generation Latinos have at least a college degree compared with 11 percent of foreign-born Latinos, and higher median household incomes—\$48,400 and \$34,600, respectively (“Second-Generation Americans,” 2013).

Despite numerous economic, legal, and social barriers, 78 percent of second-generation Latinos, compared with 58 percent of all U.S. adults, believe that most people can get ahead if they’re willing to work hard (“Second-Generation Americans,” 2013).

**Figure 10.6** Latinos by Origin, 2014



Note: Central American includes countries such as El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala; South American includes countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela.

\*Includes people from Spain and those who didn’t specify a country of origin.

Source: Based on U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanic or Latino Origin by Specific Origin, 2015 American Community Survey, Table B03001. Accessed June 15, 2017 (factfinder.census.gov).

**Figure 10.7 U.S. Median Household Income, by Race and Ethnicity, 2016**



Sources: Based on "American Indian and Alaska Native....," 2016, and Semega et al., 2017, Table 1.

Such attitudes help explain why many Latinos are successful. Across 10 Latino groups, the second generation is working in better jobs with higher occupational status than their first-generation parents. Fully 72 percent expect their children will be better off financially than they themselves are right now. In 2014 alone, Latinos accounted for 40 percent of home ownership growth, the largest share among any racial or ethnic group. From 2007 to 2012, Latinos launched over 60 times more new small businesses than any other group. Since 2007, the number of Latina-owned businesses has grown by 137 percent, outpacing all other categories of minority women ("2012 Survey of Business Owners," 2015; Berenson, 2016; Lopez et al., 2016; Tran, 2016). Thus, despite Donald Trump's complaints that Latinos "are taking our money," they're driving much of America's economic growth.

### 10-6c African Americans: A Changing Minority

The 46 million African Americans are the second largest minority group, making up 12 percent of the population ("National African-American....," 2017). Over the past 40 years, blacks have made progress on many fronts, but racial gaps persist.

#### DIVERSITY

Most African Americans share a common characteristic: They're members of the only group ever brought to the United States involuntarily and legally enslaved. The term *African American* encompasses tremendous

diversity, including native-born Americans with black, white, American Indian, and/or Latino ancestors, as well as recent immigrants from Africa and elsewhere. Of the nearly 4 million foreign-born blacks, 50 percent are from the Caribbean, 36 percent from Africa, and 9 percent from a Central or South American country. The largest African-born populations are from Nigeria and Ethiopia (Anderson, 2015).

#### CHARACTERISTICS AND CHANGES

African Americans make up 12 percent of the population but 22 percent of people living in poverty. The median family income of African Americans is the lowest of all racial-ethnic groups (Figure 10.7). Between 2010 and 2016, the number of black households with annual incomes of \$50,000 or more rose from 36 to 41 percent (Semega et al., 2017).

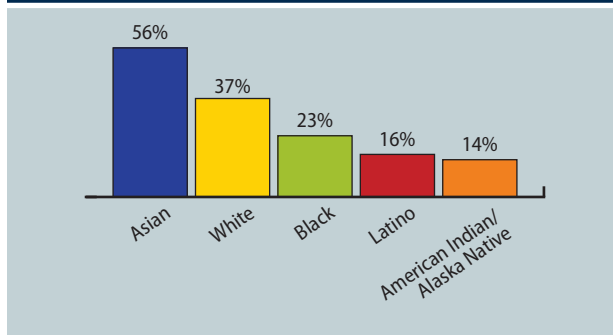
A growing share of blacks are completing high school and college, but lag behind whites and Asians in getting a college or advanced degree (Figure 10.8). Since the mid-1990s, black women have outpaced black men (and Latinos) in educational attainment. In 2016, for example, 25 percent of black women, compared with 22 percent of black men, had completed four years of college or more. Black women have higher labor force participation rates than other minority or white women, and are far more likely to work after motherhood, but experience the highest gender wage



Few people know that Madame C. J. Walker (1867–1919), who manufactured hair care products for black women, was one of the first American female millionaires. Or that Dr. Charles R. Drew (1904–1950) was a renowned surgeon, teacher, and researcher. He founded two of the world's largest blood banks, saving untold lives during and since World War II.



**Figure 10.8** Percentage with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher, by Race and Ethnicity, 2016



Sources: Based on U.S. Census Bureau, "Educational Attainment in the United States: 2016," Table 3, accessed June 2, 2017 (census.gov), and "American Indian and Alaska Native..." 2016.

gaps (Holloway, 2016; "Educational Attainment..." 2017; see also Chapter 9).

The wage gap between college-educated black and white Americans was larger in 2015 than in 1979, primarily because wage disparities build up over time. Some economists estimate that at least 30 percent of the black–white wage gap is due to differential treatment in hiring, firing, and pay rather than differences in formal schooling or specific job skills (Fryer et al., 2011; Wilson and Rodgers, 2016).

Economic factors alone don't explain race inequality. For example, white mothers with less than a high school education have lower infant mortality rates than well-educated middle-class black mothers. Affluent black families, with annual incomes of more than \$100,000, are four times more likely to live in poor neighborhoods than comparable white families. Some African Americans prefer lower-income neighborhoods because of family ties, but most live in poorer areas because of segregation and white hostility in many suburbs (Eligon and Gebeloff, 2016; Matthew and Reeves, 2016).

Despite discrimination, many African Americans are successful. They own almost 9 percent of U.S. businesses, up from 6 percent in 2007. The share of blacks in Congress is at an all-time high, increasing

from 2 percent in 1971 to 9 percent in 2015. Also, the college completion gap between whites and blacks has narrowed by 20 percent since 1976 ("2012 Survey of Business Owners," 2015; Bialik and Cilluffo, 2017).

## 10-6d Asian Americans: A Model Minority?

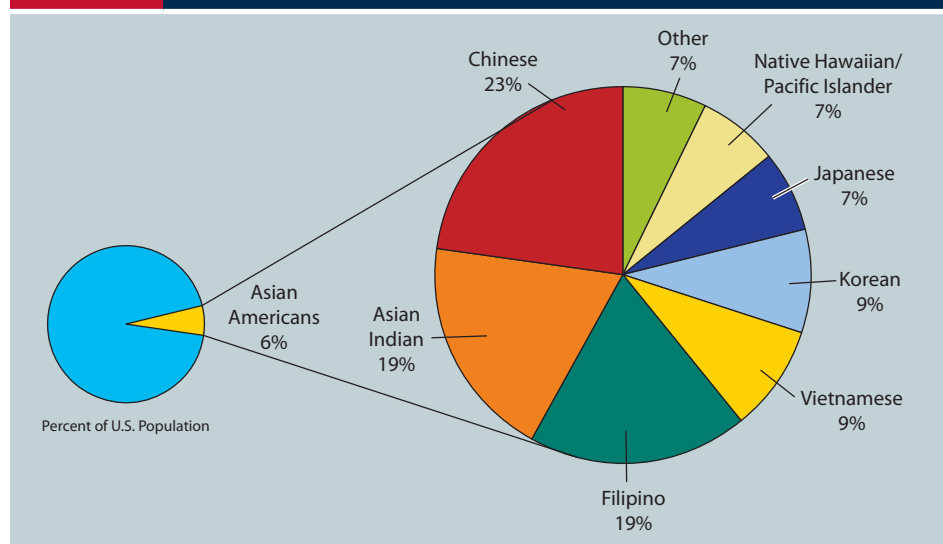
The nearly 23 million Asian Americans comprise almost 6 percent of the population. In 2012, Asians became the fastest-growing racial or ethnic group in the country; over 60 percent of the growth came from international migration. Hawaii is the only state with an Asian majority of 56 percent ("Asians Fastest-Growing..." 2013; "Asian-American and Pacific..." 2017).

### DIVERSITY

Asian Americans encompass a broad swath of cultural groups. They come from at least 26 countries in East and Southeast Asia (e.g., China, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Philippines) and South Asia (especially India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka), and speak at least 19 languages in the United States (Ryan, 2013; "Asian-American and Pacific..." 2017).

These diverse origins mean that there are huge differences in languages and dialects (and even alphabets), religions, cuisines, and customs. Chinese are the largest Asian American group, followed by Filipinos and Asian Indians (Figure 10.9). At least 83 percent of

**Figure 10.9** Asian Americans by Origin, 2015



Note: "Other" includes people from at least 15 countries, including Laos, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka.

Source: Based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey, Tables B02018 and B02019. Accessed June 15, 2017 (factfinder.census.gov).

Asian Americans trace their roots to only six countries—China, India, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam (Taylor et al., 2012).

## CHARACTERISTICS AND CHANGES

Compared with whites and other racial-ethnic groups, many Asian Americans are doing well. They have the highest education levels (*Figure 10.8*), and almost 22 percent, compared with 12 percent of the general population, have a graduate or professional degree. Because of their high education levels, almost half of Asian Americans are in highly skilled and well-paying occupations such as information technology, science, engineering, and medicine (“Asian-American and Pacific...,” 2017). Consequently, they have the highest median household income (*Figure 10.7*).

Because of their educational and economic success, Asian Americans are often hailed as a “model minority.” Such labels are misleading, however, because there’s considerable variation across subgroups. For example, more than 70 percent of people from India and Taiwan have a bachelor’s degree or higher compared with only 12 to 14 percent of Hmong, Laotians, and Cambodians (Ogunwole et al., 2012).



Asian Indian students have won the Scripps National Spelling Bee 10 years in a row, and all but four of the last 18 years. In 2015, 13-year-old Vanya Shivashankar and 14-year-old Gokul Venkatachalam were co-champions. The winning words were *scherenschnitte* and *nuntak*. (Am I the only one who had to look them up?) Asian Indians’ extraordinary performance has been attributed to factors like hard work, sacrifice, pursuing a championship over many years, and growing up in households where one or both parents are well-educated professionals who set high academic goals (Heim, 2015).

Many Asian college students succeed, and despite discrimination, because they work harder than most of their peers. Stereotypes of Asian Americans as hard-working and high-achieving can enhance performance: Teachers and guidance counselors place the students in advanced classes, the honors track, and give them extra help with homework and college applications. On the other hand, the model minority stereotype pigeonholes Asian students into specific careers and doesn’t give them the chance “to see themselves as something other than doctors, engineers, or accountants,” assumes that all minorities can overcome institutionalized discrimination, and holds Asian Americans to unrealistically high standards (Kay et al., 2013; Leung, 2013; Lee and Zhou, 2015).

Applauding Asian educational attainment obscures other barriers. Compared with whites, for example, Asians are nearly twice as likely to hold PhDs, law degrees, MBAs, or MDs, yet earn 5 percent less. Among technology companies—including those in Silicon Valley that hire a disproportionately high number of Asian professionals—Asians are vastly underrepresented in upper management: “Whites are the only group whose proportion increases as they rise through the ranks” (Chin, 2016: 70; Hilger, 2016).

## 10-6e American Indians: A Growing Nation

American Indians used to be called the “vanishing Americans” but have “staged a surprising comeback” due to higher birth rates, a longer life expectancy, and better health services (Snipp, 1996: 4). The 6.6 million American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIANs) make up almost 2 percent of the population, and are expected to increase to nearly 3 percent by 2060 (“American Indian and Alaska Native...,” 2016).

## DIVERSITY

Like Asian Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives are a heterogeneous group. Of the 566 federally recognized tribes, 8 have more than 100,000 members. The Cherokee, with almost 820,000 members, is the largest, followed by the Navajo and Choctaw (Norris et al., 2012).

Tribes speak 150 native languages, although many are quickly vanishing. For example, only about 25 people nationwide speak Comanche. Tribes also vary widely in their religious beliefs and cultural practices. Thus, a Comanche-Kiowa educator cautions, “Lumping all Indians together is a mistake. Tribes ... are sovereign

nations and are as different from another tribe as Italians are from Swedes” (Pewewardy, 1998: 71; Mangan, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau News, 2015).

## CHARACTERISTICS AND CHANGES

AIANs are a unique minority group because they’re not immigrants and have been in what is now the United States longer than any other group. They have experienced centuries of subjugation, exploitation, and political exclusion (e.g., not having the right to vote until 1924). Some tribes are still trying to reclaim billions of dollars that the federal government has squandered or mismanaged (Wilkinson, 2006; Volz, 2012; Kindy, 2013).

Many AIANs are better off today than they were a decade ago, but long-term institutional discrimination has been difficult to shake. For example, 27 percent live below the poverty line compared with 13 percent of the general population. The median household income of AIANs is slightly higher than that of African Americans, but lower than that of other racial-ethnic groups (Figure 10.7).

AIAN educational levels have increased, but only 14 percent have a bachelor’s or advanced degree or higher compared with 36 percent of the general population. One of four civilian-employed AIANs works in a management or professional occupation. Even when AIANs are similar to whites in age, gender, education level, marital status, state of residence, and other factors, their odds of being employed are 31 percent lower than those of whites. Such data suggest that AIANs are experiencing discrimination in the labor market (Austin, 2013; “American Indian and Alaska Native . . .,” 2016).

Despite numerous obstacles, AIANs have made considerable economic progress by insisting on self-determination and the rights of tribes to run their own affairs. For example, 244 tribes now generate about 43 percent of all U.S. casino gaming revenue. The Justice Department allows tribes to grow or sell marijuana on their lands, even in states that ban the practice. Some tribes, “mindful of the painful legacy of alcohol abuse in their communities,” are opposed to selling or using marijuana on their territory. Others see marijuana sales as a huge source of future income, similar to cigarette sales and casino gambling (Cano, 2015; “2013 Indian Gaming Industry Report,” 2015).

## 10-6f Middle Eastern Americans: An Emerging Minority

The Middle East is “one of the most diverse and complex combinations of geographic, historical, religious, linguistic, and even racial places on Earth” (Sharifzadeh, 1997: 442). It encompasses about 30 countries, including Armenia, Turkey, Israel, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and 22 Arab nations (e.g., Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates).

## DIVERSITY

Of the 61 million people in the United States who speak a language other than English at home, about 5 percent speak Middle Eastern languages such as Armenian, Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, or Urdu.

Because of the continued immigration from the Middle East and North Africa, Arabic is the fastest



Mohegan Sun in southern Connecticut is one of the largest casinos in the United States. It has spent some of its profits on college scholarships, a \$15 million senior center, and health insurance for tribal members. In contrast, some of the poorest tribes, such as the Navajo and Hopi, who have rejected gaming for religious reasons, have many members who live in poverty without kitchen facilities (like stoves or refrigerators) or indoor plumbing.





Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

Steve Jobs—the late co-founder, chairman, and CEO of Apple Inc.—was born to unmarried university students. His father was a Syrian-born Muslim, and his mother was a U.S.-born Catholic of Swiss descent. The father put the baby up for adoption because his girlfriend’s family wouldn’t allow her to marry an Arab (“Steve Jobs...,” 2011).

growing and seventh most commonly spoken non-English language in the United States (Brown, 2016). There are at least 1.9 million Americans of Arab descent, accounting for about 0.5 percent of the population (Brown, 2016). Those who identify themselves as Arab Americans come from many different countries (*Figure 10.10*). As in the case of Asian American families, Middle Eastern families make up a heterogeneous population that is a “multicultural, multiracial, and multi-ethnic mosaic” (Abudabbeh, 1996: 333).

## CHARACTERISTICS AND CHANGES

Middle Eastern Americans tend to be better educated and wealthier than other Americans.

About 46 percent have a college or advanced degree compared with 36 percent of the general population. In 2010, the median income of Arab American households was almost \$57,000 compared with \$52,000 for all U.S. households. As in other groups, however, there are wide variations. Lebanese have higher median family incomes (\$67,300) than Iraqis (\$32,000) (Asi and Beaulieu, 2013; Motel and Patten, 2013).

Not all Middle Eastern Americans are successful. Lebanese and Syrians have the lowest poverty rates, 11 percent, compared with more than 26 percent of Iraqis, and 23 percent of all foreign-born Middle Easterners (Arab American Institute Foundation, 2012; Motel and Patten, 2013).

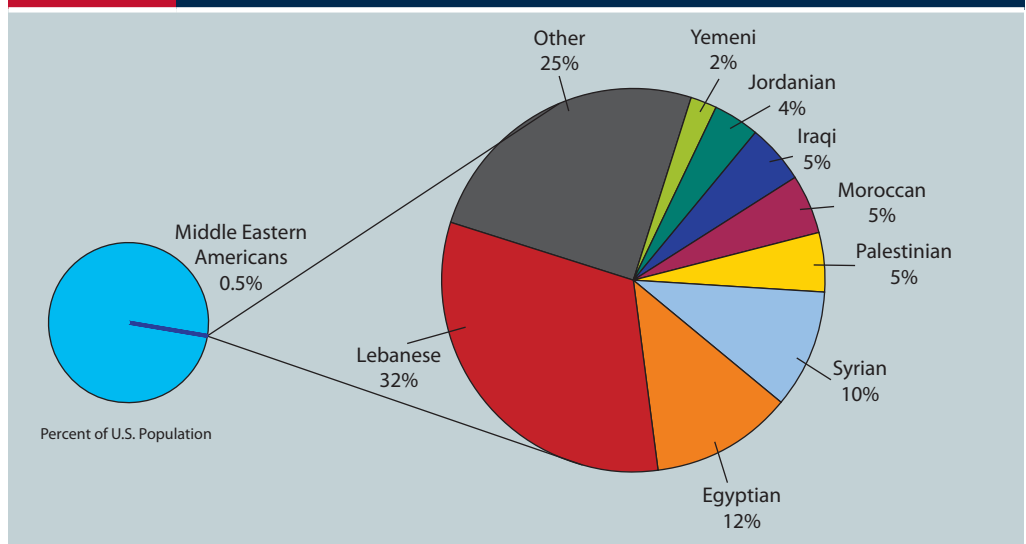
Michigan has the country’s highest concentration of residents with Middle Eastern, particularly Arabic, roots. As the auto industry recovers, companies are hiring immigrants and refugees from Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, and Myanmar. According to a manufacturing recruiter: “They work really hard, and that’s what companies are looking for” (Green, 2016: 18).

10-7

## SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF RACIAL-ETHNIC INEQUALITY

Four major sociological theories help us understand racial-ethnic relations. (*Table 10.3* summarizes the key points of each perspective.)

**Figure 10.10** Arab Americans by Origin, 2010



Note: “Other” includes those from the Middle East and North Africa.

Source: Based on Asi and Beaulieu, 2013, Table 1.

**Table 10.3 Sociological Explanations of Racial-Ethnic Inequality**

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS	KEY POINTS
<b>Functionalist</b>	Macro	Immigration provides needed workers; acculturation and assimilation increase social solidarity; racial-ethnic inequality can be dysfunctional, but benefits dominant groups.
<b>Conflict</b>	Macro	There's ongoing strife between dominant and minority groups; powerful groups maintain their advantages primarily through economic exploitation; race is a more important factor than social class in perpetuating racial-ethnic inequality.
<b>Feminist</b>	Macro and micro	Minority women suffer from the combined effects of racism and sexism; gendered racism occurs within and across racial-ethnic groups.
<b>Symbolic Interactionist</b>	Micro	Because race and ethnicity are socially constructed, social interaction can increase or reduce racial and ethnic hostility; antagonistic attitudes toward minorities, which are learned, can be lessened through cooperative interracial and interethnic contacts.

### 10-7a Functionalism

People who criticize immigrants for not becoming Americanized quickly enough reflect a functionalist view of racial-ethnic relations. That is, if a society is to work harmoniously, newcomers must adopt the dominant group's values, goals, and particularly language. Doing so increases a society's cultural solidarity.

#### STABILITY AND COHESION

Immigration is functional for the host nation if it gains needed workers. Highly educated and skilled immigrants fill important positions in medicine, science, and business. Many employers also rely on immigrants to work in fields, orchards, and vineyards at low wages; others are actively recruiting immigrants for decent-paying but "dirty" jobs at meat and fish factories that native-born Americans avoid (Newkirk and Douban, 2012; Davey, 2014).

Functionalists view racial-ethnic inequality as dysfunctional, but attribute much of the inequity to individual failings and a lack of acculturation. There are incentives for not acculturating, however. For example, hundreds of Puerto Ricans get federal disability benefits, and regardless of work experience or level of education, because they're considered less employable if they can't speak English. Office of the Inspector General, 2015).

#### CRITICAL EVALUATION

Functionalist explanations are limited in several ways. First, acculturation and assimilation increase social solidarity, but can also have negative outcomes. For example, second-generation immigrants are more likely than their foreign-born peers to join gangs, commit crimes, and experience obesity and other health

problems (Bersani, 2014; Akbulut-Yuksel and Kugler, 2016; see also Chapter 14).

Second, by focusing on order and stability, functionalists ignore racial-ethnic inequalities that often spawn tension and discord. Instead of implementing an immigration policy, President Trump tried to prevent refugees and people from seven majority-Muslim countries from entering the United States. His action polarized many Americans—particularly the 64 percent who think the nation's growing racial and ethnic diversity makes the country a better place ("In First Month..." 2017).

Third, functionalism doesn't explain why, despite acculturation and assimilation, minorities experience exclusion. For instance, 61 percent of blacks and 45 percent of whites say that U.S. race relations are "generally bad," and 43 percent of blacks believe that America will never make the changes needed for blacks to achieve equal rights with whites (Geiger, 2016; Bialik and Cilluffo, 2017). Functionalists acknowledge that inequality is dysfunctional, but this isn't their major focus. Thus, they seem to accept discrimination as inevitable (Chasin, 2004).

### 10-7b Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists see ongoing strife between dominant and minority groups. Dominant groups try to protect their power and privilege, whereas subordinate groups struggle to gain a larger share of societal resources.

#### ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CLASS INEQUALITY

For conflict theorists, capitalism creates and sustains racial-ethnic inequality. According to a classic explanation, there's a "split labor market." Jobs in the *primary labor market*, held primarily by white workers, provide better wages, health and pension benefits, and some measure of job security. In contrast, workers in the *secondary labor*



market (e.g., fast-food employees) are largely minorities and easily replaced. Their wages are low, there are few fringe benefits, and working conditions are generally poor (Doeringer and Piore, 1971; Bonacich, 1972).

Such economic stratification pits minorities against each other and low-income whites. Because these groups compete with each other instead of uniting against exploitation, capitalists don't have to worry about increasing wages or providing safer work environments.

Social class doesn't always protect minorities from economic inequality. Because of residential segregation, for instance, middle-income black and Latino households are much more likely than white ones to live in poor neighborhoods, exposing children to inadequate schools and more crime. At leading technology companies like Facebook and Google, blacks and Latinos still make up only 2 to 3 percent of college-educated officials and managers (Andrews, 2015; Kang, 2015; Reardon et al., 2015).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Conflict theories have several drawbacks. First, discrimination isn't always as conscious and deliberate as some conflict theorists claim. To increase diversity, Google and Facebook have for some time recruited at historically black colleges, trained employees about unconscious bias, and rewarded recruiters and managers for hiring black, Latino, and female engineers (McGirt, 2017; Zarya, 2017).

Second, conflict theories are better at explaining racial-ethnic competition than cooperation. Forty-two percent of Americans (up from only 13 percent in 2010) worry a "great deal" about U.S. race relations. This surge is likely due to high-profile police shootings of unarmed black men

and some of President Trump's racist comments about Mexicans and Middle Eastern refugees (Swift, 2017). Despite such divisive rhetoric, Americans generally work together and cooperate to improve race relations, especially at the local level. Finally, economic inequality reinforces racial-ethnic inequality, but racism existed hundreds of years before the rise of capitalism.

## 10-7c Feminist Theories

Walk through almost any hotel, large discount store, nursing home, or fast-food restaurant in the United States. You'll notice two things: Most of the low-paid employees are women, and predominantly minority women. For feminist scholars, such segregation of minority women is due to gendered racism.

### GENDERED RACISM

**Gendered racism** refers to the overlapping and cumulative effects of inequality due to racism *and* sexism. Many white women encounter discrimination on a daily basis (see Chapter 9). Minority women, however, are also members of a racial-ethnic group, bringing them a double dose of inequality. If social class is included, some minority women experience *triple oppression*. Many affluent women, in particular, have no qualms about exploiting recent immigrants, especially Latinas, who perform demanding housework at very low wages (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001).



In 2015, Viola Davis became the first African-American woman to win an Emmy for best actress in a drama series (*How to Get Away with Murder*). In her acceptance speech, Davis said, "The only thing that separates women of color from anyone else is opportunity."

**gendered racism** the overlapping and cumulative effects of inequality due to racism and sexism.



Gendered racism also occurs *within* racial-ethnic groups. According to a black male sociologist, scholars rarely discuss black male privilege, which is characterized by having advantages over black women. Examples include being promoted more often and getting higher pay than their black female counterparts who are equally skilled and educated (National Public Radio, 2010).

Minority women are eager to reach high-level positions: 48 percent, compared with 37 percent of white women, aspire to be a top executive. Minority women make up one-third of the workforce, but less than 4 percent of executives and only 0.4 percent of CEOs at the largest companies. Some label minority women's roadblocks a "concrete ceiling." In contrast to a "glass ceiling" that white women might shatter, concrete ceilings are more difficult to break through (Piazza, 2016; Calacal, 2017; see also Chapter 6 on glass ceilings).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Feminist perspectives can be faulted on two counts. First, because all of us have internalized institutional discrimination, minority group members are also guilty of reinforcing gendered racism in schools, workplaces, and elsewhere. African American girls as young as 15 have to cope with black men's sexual harassment, stereotypes that black girls and women are sexually promiscuous, and many black men's preference for women with lighter complexions and facial features that are closer to European standards of beauty (Friedman, 2011; Thomas et al., 2011). Second, feminist scholars seldom explore women's contribution to gendered racism (e.g., affluent black women and Latinas who exploit domestic and farm workers).

## 10-7d Symbolic Interaction

According to symbolic interactionists, we learn attitudes, norms, and values throughout the life course. Because race and ethnicity are constructed socially by thoughts and conversations, labeling, selective perception, and social contact can have powerful effects on everyday intergroup relations.

### Looting



*After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the caption on a photo of a young black man wading through water described him as "looting."*

For symbolic interactionists, images shape our perceptions of racial and ethnic groups.

### Finding



*A caption described a white man and a light-skinned woman as "finding" goods at a flooded local grocery store.*

## LABELING, SELECTIVE PERCEPTION, AND THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

Labeling can increase racial tension and conflict, because people attach meaning to symbols and act according to their subjective interpretation of the symbols. Students on some college campuses have demanded the removal of paintings and Civil War statues and the renaming of buildings that, according to students, honor slave owners, segregationists, and white supremacists. The protests antagonize many alumni whose generous donations support academic and sports programs, scholarships, and libraries ("Universities," 2015).

Selective perception also affects racial attitudes and behavior. When white people get proof of being privileged, they may insist that *other* people, not they themselves, benefit personally from privilege (Phillips and Lowery, 2015). People who see what they want and ignore any evidence that challenges their perceptions are unlikely to support policies to reduce racial inequality.

Negative images create and reinforce racial and ethnic stereotypes, but people can decrease labeling and selective perception. The **contact hypothesis** posits that the more people get to know minority group members personally, the less likely they are to be prejudiced against that group. Such contacts are most effective when dominant and minority group

**contact hypothesis** posits that the more people get to know members of a minority group personally, the less likely they are to be prejudiced against that group.

members have approximately the same ability and status (e.g., both are coworkers or bosses), when they share common goals (e.g., work on a project), when they cooperate rather than compete, and if an authority figure supports intergroup interaction (e.g., an employer requires white supervisors to mentor minority workers) (Allport, 1954; Kalev et al., 2006; Carrell et al., 2015).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Interactionism is limited for three reasons. First, it's not clear why labeling, selective perception, and racial bias are more common among some people than others, especially when they're similar on a number of variables such as social class, gender, age, religion, race, and ethnicity (Dovidio, 2009).

Second, symbolic interaction tells us little about the social structures that create and maintain racial-ethnic inequality. For instance, people who aren't prejudiced can foster discrimination by simply going along with the inequitable policies that have been institutionalized in education, the workplace, and other settings (i.e., the unprejudiced discriminators described earlier).

A third criticism is that contact between and among racial-ethnic groups doesn't necessarily increase acceptance and understanding. For instance, darker- and lighter-skinned blacks report more everyday discrimination even from blacks than those with a medium tone (Monk, 2015; Jones et al., 2016).

## 10-8 INTERRACIAL AND INTERETHNIC RELATIONSHIPS

President Obama, the son of a black father from Kenya and a white mother from Kansas, identified himself as "black" on the 2010 census questionnaire, although he could have checked off both black and white or "other." The president is just one of the growing number of Americans who are biracial or multiracial.

### 10-8a Growing Multiracial Diversity

The 2000 U.S. Census for the first time allowed people to mark more than one race, which generated about 126 categories and combinations. In 2010, 97 percent of Americans reported being only one race, but almost 3 percent (9 million people) self-identified as being two or more races, up from 2.4 percent in 2000. Every state saw its multiple-race population jump by at least 8 percent, but Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders were the most likely to identify themselves as belonging to two or more races (*Figure 10.11*).



AP Images/ Kevin Cederstrom

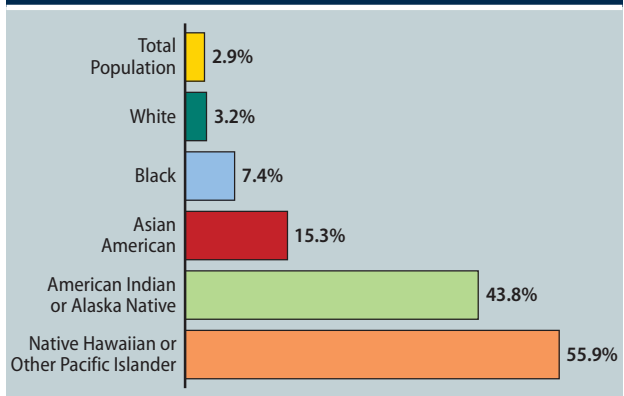
White supremacist Craig Cobb made headlines worldwide when he tried, unsuccessfully, to establish a white-only town in North Dakota. Shortly after that, Cobb's DNA test showed that he was 14 percent black. How awkward, a journalist observed ("DNA Reveals...", 2013: 8).

A recent survey found that 17 percent of U.S. adults could be considered multiracial based on how people describe themselves as well as their parents' and grandparents' racial backgrounds. The percentage may be even higher because 61 percent of adults with a mixed racial background don't consider themselves "multiracial" (Parker et al., 2015; Patten, 2016).

### 10-8b Interracial Dating and Marriage

Laws against **miscegenation**, marriage or sexual relations between a man and a woman of different races,

**Figure 10.11** Percentage of Americans Who Identified Themselves as Being Two or More Races, 2010



Note: Of the almost 309 million U.S. population in 2010, only 0.3 percent said they were three or more races.

Source: Based on Jones and Bullock, 2012, Figure 10.

existed in America as early as 1661. It wasn't until 1967 that the U.S. Supreme Court's *Loving v. Virginia* decision overturned antimiscegenation laws nationally.

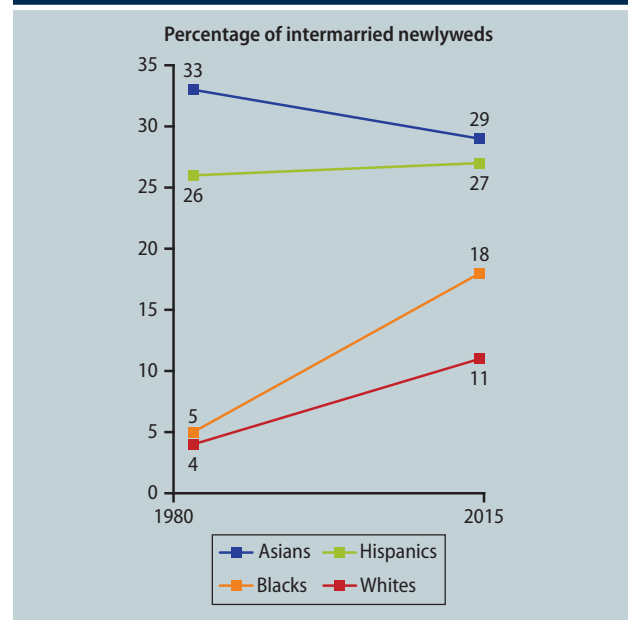
Racial-ethnic intermarriages have increased slowly—from only 0.7 percent in 1970 to 10 percent (11 million people) in 2015. In that year, 17 percent of newlyweds had a spouse of a different race or ethnicity. Latinos and Asians have higher intermarriage rates than blacks and whites, but recent overall increases have been fueled by rising intermarriage rates among black and white newlyweds (Figure 10.12).

The increase in intermarriage is due to many interrelated factors—both micro and macro level—that include everyday contact and changing attitudes. In 2000, 31 percent of Americans said they would oppose an intermarriage in their family. That share fell to 10 percent in 2016. Only 12 percent of whites, 9 percent of blacks, and 3 percent of Latinos say they would oppose a close relative marrying someone of a different race or ethnicity (Livingston and Brown, 2017).

Proximity and education also affect intermarriage rates. We tend to date and marry people we see on a regular basis. The higher the educational level, the greater the potential for intermarriage, because educated minority group members often attend integrated colleges, and their workplaces and neighborhoods are more racially mixed than in the past (Chen and Takeuchi, 2011; Wang, 2012).

People often marry outside of their racial-ethnic groups because of a shortage of potential spouses within their own group. Because the Arab American population is so small, 80 percent of U.S.-born Arabs have non-Arab spouses. Acculturation also affects intermarriage rates. Intermarriage is more common among second-generation immigrants (15 percent) than those in the first generation (8 percent). By the third generation,

**Figure 10.12** U.S. Intermarriage Rates Vary by Race and Ethnicity



Source: Based on Livingston and Brown, 2017: 11.

31 percent of Latinos and Asian Americans have a spouse of a different race or ethnicity (Kulczycki and Lobo, 2002; “Second-Generation Americans,” 2013).

The white majority is shrinking as multiracial marriages surge. According to demographer William Frey (2015: 191), the rise in intermarriages and multiracial children shows “an unmistakable trend toward a softening of racial boundaries” that should lead to greater equality in education, politics, the economy, and other institutions.

**miscegenation** marriage or sexual relations between a man and a woman of different races.

## STUDY TOOLS 10

### READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you've read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.





Andrew Lichtenstein/Corbis News/Getty Images

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 11-1 Compare and illustrate the different types of global economic systems.
- 11-2 Describe corporations and explain how corporate and political power are interwoven.
- 11-3 Explain how and why macro-level variables have changed the U.S. economy and jobs.
- 11-4 Compare, illustrate, and evaluate the theoretical explanations of work and the economy.
- 11-5 Compare and illustrate the different types of global political systems.
- 11-6 Explain how power and authority differ, and the different types of authority.
- 11-7 Describe the U.S. political system, and explain who votes, who doesn't, and why.
- 11-8 Compare, illustrate, and evaluate the theoretical explanations of politics and power.

After finishing  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 228** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**

In mid-2017, 58 percent of Americans said that economic conditions were good (up from only 28 percent in 2014). The same percentage also said that they didn't trust political leaders. Financial worries have decreased since the Great Recession, but dissatisfaction with government has increased (Jones, 2016; Stokes, 2017). In this chapter, we look at how the economy and government affect people's everyday lives.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The country would be better off if there were more women in political office.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree					strongly disagree	

The **economy** determines how a society produces, distributes, and consumes goods and services. In **politics** individuals and groups acquire and exercise power and authority and make decisions. Societies worldwide differ in the kinds of economic and political systems they develop because of factors such as globalization and technology. Let's begin by looking at global economic systems.

## 11-1 GLOBAL ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

The two major economic systems around the world are capitalism and socialism. A handful of countries endorse communism, but in actual practice, economies are usually some mixture of both capitalism and socialism.

### 11-1a Capitalism

Ideally, *capitalism*, an economic system based on the private ownership of property and the means of production, has four essential characteristics (Smith, 1776/1937; Heilbroner and Thurow, 1998):

- ▶ **Private ownership of the means of production.** Property (e.g., real estate, banks, utilities) belongs to individuals or organizations rather than the state or the community.
- ▶ **Market competition.** Owners of production compete in deciding what goods and services to produce and setting prices that offer consumers the greatest value in price and quality.

- ▶ **Profit.** Selling something for more than it costs to produce generates an accumulation of wealth for individuals and companies.
- ▶ **Investment.** By investing profits, capitalists can increase their own wealth. Workers, too, can save and invest their money.

In reality, capitalism doesn't function ideally because of abuses, greed, and worker exploitation. It usually results in monopolies and oligopolies rather than a free market that encourages competition. Federal laws prohibit the establishment of a **monopoly**, the domination of a particular market or industry by one person or company. With little or no competition, a company would be able to dictate prices and lower the quality of goods and services.

An **oligopoly**, which is legal, is the domination of a market by a few large producers or suppliers. In the mid-1980s, 50 companies controlled 90 percent of all U.S. media. Today, it's six companies—including CBS, Time Warner, and the Walt Disney Corporation. There were hundreds of airlines in the mid-1980s, but four giant airlines (United, Delta, American, and Southwest) now control 85 percent of the U.S. market. CEOs maintain that merging companies increases efficiency and safety. Critics argue that oligopolies raise prices, stifle competition, and reduce consumer choices. Companies that dominate industries make huge profits, but workers' wages and salaries tend to decline (Yglesias, 2013; Koenig and Mayerowitz, 2015; Coy, 2016). Moreover, entrepreneurs have little chance of breaking into an industry dominated by an oligopoly.

### 11-1b Socialism

**Socialism** is an economic system based on the public ownership of

**economy** determines how a society produces, distributes, and consumes goods and services.

**politics** individuals and groups acquire and exercise power and authority and make decisions.

**monopoly** domination of a particular market or industry by one person or company.

**oligopoly** domination of a market by a few large producers or suppliers.

**socialism** an economic system based on the public ownership of the production of goods and services.



the production of goods and services. Ideally, socialism is the opposite of capitalism and has the following characteristics:

- ▶ **Collective ownership of property.** The community, rather than the individual, owns property. The state owns utilities, factories, land, and equipment, but distributes them equally among all members of a society.
- ▶ **Cooperation.** Working together and providing social services to all people are more important than competition.
- ▶ **No profit motive.** Private profits that are fueled by greed and exploitation of workers are forbidden.
- ▶ **Collective goals.** The state is responsible for all economic planning and programs. People are discouraged from accumulating individual profits and investments, and are expected to work for the greater good.

There have been many socialist governments during the last 150 years, but none has reflected pure socialism. Competition and individual profits are officially forbidden, but government officials, top athletes, and high-ranking party members enjoy more freedom, larger apartments, higher incomes, and greater access to education and other resources than the rank and file.

### 11-1c Communism

**Communism** is a political and economic system in which property is communally owned and all people are considered equal. Whereas socialism allows some free market economy, and people receive resources according to how hard they work, communism demands that all production be owned by the public, and that people receive resources according to their need.

Karl Marx (1867/1967) believed that socialist states would evolve into communist societies. This hasn't happened and most formerly communist countries have col-

**communism** a political and economic system in which property is communally owned and all people are considered equal.

**welfare capitalism** (also called *state capitalism*) an economic system that combines private ownership of property, market competition, and a government's regulation of many programs and services.

lapsed. Today, only China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam practice some form of communism, but have also incorporated capitalism. In contrast to its principles, communism has failed, according to historians, because of widespread corruption and mismanagement, oppression, imprisonment or

Walt Disney Company is an example of an oligopoly. Among other holdings, it owns publishing companies, web portals, 19 major television and cable stations, at least 60 radio stations, numerous magazines, and 14 theme parks and resorts around the world. All of these outlets promote and sell Disney products, increasing the corporation's profits.

execution of people who questioned coercive policies, economic inefficiency that resulted in shortages of food and other goods, and few rewards for working hard (Brown, 2010; Johnson, 2010; Pollick, 2014).

### 11-1d Mixed Economies

#### **Welfare capitalism**

(also called *state capitalism*) is an economic system that combines private ownership of property, market competition, and a government's regulation of

many programs and services. Many countries, including the United States, have some form of welfare capitalism. Most industry is private, but the government owns or operates some of the largest industries and services (e.g., education, transportation, postal services) that benefit the entire population (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hacker, 2002).

*Crony capitalism* is an economy based on close relationships between business people and the government. In this system, the government gives wealthy people and large corporations preferential treatment through special tax breaks (called *tax credits* and *deductions*), direct



Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo; Alexey Strop/Shutterstock.com; iStock.com/CribbVisuals; Nizer/Dreamstime.com; iStock.com/Viafilms





China is an example of a country with a mixed economy: It espouses communism, practices socialism, and has endorsed many aspects of capitalism. China's economic boom hasn't benefited all of its citizens. Many urban centers are thriving—offering those in upper and middle classes high-rise apartments, stores, and restaurants. In contrast, millions of Chinese, including many older people, like the one pictured here, survive by scouring trash bins for plastic bottles to recycle.

payment or loans (called *subsidies*, not welfare), and provides grants that rarely require competition in an open market. From 2000 to 2012, for example, all but one of the Fortune 100 companies received almost \$1.3 trillion from the federal government in tax credits, contracts, grants, and various subsidies (Andrzejewski, 2014; see also the discussion of corporate welfare in Chapter 8).

Large companies drive both capitalism and mixed economies. Corporations, in particular, wield enormous influence both at home and abroad.

## 11-2 CORPORATIONS AND THE ECONOMY

In 2005, Hamdi Ulukaya, a Turkish immigrant, founded Chobani, a yogurt company that's now valued at about \$5 billion. In 2016, Ulukaya told his 2,000 full-time employees that they'd receive shares worth up to 10 percent of the company if it goes public or is sold. Many workers would become millionaires (Strom, 2016). Unlike Ulukaya, most corporate heads have luxurious lifestyles, eliminate employees' pensions, retire as billionaires, and pass on their massive wealth to their heirs (see Chapter 8). Corporate and political power are interwoven, but let's begin by looking at some of the characteristics of corporations.

### 11-2a Corporations

A **corporation** is an organization that has legal rights, privileges, and liabilities apart from those of its members. Until the 1890s, there were only a few U.S. corporations—in textiles, railroads, and the oil and steel industries. Today, there are almost 6 million, most created for profit, but a mere 0.5 percent bring in 90 percent of all corporate income (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Whereas many industrialized nations have closed corporate tax loopholes, the United States has expanded them. As a result, many corporations exercise more power than do governments, and have amassed enormous wealth. A number of U.S. corporations use legal tax loopholes to avoid paying tens of billions of dollars every year on overseas income; 29 companies alone have more cash than the U.S. Treasury Department; and the profits of the Fortune 500 corporations have soared (Durden, 2011; Niquette and Rubin, 2014; see also Chapter 8).

### 11-2b Conglomerates

A **conglomerate** is a corporation that owns a collection of companies in different industries. Conglomerates emerged during the 1960s and grew by acquiring companies through mergers. Mergers might increase the value of shareholders' stock, but typically make chief executives "truly, titanically, stupefyingly rich" (Morgenson, 2004: C1). An example of a conglomerate is Kraft Foods, which owns companies that produce snacks, beverages, pet foods, a variety of groceries and convenience foods, and has ties with other corporations such as Starbucks (see [www.kraft.com/brands](http://www.kraft.com/brands)).

Conglomerates diversify business risk by participating in a number of different markets, and can ward off emerging competition. Conglomerates waned after the 1980s, but are making a comeback. Google, for example, has set up companies to create driverless cars, extend human lifespans, and develop online education ("From Alpha to Omega," 2015).

### 11-2c Interlocking Directorates

In an **interlocking directorate**, the same people serve on the boards of

**corporation** an organization that has legal rights, privileges, and liabilities apart from those of its members.

**conglomerate** a corporation that owns a collection of companies in different industries.

**interlocking directorate** the same people serve on the boards of directors of several companies or corporations.



Roy Delgado/CartoonStock.com

directors of several companies or corporations. An estimated 15 to 20 percent of corporate directors sit on two or more corporate boards. Some interlocking directorates are especially powerful because they include past U.S. presidents and past members of Congress who provide connections in Washington, D.C. Interlocking directors develop similar economic perspectives; those who sit on two or more corporate boards are especially likely to receive appointments to influential government advisory committees (Domhoff, 2013). Thus, a very small group of people has the power to shape the national agenda.

## 11-2d Transnational Corporations and Conglomerates

Interlocking directorates have become more influential than ever because of the proliferation of transnational corporations. A

**transnational corporation** (also called a *multinational corporation* or an *international corporation*) a large company that's based in one country but operates across international boundaries.

**transnational conglomerate** (also called a *multinational conglomerate*) a corporation that owns a collection of different companies in various industries in a number of countries.

**work** a physical or mental activity that produces goods or services.

**deindustrialization** social and economic change that reduces industrial activity, especially manufacturing.

**transnational corporation** (also called a *multinational corporation* or an *international corporation*) is a large company that's based in one country but operates across international boundaries. By moving production plants abroad, large U.S. corporations can avoid trade tariffs, bypass environmental regulations, and pay low wages. On the positive side, many corporate giants (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, Microsoft, Apple) invest heavily in local and global education,

medical research, and developing economic opportunities (Preston, 2016; Gray, 2017).

The most powerful are **transnational conglomerates** (also called *multinational conglomerates*), corporations that own a collection of different companies in various industries in a number of countries. General Electric is the world's biggest transnational conglomerate. It owns hundreds of companies in the United States, and has subsidiaries in more than 170 countries ("GE Fact Sheet," 2017).

## 11-3 WORK IN U.S. SOCIETY TODAY

Economic problems vary by social class, but much financial hardship has to do with changes in **work**, a physical or mental activity that produces goods or services. Even those who work hard have lost economic ground because of macro-level variables such as deindustrialization, globalization, offshoring, and weakened labor unions.

### 11-3a Deindustrialization and Globalization

Many Americans have been casualties of **deindustrialization**, a process of social and economic change that reduces industrial activity, especially manufacturing. The number of manufacturing jobs plummeted from a peak of almost 20 million in 1979 to 11 million in 2010. Manufacturing added more than 800,000 new jobs after 2010, but of its 77 industries, only 19 are projected to add jobs by 2022—primarily in motor vehicle parts manufacturing, and animal slaughter and processing (Torpey, 2014).



Avatar\_023/Shutterstock.com

Many U.S. factories today need only a few skilled workers to manage the high-tech machines that have replaced people.

A major reason for deindustrialization is that, beginning in the early 1960s, employers easily replaced workers with the lowest skill levels, usually those on assembly lines, with automation. Machines and robots have also replaced many blue collar jobs that provided a comfortable standard of living in the past. Robots are commonplace in manufacturing jobs, but employers report a shortage of workers with science, technology, engineering, or math degrees who can program robots, repair sophisticated hardware, and design software that runs a factory's operations (Gregory, 2017; Manyika et al., 2017).

The manufacturing industry is also facing a major shortage of skilled workers like welders, ironworkers, and brick masons. An estimated two million such jobs will go unfilled over the next decade because employers can't find enough people with the required skills, and despite above-average wages. Entry-level welders, for example, can move quickly from \$17 to \$30 an hour (Cohen, 2015; Payne and Somerville, 2015).

Deindustrialization was hastened by **globalization**, the growth and spread of investment, trade, production, communication, and new technology around the world. One example of globalization is a car that's assembled in the United States with practically all of its parts manufactured and produced in Germany, Japan, South Korea, or developing countries.

Proponents argue that globalization creates millions of jobs and brings affordable goods and services (e.g., cell phones) to billions of people around the world. Critics contend that globalization has reduced the number of jobs in Western economies. They also maintain that globalization benefits primarily the world's most powerful transnational corporations: It increases their profits by expanding their worldwide base of consumers, exploits poor people in developing countries, creates greater income inequality between workers and the global elite, and gives corporations unprecedented political power (Schaeffer, 2003; Porter, 2014).

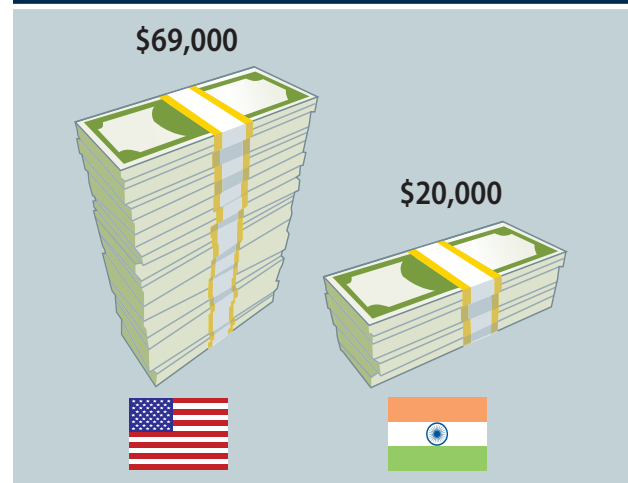
### 11-3b Offshoring and Labor Unions

**Offshoring** refers to sending work or jobs to another country to cut a company's costs at home. Sometimes called *international outsourcing* or *offshore outsourcing*, the transfer of manufacturing jobs overseas has been going on since at least the 1970s.

Between 2001 and 2011, U.S. companies moved more than 2.7 million jobs to China, 77 percent of them in manufacturing and primarily blue-collar (Scott, 2012).



**Figure 11.1** Median Annual Earnings of an Accountant in the United States and India



Sources: Based on Labor Force Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2017, Table 39, "Median Weekly Earnings of Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers by Detailed Occupation and Sex" (bls.gov/cps); Krumwiede, 2017.

During the same period, U.S. firms also offshored 28 percent of high-level, well-paid information technology (IT) jobs, including those in accounting, computer science, and engineering (National Science Board, 2012). Most of the offshored jobs go to India and China, but many have also moved to Canada, Hungary, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Egypt, Venezuela, Vietnam, and South Africa.

Companies can get accounting services in India that cost much less than in the United States (Figure 11.1).

In Mexico, the average General Motors worker earns wages and benefits that cost less than \$4 an hour compared with \$55 an hour in the United States. Because of such large wage differences, American consumers can purchase goods and services at low prices, and the majority doesn't care where products are made (Black, 2010; Guarino, 2013; Newport et al., 2014).

Deindustrialization, globalization, and offshoring have weakened *labor unions*, organized groups that seek to improve wages, benefits, and working conditions. Union membership has dropped sharply—from 35 percent of the workforce in the mid-1950s to 11 percent in 2016. Five

**globalization** the growth and spread of investment, trade, production, communication, and new technology around the world.

**offshoring** sending work or jobs to another country to cut a company's costs at home.



states prohibit unionization; 27 states have significantly restricted collective bargaining rights; and anti-union groups have helped defeat efforts to unionize autoworkers in Tennessee and other states (Whitesides, 2014; Bookman and Neeley, 2017; “Union Members—2016,” 2017).

Do we still need unions? Opponents argue that union members are overpaid, and that unions drain state resources because of high pensions and salaries of public sector employees (e.g., teachers, nurses, sanitation workers, police). Critics also contend that unions have limited employers’ flexibility in hiring and firing decisions, and that ever-increasing labor and health care costs have forced some employers to move their operations overseas to remain competitive (McKinnon, 2011; Schlesinger, 2011).

Proponents argue that states have experienced budget deficits because of the housing crisis and a recession that was due to Wall Street greed and not overpaid union members. Others point out that union members have made numerous concessions like decreasing their wages and benefits. Most important, historically, unions have benefited almost all workers by insisting on paid holidays and vacations, greater workplace safety, and overtime pay (Stepan-Norris, 2015).



Source: [fightfor15.org](http://fightfor15.org)

### 11-3c How Americans’ Work Has Changed

The U.S. economy started adding more jobs in 2012, but millions of Americans still have only low-paying and part-time jobs. If these strategies fail, they find themselves among the unemployed.

#### LOW-WAGE JOBS

About half of U.S. jobs pay less than \$15 an hour. After taxes, the wages of a full-time year-round worker who earns \$15 an hour is only about \$26,000 a year, and many jobs pay much less. The federal minimum wage, which rose from \$6.55 to \$7.25 an hour in 2009, increased the wages of less than 4 percent of the workforce. The District of Columbia and 29 states now have minimum wages that exceed the federal minimum wage. If the wage had been raised since 1968 at the same rate as the average worker’s growth in productivity, the federal minimum wage would be

nearly \$18.50 an hour (Cooper, 2015; DeSilver, 2017; Hoxie, 2017).

Almost 3 percent (2.2 million) of workers 18 and older are at or below the federal minimum wage. Another 30 percent (20.6 million) are “near-minimum” workers who earn less than \$10.10 an hour (DeSilver, 2017). Thus, most jobs don’t pay enough to allow workers to save money or get ahead. In 2016, Walmart, the nation’s largest low-wage employer, increased the hourly wage to \$10 an hour. If Walmart paid its workers \$12 an hour and passed every penny of the costs to consumers, the average customer would pay just 46 cents more per shopping trip, or about \$12 a year (Cooper, 2015; Montlake, 2016). Thus, many Americans are being paid less for doing more.

Except for registered nurses, whose median annual salary is about \$69,000, eight of the occupations expected to have the most jobs added through 2024 are low paying, under \$24,000 a year. These occupations include home health aides and personal care aides who help older and disabled people. Other fast-growing but low-paying jobs—from about \$22,000 to \$25,000 a year—include retail salespersons, cooks, stock clerks, janitors, housekeeping cleaners, and fast-food workers (“Employment Projections,” 2017).

#### PART-TIME, TEMPORARY, AND GIG WORK

Of the almost 27 million part-timers (those who work less than 35 hours a week), 20 percent are part time involuntarily, because they can’t find suitable full-time employment or employers have reduced their hours. The “alternative workforce”—which includes working for temporary help agencies, as freelancers, or as independent contractors—rose from 11 percent in 2005 to 16 percent in 2015 (15 million and nearly 24 million, respectively) (Katz and Krueger, 2016; “Economic News Release,” 2017).

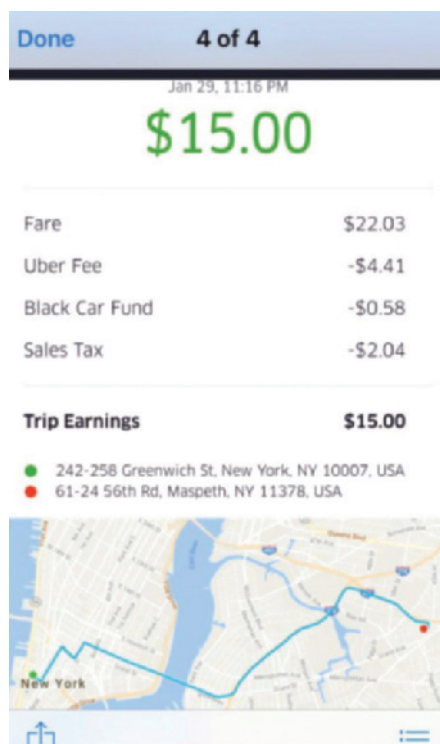
Rapid technological advances have spurred a *gig economy* (also called a sharing, on-demand, platform, collaborative, or digital economy). Although there’s no official definition, *gig work* is a project or task for which an individual, often through a digital marketplace, receives payment (e.g., Uber, Airbnb, TaskRabbit, Postmates, Etsy). Because definitions of gig work vary, prevalence rates

range from 1 to 33 percent of the workforce (Katz and Krueger, 2016; Torpey and Hogan, 2016; Morgan, 2017).

The benefits of alternative and gig work include job flexibility and autonomy, few formal education or experience requirements, turning a hobby or pastime into a source of income, and supplementing a full-time job. On the other hand, people generally earn less than in traditional occupations, must cover their own health care costs, and may face unpredictable hours and financial instability (Smith, 2016; Hicks, 2017; Morgan, 2017).

## UNEMPLOYMENT AND DISCOURAGED WORKERS

The U.S. unemployment rate surged between 2008 and 2010, but has dropped since then (Figure 11.2). Despite the drop, only 63 percent of Americans age 16 and older have a job or are looking for one—the lowest share of the population participating in the labor force since 1978. The share of men aged 25 to 54, the prime of working life, has been declining since 1965. As a result, almost 12 percent (7 million men) aren't employed or looking for work. Large numbers are black, veterans, or ex-prisoners; have a high school diploma or less; are on painkillers; or receive disability benefits (Eberstadt, 2016; Krueger, 2016; White House Council of Economic Advisers, 2016).



Source: Uber

About 24 percent of the jobless are *long-term unemployed*, people who have searched for but not found a job for 27 weeks or longer. The longer that people are unemployed, the harder it is to find a job: Only 11 percent find steady, full-time employment a year later. Many of the long-term unemployed become **discouraged workers**, people who stop looking for work because they believe that job hunting is futile. About 5 percent of Americans are discouraged workers who aren't included in official unemployment rates (Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2015; BLS News Release, 2017).

## JOB SATISFACTION AND PRODUCTIVITY

A whopping 69 percent of Americans report being “not engaged” or “actively disengaged” in their jobs, meaning that they’re uninvolved, unhappy that their

needs aren't being met, and put in as little time as possible (Harter and Adkins, 2017). Service workers are less engaged than managers and executives (28 percent and 40 percent, respectively), but 60 percent of the latter aren't engaged or are actively disengaged. Across generations, people born after 1980 are the least engaged, primarily because they believe that their jobs don't allow them to use their talents and strengths (Adkins, 2015).

In most European countries, the typical workweek is 35 hours—comparable with the U.S. definition of part-time work. Americans work nearly 25 percent more hours than Europeans, which amounts to an additional 258 hours per year. Because taxes are much higher in Europe than in the United States and Europeans get generous pensions, they have less incentive to work longer hours. Despite longer workweeks, the United States ranks fifth in productivity compared with 34 other countries. Luxembourg, the most productive country, has an average workweek of just 29 hours. Luxembourg's workplace and government policies

encourage employees to make time for family and

**discouraged workers** people who stop looking for work because they believe that job hunting is futile.

**Figure 11.2** U.S. Unemployment Rate, 2000 to 2017



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017, “Unemployment Rate.” Accessed June 8, 2017 (data.bls.gov).



In good times and in bad, African American men have the highest unemployment rates. And compared with their white counterparts, black workers are unemployed longer after their unemployment insurance benefits end. Pictured here are laid-off workers examining listings at a job fair.

**Table 11.1 Vacation Days, on Average, that Workers Receive and Use**

	Receives	Uses
France	30	30
Spain	30	26
Italy	30	25
Germany	30	28
Denmark, Norway, and Sweden	25	25
Japan	20	10
Ireland	21	21
United States	15	12
South Korea	15	8

Source: Based on Expedia's Vacation Deprivation Study, 2016.

other commitments, only 3 percent work 50 hours or more per week, and all employees have a minimum of five weeks of paid vacation (Bick et al., 2017; OECD, 2017).

The United States is the only industrialized nation in the world that doesn't legally guarantee workers a paid vacation; 25 percent of Americans have no paid vacation *and* no paid holidays. In contrast, the typical worker, especially in Western Europe, has at least 6 weeks of paid vacation, regardless of job seniority or the number of years worked (Ray et al., 2013; Greenfield, 2015). U.S. workers have the least vacation days and don't use all of them (*Table 11.1*). Workers in France receive and take 30 days, but 90 percent complain that they're "vacation deprived" ("Vacation Habits...", 2013).

In 2014, 41 percent of Americans didn't take any vacation days. The rest shrank their vacations to a few days or long weekends because they couldn't afford a vacation, had too much to do on the job, wanted to impress their boss with their dedication, or feared being replaced



Laura Gangi Pond/Shutterstock.com

while away. Employees who forfeit paid time off don't get more raises or bonuses and report higher stress than those who take all of their vacation time, but employers save almost \$53 billion a year when people work for free (U.S. Travel Association, 2014; Dickey, 2015; Mudallal, 2015).

### 11-3d Women and Minorities in the Workplace

One of the most dramatic changes in the United States during the twentieth century was the increase of women in the labor force (*Table 11.2*). Many factors have contributed to the surge in women's employment, especially since the 1970s, including the growth in the number of college-educated women (who, consequently, had more job opportunities), an increase in the number of working single mothers, and the higher costs of homeownership that require two incomes.

Largely because of their higher educational attainment, 29 percent of women in two-income marriages bring home the bigger paycheck, up from



**Table 11.2 Women and Men in the Labor Force, 1890–2016**

Percentage of Men and Women in the Labor Force			Women as a Percentage of All Workers
Year	Men	Women	
1890	84	18	17
1900	86	20	18
1920	85	23	20
1940	83	28	25
1960	84	38	33
1980	78	52	42
1990	76	58	45
2016	66	54	47

Source: Based on Labor Force Statistics, Current Population Survey, Table 3, "Employment Status," 2016. Accessed May 1, 2017 (bls.gov/cps).

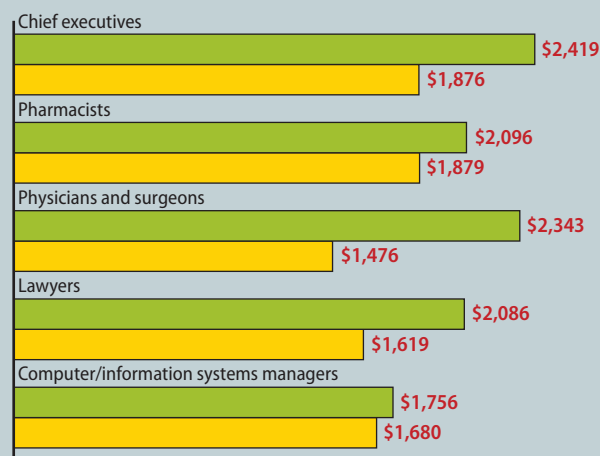
only 4 percent in 1970 ("Wives Who Earn More . . .," 2014). As a group, however, women have lower earnings than men in both the highest and lowest paying occupations, and the wage gaps are greater in high-income jobs (*Figure 11.3*).

There are earnings disparities across racial-ethnic groups, but the differences are especially striking by sex. As you examine *Figure 11.4*, note two general characteristics. First, earnings increase—across all racial-ethnic groups and for both sexes—as people go up the occupational ladder. But across all occupations, men have higher earnings than women of the same racial-ethnic group. At the bottom of the occupational ladder are African American women and Latinas, with the latter faring worse than any of the other groups. Thus, both gender *and* race-ethnicity affect earnings. (See Hegewisch et al., 2015, for a detailed analysis of the gender wage gap, by race and ethnicity, since 1955.)

**Figure 11.3 Women Earn Less Than Men Whether They're CEOs or Cooks**

These are five of the highest and lowest paid occupations of full-time, year-round U.S. workers in 2016. How might you explain why the earnings differ by sex, especially in the highest paid jobs?

**Men Make More Than Women in Some of the Highest Paying Jobs**

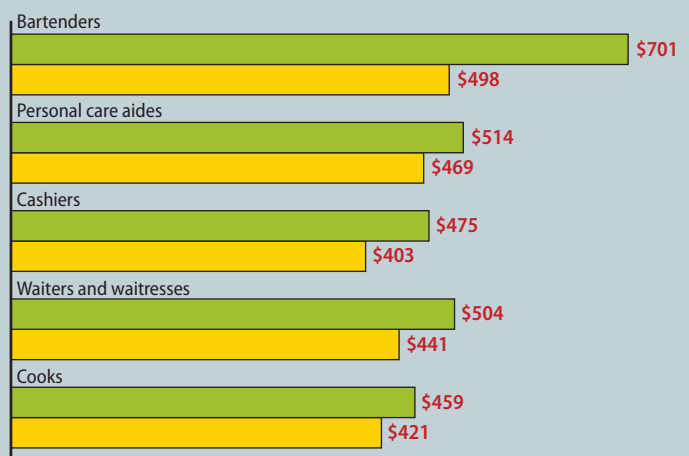


Median Weekly Earnings

Men

Women

**... and in Some of the Lowest Paying Jobs**

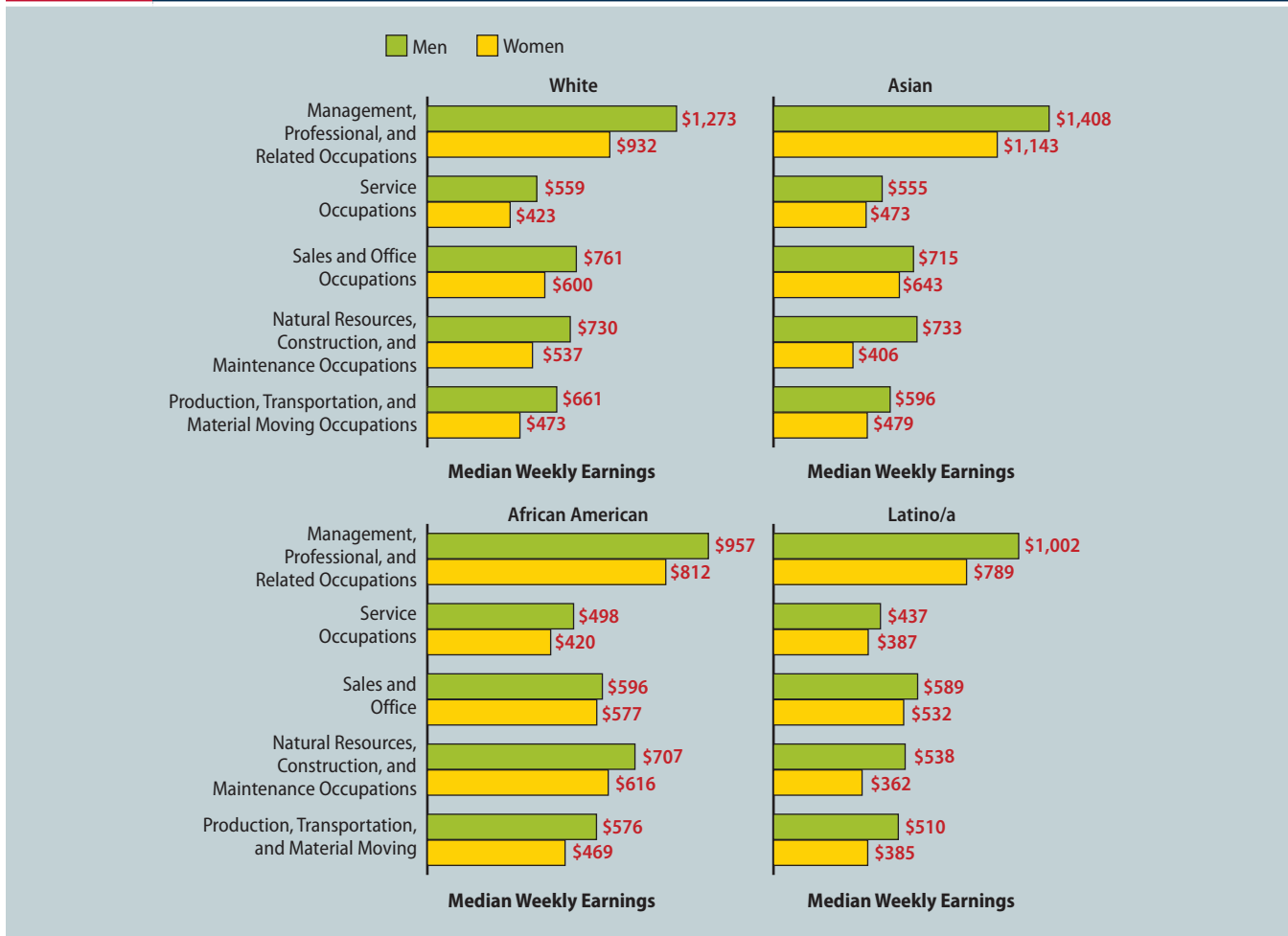


Median Weekly Earnings

Note: Some of the differences between men's and women's median weekly earnings may seem small, but multiply each number by 52 weeks. Thus, in annual earnings, male physicians and surgeons average more than \$121,836 compared with only \$76,752 for females.

Source: Based on Labor Force Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2017, Table 39, "Median Weekly Earnings of Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers by Detailed Occupation and Sex." Accessed July 1, 2017 (bls.gov/cps).

**Figure 11.4** Median Weekly Earnings of Full-Time Workers by Occupation, Sex, Race, and Ethnicity



Note: Examples of the occupations include the following:

**Managerial and Professional**—Executives, managers, public administrators

**Service**—Private household workers, police, firefighters, people in food and health services, janitors

**Sales and Office**—Supervisors, sales representatives, office administrators

**Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance**—Farmers, fishing industries, construction workers, auto mechanics, machine repairers

**Production, Transportation, and Material Moving**—Truck drivers, assembly-line workers, equipment cleaners

Source: Based on Bureau of Labor Statistics, *The Editor's Desk*, 2011. Accessed April 15, 2014 ([bls.gov/opub/ted/2011/ted\\_20110914.htm](http://bls.gov/opub/ted/2011/ted_20110914.htm)).

## 11-4 SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF WORK AND THE ECONOMY

Sociological theories offer different insights on the economy and its impact on society. *Table 11.3* summarizes each perspective's key points.

### 11-4a Functionalism

Functionalists typically emphasize the benefits of work and the economy. They also see capitalism as bringing prosperity to society as a whole.

### SOME KEY ISSUES

For functionalists, work is necessary for a society's survival and defining its members' roles. Work is also important because it connects people to each other: As jobs become more specialized, a small group of workers is responsible for getting the work done, and co-workers can get to know one another (Parsons, 1954, 1960; Merton, 1968). Such networks increase workplace solidarity and enhance a sense of belonging to a group where people listen to each other's ideas, interact, and "share a vision for the work [they] do together" (Gardner, 2008: 16).

**Table 11.3 Sociological Explanations of Work and the Economy**

Theoretical Perspective	Level of Analysis	Key Points
<b>Functionalist</b>	Macro	Capitalism benefits society; work provides an income, structures people's lives, and gives them a sense of accomplishment.
<b>Conflict</b>	Macro	Capitalism enables the rich to exploit other groups; most jobs are low-paying, monotonous, and alienating; productivity isn't always rewarded.
<b>Feminist</b>	Macro and micro	Gender roles structure women's and men's work experiences differently and inequitably.
<b>Symbolic Interactionist</b>	Micro	How people define and experience work in their everyday lives affects their workplace behavior and relationships with coworkers and employers.

Besides providing income, work has social meaning. For many Americans, jobs offer a sense of accomplishment and feeling valued; stability, order, and a daily rhythm; and a network of interesting social and professional contacts (Katzenbach, 2003; Brooks, 2007). Functionalists also maintain that wage inequities spur people to persevere and to set higher goals. Low-paying jobs, for example, can motivate people to work harder or obtain further education to move up the economic ladder (see Chapter 8).

### CRITICAL EVALUATION

Critics point out that work is a significant source of stress for 69 percent of Americans and often leads to myriad health problems (American Psychological Association, 2014). Many people have unstimulating and low-paid jobs that require repetitive and routine tasks, instead of providing a connection to a product or a group (see the discussion of McDonaldisation in Chapter 6). Even in higher paying jobs, only a third of physicians and nurses report being engaged in their work (Gallup, 2013).

Functionalists also gloss over many U.S. corporations' disinterest in workers' well-being. In the private

sector, 30 percent of full-timers and 74 percent of part-timers don't have paid sick days (Williams and Gault, 2014). Even when business improves, many employers convert full-time jobs to part-time or temporary positions, and cut health benefits (Schultz, 2011).

### 11-4b Conflict Theory

Whereas functionalists emphasize the economy's benefits, conflict theorists argue that capitalism creates social problems. They contend, for example, that globalization has led to job insecurity, and that a handful of transnational conglomerates have enormous power.

### SOME KEY ISSUES

For conflict theorists, low wages alienate employees rather than motivate them to work harder, as functionalists claim. Many people are stuck in low-paying, monotonous jobs and don't always get promotions regardless of their skills, attitudes, perseverance, or productivity (Clements, 2012).

Conflict theorists also argue that capitalism enables the rich and powerful to exploit other groups, resulting in huge wealth disparities. In most industrialized countries, CEOs earn 10 to 25 times more than the average worker. In some of the largest U.S. companies, CEOs earn 1,000 times more than their employees. Between 1978 and 2014, CEO pay increased by 937 percent compared with only 10 percent for workers. Because executive compensation boards are "packed with insiders who parcel



AP Images/Connecticut Post, Ned Gerard

For functionalists, the economy provides order and stability. Many unemployed men—including recent Asian and Latino immigrants—join the military because it offers steady work, college education benefits, and an opportunity for career advancement.



## ARE CONFLICT THEORISTS TOO QUICK TO BLAME CAPITALISM FOR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS?

out rewards to their friends,” it’s not unusual for CEOs to be paid at least \$60 million a year. And, unlike other industrialized countries, the U.S. government doesn’t cap corporate pay (Bivens and Mishel, 2015; Krantz, 2015; “Executive Pay,” 2016: 18; Weaver, 2016).

Instead of higher wages, annual raises, and health benefits, more businesses are rewarding employees with perks (e.g., free gym memberships, \$100 gift cards, pet health insurance). Working-class families’ eroding job opportunities and wages have led to personal problems such as marital discord and mental health problems. As economic problems accumulate, “deaths of despair”—death by drugs, alcohol, or suicide—increase, especially among middle-aged white men with low education levels (Mui, 2015; Case and Deaton, 2017; see also Chapter 14).



In 2017, the median CEO compensation was nearly \$16 million. In contrast, the median annual wages for full-time workers was only \$44,980—a CEO-to-worker pay ratio of 356 to 1 (Economic News Release, 2017; Marcec, 2017).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Critics fault conflict theorists for emphasizing economic constraints rather than choices. For example, almost a third of households making more than \$75,000 a year live paycheck-to-paycheck because they enjoy “lifestyle purchases” like dining out and entertainment (“SunTrust: Many Higher Income...,” 2015).

Also, according to functionalists, conflict theorists underestimate people’s ability to get ahead. Many young people are thronging schools that teach high-tech skills in welding and other trades, fast-food workers are unionizing to raise the industry’s minimum wage to \$15.00 an hour, and 63 percent of small-business owners find qualified new employees through word-of-mouth referrals (Berfield, 2013; Jacobe, 2013; Phillips, 2014). Thus, many Americans are using several strategies to succeed economically.

### 11-4c Feminist Theories

Feminist scholars agree with conflict theorists that there’s widespread workplace inequality. They emphasize, however, that gender is a critical factor in explaining the inequity.

## SOME KEY ISSUES

At all income levels and in all occupations, women, especially Latinas and black women, earn less than men (Figure 11.4). There’s a 40 percent gender wage gap—after accounting for race, ethnicity, education, occupation, workplace experience, and other factors—that’s presumably due to gender discrimination (Blau and Kahn, 2016). Both historically and currently, as you saw in Chapters 6 and 9, women have lower earnings than men because of occupational sex segregation, glass ceilings, and glass escalators.

Employment rates increased after the recession, but the gains for women have been largely in low-paying jobs, particularly waitressing, in-home health care, food preparation, and housekeeping. From 2009 to 2012, 60 percent of the increase in women’s employment, versus 20 percent for men, was in jobs that pay less than \$10.10 an hour. Women make up less than half of the labor force but hold more than two-thirds of all low-wage jobs (e.g., personal and home health aides, fast-food workers, lowest-paid retail positions). These female-dominated low-wage jobs, which will be the fastest-growing until 2024, will leave millions of women and families struggling to make ends meet (National Women’s Law Center, 2014; Robbins and Vogtman, 2016).

Many women's earnings suffer from a **motherhood penalty** (also called *motherhood wage penalty* or *mommy penalty*), a pay gap between women who are and aren't mothers. On average, women without children make 90 cents to a man's dollar, married mothers make 73 cents to a man's dollar, and single mothers make only 60 cents to a man's dollar (Rowe-Finkbeiner, 2012; Entmacher et al., 2014).

After declining for several decades, the share of stay-at-home mothers rose from 23 percent in 1999 to 29 percent in 2012. There are many reasons for this increase, but low wages and motherhood penalties are at the top of the list. Many mothers in two-income households have dropped out of the labor force because child care costs rose more than 70 percent from 1985 to 2011 (Cohn et al., 2014).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Critics note that men don't always dominate women in the workplace. There are many situations where female supervisors have power and authority over women and men, and top female managers aren't always concerned about gender wage gaps nor support qualified women's promotions (Huffman, 2013). Second, many feminist scholars maintain that capitalism exploits women by crowding them into lower-paying occupations. However, there's considerable economic gender inequality in socialist, communist, and mixed economies in both industrialized and developing nations (Cudd and Holstrom, 2010).

Some people also question whether the economy reinforces sex discrimination or simply reflects cultural sexism. For example, 51 percent of Americans, including women, say that children are better off if the mother is at home and doesn't work; only 8 percent say the same about stay-at-home dads (Cohn et al., 2014). Thus, patriarchal values may be as important as discrimination in explaining many women's economic inequality.

## 11-4d Symbolic Interaction

Symbolic interactionists rely on micro-level approaches to explain the day-to-day meaning of work. They're especially interested in how work shapes people's self-identity.

## SOME KEY ISSUES

Symbolic interaction has provided numerous insights on how people define and experience work. Regardless of income level, 63 percent of U.S. workers who are engaged in their jobs, and even 42 percent of those who aren't engaged, say they would continue to work in their current job if they won a \$10 million lottery. All of them might quit, of course, but such responses show that work provides many people with "a source of identity, purpose, and satisfaction that money alone may not replace" (Harter and Agrawal, 2013).



Would you work if you won a \$10 million lottery? Why or why not?

Interactionists also study how people are socialized into their jobs and the informal rules that shape behavior. In medicine, surgeons teach their interns and residents that it's normal to make some mistakes, but that carelessness and continued errors are unprofessional (Bosk, 1979). Assembly-line workers also control coworkers who overproduce or underproduce by punishing or rewarding them (see Chapter 6).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

The most common criticism is that symbolic interaction, although providing in-depth analyses, sacrifices scope. Studies of small work groups can tell us much about people's interaction. We don't know, however, if the findings are applicable to large companies or different parts of the country because the research is based on small and nonrepresentative samples.

Another limitation is that interactionism neglects macro-level social forces that affect people's work and choices. Consider government: When it allows monopolies, consumers must pay high prices for low-quality goods and services because there are no options. Low wages and discrimination, which most politicians ignore, alienate workers and increase personal and family stress. Thus, structural obstacles can thwart individual choices and efforts.

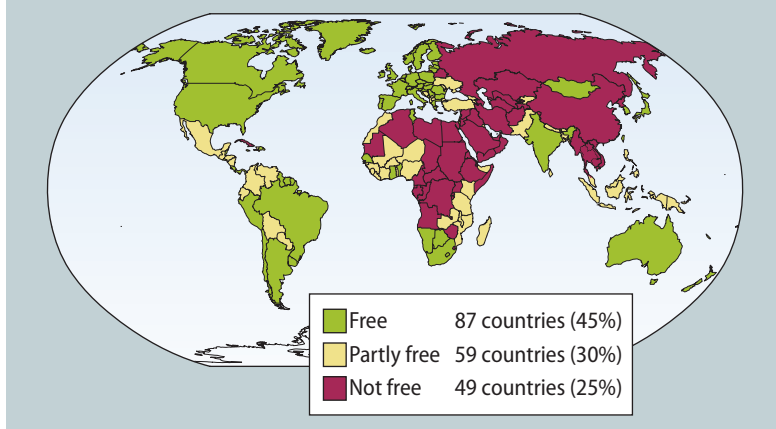
## 11-5 GLOBAL POLITICAL SYSTEMS

Every society has a **government**, a formal organization that has the authority to make and enforce laws. Governments are expected to maintain order, provide social services, regulate the economy, establish educational systems, create armed forces to discourage (real or imagined) attacks by other countries, and ensure their residents' safety.

**motherhood penalty** (also called *motherhood wage penalty* or *mommy penalty*) a pay gap between women who are and aren't mothers.

**government** a formal organization that has the authority to make and enforce laws.

**Figure 11.5** Political Freedom Around the World, 2017



This map shows the degree of political freedom and civil liberties in 195 countries around the world. *Political freedom* includes free and fair elections, competitive parties, and no discrimination against minorities. *Civil liberties* include freedom of speech and the press, to practice one's religion, and to discuss political issues without fear of physical violence or intimidation by the government.

Source: Freedom House, 2015; Puddington and Roylance, 2017.

Worldwide, governments vary from democratic to totalitarian, but there are also authoritarian governments and monarchies. Let's begin by looking at democracy.

### 11-5a Democracy

A **democracy** is a political system in which, ideally, citizens have control over the state and its actions. Democracies are based on several principles:

- ▶ Individuals participate in decisions, and select leaders who are responsive to the majority of the people's wishes.
- ▶ Suffrage (the right to vote) is universal, and elections are frequent, free, fair, and secret.
- ▶ The government recognizes individual rights, such as freedom of speech (including dissent), press, and assembly, and the right to organize political parties whose members compete for public office.
- ▶ The "rule of law" requires everyone to obey the law and to be held accountable if they violate it.

Worldwide, 36 percent of the world's population (2.7 billion people) live in countries with repressive

**democracy** a political system in which, ideally, citizens have control over the state and its actions.

**totalitarianism** the government controls almost every aspect of people's lives.

governments that deny basic political and civil rights. People in sub-Saharan and North Africa, the Middle East, China, Eurasia, and Russia are the least likely to have political freedom

(Figure 11.5). Despite some countries' attempts to establish democracies, democracy has declined around the world for 11 consecutive years (Puddington and Roylance, 2017).

### 11-5b Totalitarianism and Dictatorships

At the opposite end of the continuum from democracy is **totalitarianism**, a political system in which the government controls almost every aspect of people's lives. Totalitarianism has several distinctive characteristics (Taylor, 1993; Tormey, 1995; Arendt, 2004):

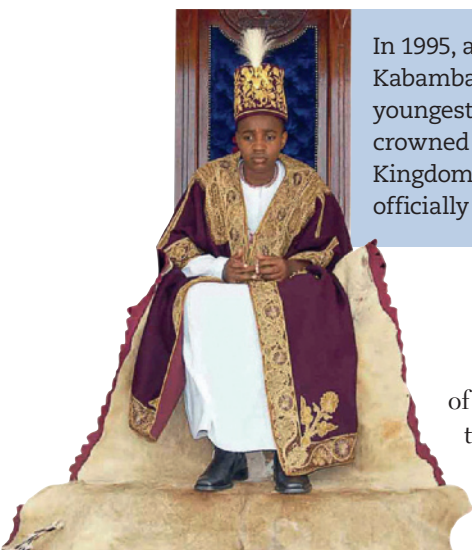
- ▶ A pervasive ideology that legitimizes state control and instructs people how to act in their public and private lives.
- ▶ A single political party controlled by one person, a *dictator*—a supreme, sometimes idolized leader—who stays in office indefinitely.
- ▶ A system of terror that relies on secret police and the military to intimidate people into conformity and to punish dissenters.
- ▶ Total control by the government over other institutions, including the military, education, family, religion, economy, media, and all cultural activities, including the arts and sports.



Timofeev Sergey/Shutterstock.com

Some political analysts believe that Russia is moving from authoritarianism to totalitarianism. Vladimir Putin, Russia's prime minister/president since 1999, censors much of the Internet content, crushes gay and other civil rights activists, represses his regime's critics, and is resurrecting the KGB—a secret police force and spy network involved in all aspects of people's everyday lives (Ryzhkov, 2015; Soldatov, 2016).





Peter Busomoke/Getty Images

In 1995, at age 3, Oyo Nyimba Kabamba Iguru became the world's youngest monarch when he was crowned as king of the Ugandan Kingdom of Toro. At age 18, he officially took control of the kingdom.

Contemporary examples of the most repressive totalitarian governments include Central African Republic, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Iran, and Uzbekistan.

Within these countries and territories, state control over daily life is pervasive and wide-ranging, independent organizations and political opposition are banned or suppressed, and those who criticize the government are imprisoned, tortured, or killed (Puddington and Roylance, 2017).

### 11-5c Authoritarianism and Monarchies

Many nations have some version of democracy or totalitarianism. However, a number of countries are characterized by **authoritarianism**, a political system in which the state controls the lives of citizens but permits some degree of individual freedom. Authoritarian governments, like Russia, may permit elections, often controlled, but prohibit free speech, punish those who publicly question state policies, and imprison people without giving them a trial.

In a **monarchy**, the oldest type of authoritarian regime, power is based on heredity and passes from generation to generation. A member of a royal family, usually a king or queen, reigns over a kingdom. A monarch's power and authority are legitimized by tradition and religion. There are more than 40 monarchies around the world. In some countries—especially in the Middle East and parts of Africa—monarchs have absolute control. Those in Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Britain, Japan, and many other countries have little political power because they're limited by democratic constitutions and serve primarily ceremonial roles (Glauber, 2011).

We see, then, that political systems vary worldwide. Despite the variation, political leaders wield considerable power and authority.

## 11-6 POLITICS, POWER, AND AUTHORITY

Power and authority are important concepts in sociological analyses of politics. The use and misuse of power and authority affect the quality of our everyday lives.

### 11-6a Power

**Power** is the ability of a person or group to influence others, even if they resist. For example, a government can quash a peaceful protest or, conversely, protect people's right to protest. *Legitimate power* comes from having a role, position, or title that people accept as legal and appropriate (e.g., Congress has the right to pass laws, the police have the right to enforce laws). *Coercive power* relies on force or the threat of force to impose one's will on others (e.g., a dictator who imprisons or executes protestors).

Power is relational. Lawmakers affect their constituents' lives because of the laws they pass on taxes, the environment, and other issues. Voters can protest, refuse to follow laws, and vote politicians out of office.

Whether legitimate or coercive, power—especially political power—is about controlling others. Because people may revolt against sheer force, many governments depend on authority to establish order, shape people's attitudes, and control their behavior.

### 11-6b Authority

**Authority**, the legitimate use of power, has three characteristics. First, people *consent* to authority because they believe that their obedience is for the greater good (e.g., following traffic rules). Second, people see the authority as *legitimate*—valid, justifiable, and necessary (e.g., paying taxes to support public education, increase national security, and remove trash and snow). Third, people accept authority because it's *institutionalized*, accepted by a large number of people, in organizations (e.g., police departments and government agencies).

Max Weber (1925/1978) described three ideal types of legitimate authority: traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal (*Table 11.4*). Remember that ideal types

**authoritarianism** the state controls the lives of citizens but permits some degree of individual freedom.

**monarchy** power is based on heredity and passes from generation to generation.

**power** the ability of a person or group to influence others, even if they resist.

**authority** the legitimate use of power.

**Table 11.4** Weber's Three Types of Authority

Type of Authority	Description	Source of Power	Examples
<b>Traditional</b>	Power is based on customs, traditions, and/or religious beliefs.	Personal	Medieval kings and queens, emperors, tribal chiefs
<b>Charismatic</b>	Power is based on exceptional personal abilities or a calling.	Personal	Adolf Hitler, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr.
<b>Rational-legal</b>	Power is based on the rules and laws that are inherent in an elected or appointed office.	Formal	U.S. presidents, members of Congress, state officials, police, judges

are models that describe the basic characteristics of any phenomenon (see Chapters 1 and 5). In reality, these types of authority often overlap.

### TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY

**Traditional authority** is power based on customs that justify the ruler's position. The source of power is personal because the ruler inherits authority on the basis of long-standing customs, traditions, or religious beliefs. Traditional authority is most common in nonindustrialized societies where power resides in kinship groups, tribes, and clans. In many African, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries, power is passed down among men within a family line (Tétreault, 2001; see also Chapter 8).

### CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY

**Charismatic authority** is power based on exceptional individual abilities and characteristics that inspire devotion, trust, and obedience. Like traditional authority, charismatic authority is personal and reflects extraordinary deeds or even a belief that a leader has been chosen by God, but the leaders don't pass their power down to their offspring.

Charismatic leaders can inspire loyalty and passion whether they're heroes or tyrants. Examples of the latter include historical figures Adolf Hitler, Napoleon,

Ayatollah Khomeini, and Fidel Castro. These and other dictators have been spellbinding orators who radiated magnetism, dynamism, and tremendous self-confidence, and promised to improve a nation's future (Taylor, 1993).

### RATIONAL-LEGAL AUTHORITY

**Rational-legal authority** is power based on the belief



ChinaFotoPress/Getty Images

First Lady Michelle Obama is an example of a charismatic political leader. She worked to end childhood obesity, helped military families, and visited other countries as a goodwill ambassador.

that laws and appointed or elected political leaders are legitimate. Unlike traditional and charismatic authority, rational-legal authority comes from rules and regulations that pertain to an office rather than to a person. For example, anyone running for mayor must have specific qualifications (e.g., U.S. citizenship). When a new mayor (or governor or other politician) is elected, the rules don't change because power is vested in the office rather than the person currently holding the office.

### MIXED AUTHORITY FORMS

People may enjoy more than one type of authority. Some historians believe that presidents Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and Ronald Reagan enjoyed charismatic appeal beyond their rational-legal authority. In some countries, including Japan and England, emperors, kings, and queens have traditional authority and perform symbolic state functions (e.g., attending ceremonies). Both of these countries also have parliaments that exercise legal-rational authority in determining laws and policies.

**traditional authority** power based on customs that justify the ruler's position.

**charismatic authority** power based on exceptional individual abilities and characteristics that inspire devotion, trust, and obedience.

**rational-legal authority** power based on the belief that laws and appointed or elected political leaders are legitimate.

## POLITICS AND POWER IN U.S. SOCIETY

Politics plays a critical role in our everyday lives. Three important components of the political system are political parties, special-interest groups, and voters.

### 11-7a Political Parties

A **political party** is an organization that tries to influence and control government by recruiting, nominating, and electing its members to public office. Political parties are avenues for citizens to shape public policy at the local, state, and national levels.

### FUNCTIONS OF U.S. POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties engage in a range of activities—from mailing flyers and calling voters to drafting laws if a candidate is elected. Parties perform a number of vital political functions, especially recruiting candidates for public office, organizing elections, and if elected, running the government.

Ideally, that's how political parties *should* work. In reality, parties perform some of these functions more effectively than others. For example, parties typically concentrate on winning elections rather than passing laws

that benefit the general population once candidates are in office.

### THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

Many democracies around the world have a number of major political parties: 3 in Canada, 5 in Germany, 9 in Italy and Holland, 34 in Israel, and more than 1,000 in India. Thus, compared with many other countries, the two-party system of Democrats and Republicans in the United States is uncommon. Political parties base their activities on an *ideology*, a set of ideas that constitute a person's or group's beliefs, goals, expectations, and actions. *Table 11.5* gives some examples of major ideological differences between Democrats and Republicans.

Until the late 1980s, about equal percentages of Americans identified themselves as either Republicans or Democrats. Because of dissatisfaction with both parties, however, 28 percent identify themselves as Republicans, 29 percent as Democrats, and 39 percent as independent, down from a record high of 43 percent in 2014. A large majority (60 percent) of Americans say that we need a third major party that would do a better job of representing the people (McCarthy, 2015; Jones, 2017). Because there's no national Independent Party,

**political party** an organization that tries to influence and control government by recruiting, nominating, and electing its members to public office.

**Table 11.5** How Do Democrats and Republicans Differ?

Issue	Many Democrats Believe That...	Many Republicans Believe That...
<b>Economy</b>	The government should raise taxes on the wealthy and corporations, and expand programs for the poor.	The government should lower taxes on the wealthy and corporations to encourage investment and economic growth; poor people are too dependent on the government.
<b>Abortion</b>	Women should have the right to choose abortion in practically all cases; the government should pay for abortions for low-income women.	The unborn should be protected in all cases; there should be no public money for abortions; <i>Roe v. Wade</i> should be overturned.
<b>Women's Rights</b>	Significant obstacles still make it harder for women to get ahead than men; women should have paid child care and family leave, and equal pay.	The obstacles that made it harder for women to get ahead are largely gone; there are as many or more women than men in powerful positions; women have equal or more financial stability than men.
<b>Education</b>	The government should strengthen public schools by raising salaries for teachers and decreasing classroom sizes. It shouldn't use tax dollars to help students attend private schools.	The government should increase state and local control of schools. It should use tax dollars to fund students to attend private schools of their choice if their local school is underperforming.
<b>Immigration</b>	Immigrants help the economy by creating small businesses, taking jobs Americans don't want, and accepting lower wages that keep the costs of goods and services down; immigrants have enriched U.S. culture through food, music, and the arts.	Immigrants hurt the economy by driving down wages and decreasing the incomes of Americans who work in the lowest-paying jobs, increasing crime rates, and paying few (if any) taxes.

Sources: Doherty et al., 2014; Wilke and Newport, 2014; Dugan, 2015; Fingerhut, 2016, 2017; McCarthy, 2017; PerryUndem, 2017; Swift, 2017.





Tim Sloan/APP/Getty Images/Newscom

In 5 to 4 decisions in 2010 and 2014, the Supreme Court overturned previous limits on federal campaign donations. Now, super PACs can contribute as much as they want.

however, independents usually vote for Democrats, Republicans, or don't vote at all.

Especially at the national level, political candidates routinely promise that, if elected, they'll reform campaign spending, curb lobbying, and stop wasting taxpayer money. Instead, special-interest groups play an important role in political outcomes.

## 11-7b Special-Interest Groups

A **special-interest group** (also called an *interest group*) is made up of people who seek or receive benefits or special treatment. Whereas political parties include diverse individuals, special-interest groups are usually made up of people who are similar in social class and political objectives. There are thousands of U.S. special-interest groups that include everything from agribusiness to unions. Special-interest groups use many tactics to influence the government, but the most effective are campaign contributions and lobbying.

### CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

Eighty-four percent of Americans agree that money has too much influence in our political campaigns, but it's often the most important factor in winning elections. Money

doesn't guarantee a victory, but candidates with little financing usually have little public visibility. Among all presidential and congressional candidates, the spending doubled from \$3.1 billion in the 2000 election to nearly \$6.5 billion in the 2016 election (Montanaro et al., 2014; Kamp, 2016; Center for Responsive Politics, 2017).

**special-interest group** (also called an *interest group*) a group of people that seeks or receives benefits or special treatment.

**political action committee (PAC)** a special-interest group that raises money to elect one or more candidates to public office.

**lobbyist** someone hired by a special-interest group to influence legislation on the group's behalf.

Contributions come from individuals and national, state, and local party committees, but the most powerful are **political action committees (PACs)**, special-interest groups that raise money to elect one or more candidates to public office. PACs can contribute directly to candidates but have donation limits. Super PACs can't contribute directly to political candidates, but may raise and spend unlimited funds to advocate for or against candidates.

PACs have mushroomed—from 608 in 1974 to almost 15,700 in 2014 (35 percent represent corporate interests). During 2016 alone, 2,389 super PACs collected nearly \$3 billion (Center for Responsive Politics, 2017). Some PACs, like the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, support primarily Democrats, whereas the National Rifle Association contributes only to Republicans. A number of PACs, however, contribute to both parties to cover their bases regardless of who's elected. PACs and super PACs provide access to politicians and obligate lawmakers to pass legislation that a PAC wants.

### LOBBYISTS

A **lobbyist** is someone hired by a special-interest group to influence legislation on the group's behalf. At the federal level, the number of lobbyists rose from 10,400 in 1998 to almost 11,200 in 2016, an average of 21 lobbyists per congressional member. Some of the best-paid lobbyists include former members of Congress, former congressional aides, and lawmakers' relatives (Drutman and Furnas, 2014; "Lobbying Database," 2017).

In 2016, lobbyists spent \$3.2 billion to send members of Congress and their family members on expensive vacations, and, most importantly, made generous campaign contributions. In return, corporations and other organizations receive favorable legislation, such as Congress passing lax gun and banking laws, approving corporate mergers, and not investigating monopolies (Schweizer, 2013; "Top Spenders," 2017).

Lobbying also generates *earmarks* (known commonly as "pork")—funding requests by Congress to provide federal money to companies, projects, groups, and organizations in their district—that don't require external competitive bidding. After considerable public pressure, Congress banned earmarks in 2010, but pork spending continues. In 2016, taxpayers paid \$5.1 billion, a nearly 90 percent increase since 2014, for pork barrel projects. Examples include \$1 billion for a destroyer that the Pentagon didn't ask for, \$164 million to fund education programs that the Obama administration didn't request, and \$10 million to provide farmers with electricity that they don't need (Citizens Against Government Waste, 2016).

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump repeatedly promised to “drain the swamp” of special-interest groups and lobbyists. Shortly after taking office, however, he packed his administration with corporate executives, corporate lawyers, and lobbyists: “Auto industry lobbyists are setting transportation policy . . . Wall Street is in control of financial policy and regulatory agencies, and corporate defense lawyers staff the key positions in the Justice Department” (Zibel, 2017).

### 11-7c Who Votes, Who Doesn’t, and Why

In 2016, 62 percent of Americans voted in the presidential election, about the same as in 2012. These were larger than usual percentages, but lower than the numbers of those who voted in presidential elections during the 1950s and 1960s (File and Crissey, 2010; File, 2017).

Of 110 countries around the world that hold democratic presidential elections, 69 have higher voter turnout rates than the United States; in 17 countries, at least 80 percent of the eligible population votes (Friedman, 2012; International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2014).

Why are U.S. voting rates so low? Who votes, who doesn’t, and why reflect demographic characteristics, attitudes about politics, and situational and structural factors.

## DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Many demographic factors (e.g., marital status, geographic region, religion) affect registration and voting. The most important, however, are sex, age, social class, and race and ethnicity.

**Sex.** In every presidential election since 1996, women—and across all racial/ethnic groups—have voted at higher rates than men. In the 2016 election, 58 percent of women and 54 percent of men voted. The biggest gender voting gap was among African Americans—black women voted at higher rates than black men by 9 percentage points. The reasons for this difference are unclear, but may reflect higher turnouts by women who believe that social services, abortion rights, and health care coverage are threatened (Jones, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

**Age.** Historically, and across all elections, voting rates increase with age. In 2016, voting rates were higher among older than younger people (*Table 11.6A*). A key factor is registration. Only 55 percent of young people (ages 18–24) were registered to vote compared with 81 percent of those age 65 and older (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

Young people have lower registration rates because they’re more geographically mobile than older people

**Table 11.6** Voter Rates in the 2016 Presidential Election, by Selected Characteristics

A. Age	
18–24	39%
25–44	49%
45–64	62%
65–74	70%
75 and older	66%
B. Education	
High school, no diploma	29%
High school graduate	47%
Some college or associate degree	61%
Bachelor’s degree	69%
Advanced degree	74%
C. Annual Family Income	
Under \$20,000	38%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	43%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	50%
\$40,000 to \$49,999	56%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	62%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	67%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	73%
\$150,000 and over	77%

Source: Based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2017, Tables 5 and 7.

and are less likely to reregister after a move. Moreover, they often feel uninformed about politics, believe that elections aren’t relevant in their lives, and may be preoccupied with major life events such as going to college and finding jobs (Schachter, 2004; Child Trends Data Bank, 2013). In effect, young people’s low voting rates means that they have little effect on political processes.

**Social Class.** Social class has a significant impact on voting behavior. At each successive level of educational attainment, the voting rate increases, and those with advanced degrees are the most likely to vote (*Table 11.6B*). People with higher educational levels are usually more informed about and interested in the political process and more likely to believe that their vote counts (File and Crissey, 2010; “The Politics of Financial Insecurity,” 2015).

Voting rates also increase with income levels (*Table 11.6C*). People with higher incomes are more likely to be employed and to have assets (e.g., houses, stock) and, therefore, are more likely to vote to protect or increase their

## How Would You Describe Congress?

In 2010, the Pew Research Center asked Americans to use one word that described Congress. The responses were put into a “word cloud.” The larger the word, the more times it was used. What one word would you use to describe Congress?



Word cloud graphic, created using <http://wordle.net>, from “Congress in a Wordle”, Mar. 22, 2010, The Pew Research Center For the People & the Press, a project of the Pew Research Center.

resources. In contrast, low-income people usually have few assets and may be too disillusioned with the political system to vote (“Who Votes . . .,” 2006; File and Crissey, 2010).

**Race and Ethnicity.** Across racial-ethnic groups, there are more native-born or naturalized whites who are eligible to vote. They’re also the most likely to register and to vote. Minorities, especially African Americans, played a pivotal role in Barack Obama’s 2008 and 2012 presidential wins. In 2016, in contrast, 64 percent of whites versus 53 percent of minorities voted. Among minority groups, 60 percent of blacks voted; it was the lowest black turnout since 2000 (Frey, 2017).

In the past and currently, black voting rates have been higher than those of Latinos and Asians, but their turnout fell between 2012 and 2016 (*Figure 11.6*). About 75 percent of Asians and Latinos were born in the United States, but both groups had much lower voter registration rates (about 57 percent) than blacks (70 percent) and whites (74 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

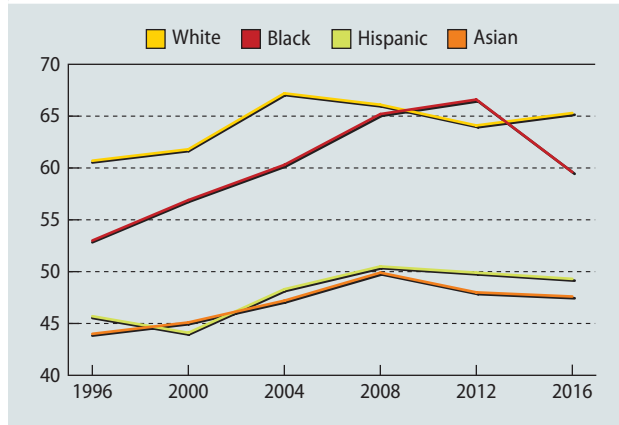
The racial-ethnic voting gaps may close in the future as immigrants become eligible for citizenship, and as Latinos and Asians become more familiar with registration and voting practices. Low Asian voter turnout is puzzling, however: They have the highest education and income levels (see Chapters 8 and 10) but, even among the college-educated, voter turnout has lagged behind whites and blacks (Krogstad, 2014; Frey, 2015).

## ATTITUDES

Millions of Americans have a low opinion of the government and Congress: Only 20 percent trust the government to do what’s right; 25 percent say that the government is the most important problem facing the United States; 75 percent (compared with 66 percent in 2009) believe there’s widespread corruption; and trust in political leaders has plummeted—from 63 percent in 2004 to 42 percent in 2016. A day before the election, 61 percent of Americans rated Donald Trump as “totally unfavorable” and 52 percent said the same about Hillary Clinton. They were the most negatively reviewed presidential candidates since 1956, “and probably ever” (Clifton, 2016; Jones, 2016; Saad, 2016; “Public Trust . . .,” 2017; Reinhart, 2017).

Such distrust and dissatisfaction helps explain why many people don’t vote: They believe that their lives won’t improve regardless of who’s elected. On the other hand, few incumbents are voted out of office election after election. Why? Only 17 percent of registered voters say that members of Congress should be re-elected, but almost half believe that *their* congressional representatives are doing a good job (Dugan and Hoffman, 2014). Perhaps, then, “the government we have is the government we deserve” (Cillizza, 2014).

**Figure 11.6** Voting Rates in Presidential Elections, by Race and Ethnicity: 1996–2016



Sources: Based on File, 2017, Figure 2, and Frey, 2017.



## SITUATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL FACTORS

A quarter of registered voters didn't cast a ballot in the 2016 presidential election because they didn't like the candidates or campaign issues, but situational and structural factors also affect elections. Some of the high turnout rates in other countries are partly due to *compulsory voting*: The government imposes fines for not voting, may cut off public assistance benefits, or requires evidence of voting to get a passport or a driver's license. Such sanctions send the message that voting isn't a privilege but a civic responsibility. In many European and other countries, voters are registered automatically when they pay taxes or receive public services, elections are held on weekends, and people vote electronically (Seward, 2012; Samuelson, 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

Instead of making voting easier, 34 states (particularly those controlled by Republican legislatures) have passed or are considering laws that will make voter registration more difficult. Some of the new rules require government-issued photo identification (e.g., a driver's license or passport) and a birth certificate or proof of citizenship. Some states have reduced early voting, limited the time polls are open, done away with same-day voter registration, and moved polling locations outside of areas with large racial-ethnic populations. Proponents contend that the new laws will crack down on voter fraud; opponents argue that the new regulations will stifle voter turnout, especially among students, the poor, and minorities, who tend to vote for Democrats. Of the more than 1 billion ballots cast from 2000 through 2014, there were only 31 documented incidents of voter fraud (Whiteaker et al., 2014; Rios, 2016; Underhill, 2017).

Because many Americans don't vote, who has the most power? And do government leaders represent the average citizen? Such questions have generated considerable debate among sociologists and other social scientists.

11-8

## SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON POLITICS AND POWER

According to symbolic interaction, power is socially constructed through interactions with others; people learn to be loyal to a political system—whether it's a democracy or a monarchy—and to show respect for its symbols and leaders. For the most part, however, sociologists rely on functionalist, conflict, and feminist theories to explain political power. *Table 11.7* summarizes these perspectives.

### 11-8a Functionalism: A Pluralist Model

For functionalists, the people rule through **pluralism**, a political system in which power is distributed among a variety of competing groups in a society (Riesman, 1953; Polsby, 1959; Dahl, 1961).

### SOME KEY ISSUES

For functionalists, the government is an important institution that creates and enforces laws, regulates elections, and protects people's civil liberties. In the pluralist model, individuals have little direct power over political decision making but can influence government policies

**pluralism** a political system in which power is distributed among a variety of competing groups in a society.

**Table 11.7** Sociological Explanations of Political Power

	Functionalism: A Pluralist Model	Conflict Theory: A Power Elite Model	Feminist Theories: A Patriarchal Model
<b>Who has political power?</b>	The people	Rich upper-class people—especially those at top levels in business, government, and the military	White men in Western countries; most men in traditional societies
<b>How is power distributed?</b>	Very broadly	Very narrowly	Very narrowly
<b>What is the source of political power?</b>	Citizens' participation	Wealthy people in government, business corporations, the military, and the media	Being white, male, and very rich
<b>Does one group dominate politics?</b>	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Do political leaders represent the average person?</b>	Yes, the leaders speak for a majority of the people.	No, the leaders are most concerned with keeping or increasing their personal wealth and power.	No, the leaders are rarely women who have decision-making power.

**Figure 11.7** Pluralist and Power Elite Perspectives of Political Power

### PLURALIST MODEL

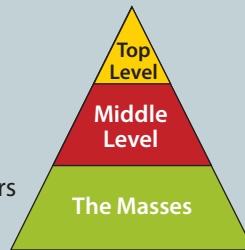
Power is dispersed among multiple groups that influence the government. For example,



- government employees
- victims' rights groups
- labor unions
- banks and other financial institutions
- realtors and home builders
- teachers
- environmental groups
- women's rights groups

### POWER ELITE MODEL

Power is concentrated in a very small group of people who make all the key decisions. For example,



**Top level** (1 percent)—CEOs of large corporations, high-ranking lawmakers in the executive branch, and top military leaders

**Middle level** (8 percent)—most members of Congress, lobbyists, entrepreneurs of small businesses, leaders of labor unions and other interest groups (in law, education, medicine, etc.), and influential media commentators

**The masses** (91 percent)—people who are unorganized and exploited and either don't know or don't care about what's going on in government

through special-interest groups—unions, professional organizations, and so on (Figure 11.7). The various groups rarely join ranks because they concentrate on single issues such as health care, pollution, or education. This focus on different issues fragments groups, but also results in a broad representation of interests and a distribution of power.

Because there are a number of single-issue groups, functionalists maintain, there are multiple leaderships (Dye and Ziegler, 2003). As a result, many leaders, not just a few, can shape decisions that represent numerous groups and issues. Pluralists note that people also have power outside of interest groups: They can vote, run for office, contact lawmakers, and put specific issues on a ballot. Therefore, there are continuous checks and balances as individuals and groups vie for power and try to influence laws and policies.

Pluralists believe that groups resolve differences by bargaining and compromising. As this process unfolds, the government is a neutral referee: It reduces outright hostility, helps groups achieve their goals to at least some degree, and ensures that no particular group has absolute authority. Thus, group competition benefits society as a whole.

### CRITICAL EVALUATION

Does pluralism work as democratically as functionalists maintain? Critics argue that interest groups have unequal resources. The poor and disadvantaged rarely have the skills and educational backgrounds

to organize or promote their interests. In contrast, wealthy individuals and organizations can influence government through lobbyists, political contributions, and personal connections.

Critics also maintain that pluralists aren't realistic about the emergence of multiple leaderships because the affluent control the government. For example:

- ▶ President Trump's Cabinet, the wealthiest in U.S. history, is made up of multi-millionaires and billionaires. More than half of the members of Congress are millionaires or multi-millionaires, and five are worth \$100 million or more (Choma, 2015; Buchanan et al., 2017).
- ▶ All nine Supreme Court Justices are millionaires or billionaires (Levinthal et al., 2017).
- ▶ Cabinet memberships and Cabinet-level positions are dominated by business executives who have been abolishing or watering down pollution and banking regulations that conflict with corporate interests (Flesher and Biesecker, 2017; Walsh, 2017).

Because the wealthy control the political system, according to critics, the government isn't a neutral referee that benefits the general population.

### 11-8b Conflict Theory: A Power Elite Model

Conflict theorists contend that the United States is ruled not by pluralism but a **power elite**, a small group of influential

**power elite** a small group of influential people who make the nation's major political decisions.

people who make the nation's major political decisions. Sociologist C. Wright Mills (1956) coined the term *power elite* to describe a pyramid of power that he believed characterized American democracy.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

According to Mills, the power elite is made up of three small but dominant groups of people at the top level who run the country: political leaders, corporate heads, and military chiefs (*Figure 11.7*). Practically all of the members of these groups are white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant men who form an inner circle of power. Those at the middle power level include members of Congress, lobbyists, influential media commentators, and others. The bottom level, and the largest and least powerful group, the masses, is composed of everyone else.

The power elite tolerates the masses—including their elections and laws—but in the end simply does what it wants. In 2013, almost 80 percent of Americans wanted limits on the amount of money that congressional candidates could spend on their campaigns (Saad, 2013). The following year, the Supreme Court did just the opposite by striking down laws that limited contributions to political candidates, parties, and PACs.

Like Mills, contemporary conflict theorists maintain that the United States isn't a democracy because of the close ties and "revolving door" between the power elite in politics, business, and the military. For example, fewer than 31,390 people—less than 0.01 percent of the nation's population—contributed more than \$1.6 billion to political campaigns in 2012, and nobody was elected to Congress without the economic elite's money. In return, politicians pass favorable legislation such as \$83 billion in taxpayer-financed subsidies to the country's banks, award earmarks and lucrative military and other contracts, and may later serve as corporate lobbyists (Gilson, 2014; Kristof, 2014; Winship, 2015).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Functionalists accuse conflict theorists of exaggerating the power elite's influence. They point out, for example, that "the masses" aren't just puppets but vote, mobilize, support particular interest groups, and protest current political and corporate policies.

Also, according to critics, the power elite perspective assumes, incorrectly, that the ruling class acts as a unified force in protecting its interests. Because the Democratic



and Republican parties and their top officials endorse very different agendas, the power elite are rarely unified.

Some also question whether elites are always as self-serving and self-interested as conflict theorists contend. For example, past administrations have reduced smoking, pollution, and unsafe automobiles despite considerable lobbying and resistance by wealthy and influential corporations.

## 11-8c Feminist Theories: A Patriarchal Model

In a recent national poll, 75 percent of women and men said that both sexes are equally good political leaders (Associated Press and NORC, 2016). Why, then, are there so few female officeholders?

## SOME KEY ISSUES

Feminist theorists maintain that women are generally shut out of the most important political positions because, in a patriarchal society, men rule. A "gender gap in political ambition" begins early in the socialization process. Parents often encourage their sons, not their daughters, to think about politics as a career and to join political clubs in college. In adulthood, family, friends, and party leaders are more likely to urge men than women to promote themselves and to run for a political office. Thus, despite comparable educational and occupational backgrounds, men are almost 60 percent more likely than women to view themselves as "very qualified" to run for office (Lawless and Fox, 2013).

When women run for political office, they're almost as likely to be elected as men, but must overcome stereotypes and double standards. According to 40 percent of Americans, women who seek the highest political offices are held to higher standards than men. Some voters believe that mothers with young children who run for office won't be able to balance work and family life. In contrast, men routinely include their children in political advertising to project an image of being a father and family man, a traditional gender role. Voters are also more likely to expect female than male candidates to be likeable, honest, and ethical (Hayes and Lawless, 2016; Barbara Lee Family Foundation, 2017; Ditmar, 2017).

During the 2016 presidential campaign, some political observers rebuked both Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Carly Fiorina for appearing too stern and not smiling enough. No one criticized Donald



Shortly after the 2016 election, Vice President Mike Pence convened an influential group of Republicans to discuss, among other things, removing Obamacare insurance companies' requirements covering maternity, newborn, and pregnancy care (Filipovic, 2017). *Where are the women!*



The White House

Trump's or Bernie Sanders' smiles or scowls. Talk show commentators (particularly Fox News) and male journalists accused Clinton of being "shrill," "angry," and "grating." Sanders, who often shouted, was described as "enthusiastic" and "tough." Except for a handful of female journalists, few news correspondents or talk show hosts objected to Trump's continuous lewd, degrading, and sexist comments about women or his multiple sexual assaults (Christina, 2016; Holloway, 2016; Ditmar, 2017).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Critics fault feminist explanations for several reasons. First, there are powerful women on some of the most influential congressional committees. Women have attained top leadership posts—president, prime minister, or its equivalent—in more than 70 countries in Europe, Latin America, and the Asia-Pacific. Angela Merkel in Germany and Theresa May in Britain run two of Europe's most powerful, and patriarchal, nations (Kiefer, 2015; Bennhold and Gladstone, 2016).

Second, a larger number of female officeholders doesn't guarantee greater gender equality. For example, some Republican women in Congress have opposed equal pay for equal work laws because (they maintain) well-qualified women are already paid the same as men, and because such legislation would increase the number of civil lawsuits and hurt businesses (Lowery, 2014; McDonough, 2014).

One might also question whether patriarchy is the root of political power differences between women and men. Some of the world's most patriarchal societies (e.g., in parts of Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East) have more women in high-ranking political positions than does the United States, which professes gender equality. Women have the fewest rights in societies where male political leaders are religious zealots who don't believe in gender equality (see Jones, 2014). Thus, religion may be more important than patriarchy in quashing women's political leadership.

# STUDY TOOLS 11

## READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you've read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

## ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.



# 12

# Families and Aging



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 12-1 Describe how families are similar and different in the United States and worldwide.
- 12-2 Describe how and explain why U.S. families are changing.
- 12-3 Describe, illustrate, and explain why intimate partner violence, child maltreatment, and elder abuse occur.
- 12-4 Describe, illustrate, and explain how the U.S. older population is changing, and its impact on our society.
- 12-5 Compare and evaluate the theoretical explanations of families and aging.

After finishing  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 252** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**



American families vary greatly in structure, dynamics, and racial-ethnic diversity. This chapter examines the ways that families and aging are changing, both in the United States and globally. Before reading further, take the True or False quiz to see how much you already know about these topics.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I would undergo medical treatments to live to age 120 or longer.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree			strongly disagree			

## 12-1 WHAT IS A FAMILY?

Ask five of your friends to define *family*. Their definitions will probably differ not only from each other's but also from yours. For our purposes, a **family** is an intimate group consisting of two or more people who (1) have a committed relationship, (2) care for one another and any children, and (3) share activities and close emotional ties. This definition includes households (e.g., foster families, same-sex couples) whose members aren't related by birth, marriage, or adoption.

Contemporary households are complex; family structures vary across cultures and have changed over time. In some societies, a family includes uncles, aunts, and other relatives. In others, only parents and their children are viewed as a family.

### 12-1a How Families Are Similar Worldwide

The family, a social institution, exists in some form in all societies. Worldwide, families are similar in fulfilling some functions that have persisted over time.

## FAMILY FUNCTIONS

Families vary considerably in the United States and globally but fulfill five important functions that ensure a society's survival (Parsons and Bales, 1955):

- ▶ **Sexual activity.** Every society has norms regarding who may engage in sexual relations, with whom, and under what circumstances. U.S. laws ban sexual

## True or False?

### HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CONTEMPORARY U.S. FAMILIES AND AGING?

1. Nonmarital teenage births have increased over the past 20 years.
2. College-educated women are less likely than those with a high school diploma to live with a man outside of marriage.
3. Divorce rates have increased since the 1990s.
4. The most common type of family is married couples with children.
5. Baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) are the fastest growing segment of the population.
6. Asian Americans are more likely than Latinos to live in a home with three or more generations.

The answers to #2 and #6 are true; the others are false. You'll see why as you read this chapter.

intercourse with someone younger than 18 (or 16 in some states), but several states allow 12- and 13-year-old girls and 14-year-old boys to marry with parental permission, and some countries permit marriage with girls as young as 8 (McClendon and Sandstrom, 2016; Sandstrom and Theodorou, 2016; see also Chapter 9).

One of the oldest rules that regulate sexual behavior is the **incest taboo**, cultural norms and laws that forbid sexual intercourse between close blood relatives (e.g., brother and sister, father and daughter, uncle and niece).

**family** an intimate group consisting of two or more people who (1) have a committed relationship, (2) care for one another and any children, and (3) share activities and close emotional ties.

**incest taboo** cultural norms and laws that forbid sexual intercourse between close blood relatives.

- ▶ **Procreation and socialization.** Procreation is an essential family function because it replenishes a country's population. Through socialization, children acquire language; absorb the accumulated knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and values of their culture; and learn the social and interpersonal skills they need to function effectively in society (see Chapters 3 and 4).
- ▶ **Economic security.** Families provide food, shelter, clothing, and other material resources for their members.
- ▶ **Emotional support.** Families supply the nurturance, love, and emotional sustenance that people need to be happy, healthy, and secure. Our friends may come and go, but our family is usually our emotional anchor.
- ▶ **Social class placement.** Social class affects all aspects of family life. Initially, our social position is based on our parents' social class, but we can move up or down the social hierarchy in adulthood (see Chapter 8).

Some sociologists include *recreation* as a basic U.S. family function. This function isn't critical for survival, but since the 1950s many parents have spent much more time with their children on leisure activities (e.g., visiting amusement parks, playing video games together) that strengthen interpersonal bonds.

## MARRIAGE

**Marriage**, a socially approved mating relationship that people expect to be stable and enduring, is also universal. Countries vary in their specific norms and laws dictating who can marry whom and at what age, but marriage everywhere is an important rite of passage that marks adulthood and its related responsibilities, especially providing for a family.

## ENDOGAMY AND EXOGAMY

All societies have formal or informal rules about the "right" marriage partner. **Endogamy** (often used interchangeably with *homogamy*) is a cultural practice of marrying within one's group. The partners are similar in religion (e.g., Catholics marrying Catholics), race or ethnicity (e.g., blacks marrying blacks), social class (e.g., college-educated marrying college-educated), and/or age (e.g., young people marrying young people). Across

**marriage** a socially approved mating relationship.

**endogamy** (often used interchangeably with *homogamy*) cultural practice of marrying within one's group.

**exogamy** (often used interchangeably with *heterogamy*) cultural practice of marrying outside one's group.

**nuclear family** a family form composed of married parents and their biological or adopted children.

the Middle East and Africa, marrying a first or second cousin is not only common but desirable. In Egypt, for example, 40 percent of the population marry a family member. The benefits include knowing a lot about one's relatives and ensuring that property stays in the family, but the practice increases the chance of genetic diseases (such as cystic fibrosis and thalassemia, a blood disorder) in their children ("Consanguineous Marriage," 2016).

**Exogamy** (often used interchangeably with *heterogamy*) is a cultural practice of marrying outside one's group, such as not marrying one's relatives. In the United States, 25 states prohibit marriage between first cousins, but violations are rarely prosecuted (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). Even when there are no formal laws, cultural norms and values (as well as social pressure) usually limit our marital partner choices.

12-1b **How Families Differ Worldwide**

Families also differ around the world. Some variations affect the family's structure, whereas others regulate where people reside and who has the most household power and authority.

## NUCLEAR AND EXTENDED FAMILIES

In Western societies, the typical family form is the **nuclear family** composed of married parents and their biological or adopted children. In much of the world, however,



"Empty-nesters. They're hoping to sell before the flock tries to move back in."



In China's Himalayas, the Mosuo are a matriarchal society. A family consists of a woman, her children, and the daughters' offspring. An adult man will join a lover for the night and then return to his mother's or grandmother's house in the morning. Children resulting from these unions belong to the female and take her surname, she and her relatives raise them, and daughters are preferred to sons. The Mosuo population is decreasing, however, as more young people marry outside the group or move to cities for work (Qin, 2015).

the most common family form is the **extended family**, composed of parents, children, and other kin (e.g., uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews, cousins, grandparents).

As the number of single-parent families increases in industrialized countries, extended families are more common. By helping out with household tasks and child care, other adult members make it easier for a single parent to work outside the home.

Many Americans assume that the nuclear family is the most common arrangement, but such families have declined in number. In 2014, just 14 percent of children lived with a stay-at-home mother and a working father—down from 50 percent in 1960 (Livingston, 2015).

## RESIDENCE PATTERNS

In a **patrilocal residence pattern**, newly married couples live with the husband's family. In a **matrilocal residence pattern**, they live with the wife's family. In a **neolocal residence pattern**, the couple sets up their own residence.

Around the world, the most common residence pattern is patrilocal. In industrialized societies, married couples are typically neolocal. Since the early 1990s, however, the tendency for young married adults to live with the parents of either the wife or the husband—or sometimes with the grandparents of one of the partners—has increased. Such “doubled-up” U.S. households have always existed, but escalated during the 2007–2009 recession for economic reasons (Parker, 2012).

One result is a **boomerang generation**, young adults who move back into their parents' home after living independently for a while or never leave home in the first place. Seven years after the 2007–2009 recession, for example, 33 percent of 18- to 34-year-olds lived with their parents. Of those, one in four didn't work or go to school (Vespa, 2017).

You saw in Chapter 4 that many young adults don't feel a need to set up their own homes because, among

other reasons, the stigma of living with parents has faded. Some observers predict that boomerangers will become more numerous. Many “helicopter-parented, trophy-saturated, and self-centered” millennials, who were raised by coddling baby boomers, are catering to their own children even more. They want to be their kids' friends rather than authority figures. Instead of helicopter parenting, millennials are “drone parenting”—they still hover, but are now “following and responding to their kids rather than directing and scheduling them” (Steinmetz, 2015: 38, 41). Parents try to launch their children into the adult world, but like boomerangs, some keep coming back.

## AUTHORITY AND POWER

Residence patterns often reflect who has authority and power in the family.

In a **matriarchal family system**, the oldest females (usually grandmothers and mothers) control cultural, political, and economic resources and, consequently, have power over males. Some American Indian tribes were matriarchal, and in some African countries, the oldest women have considerable authority and influence. For the most part, however, matriarchal societies are rare.

Worldwide, a more typical pattern is a **patriarchal family system**, in which the oldest males

**extended family** a family form composed of parents, children, and other kin.

**patrilocal residence pattern** newly married couples live with the husband's family.

**matrilocal residence pattern** newly married couples live with the wife's family.

**neolocal residence pattern** a newly married couple sets up its own residence.

**boomerang generation** young adults who move back into their parents' home or never leave it in the first place.

**matriarchal family system** the oldest females control cultural, political, and economic resources and, consequently, have power over males.

**patriarchal family system** the oldest males control cultural, political, and economic resources and, consequently, have power over females.



(grandfathers, fathers, and uncles) control cultural, political, and economic resources and, consequently, have power over females. In some patriarchal societies, women have few rights within or outside the family; they may not be permitted to work outside the home or attend college. In other patriarchal societies, women may have considerable decision-making power in the home but few legal or political rights, such as getting a divorce or running for political office (see Chapter 9).

In an **egalitarian family system**, both partners share power and authority fairly equally. Many Americans think they have egalitarian families, but our families tend to be patriarchal. For example, employed women shoulder almost twice as much housework and child care as men, and are more likely than men to provide caregiving to aging family members (see Chapter 9).

## COURTSHIP AND MATE SELECTION

Sociologists often describe U.S. dating as a **marriage market**, a courtship process in which prospective spouses compare the assets and liabilities of eligible partners, and choose the best available mate. Marriage markets don't sound very romantic, but open dating fulfills several important functions: recreation and companionship; a socially acceptable way of pursuing love; opportunities for sexual intimacy and experimentation; and finding a spouse (Benokraitis, 2015).

Many societies, in contrast, discourage open dating and have **arranged marriages** in which parents or relatives choose the children's spouses. An arranged marriage is a family rather than an individual decision that increases solidarity between families and preserves endogamy. Children may have veto power, but they believe that if partners

are compatible, love will result. In some of India's urban areas, arranged marriages also rely on non-traditional methods (e.g., online dating services) to find prospective spouses (Cullen and Masters, 2008; see also Chapter 9).

## MONOGAMY AND POLYGAMY

In **monogamy**, one person is married exclusively to another person. Where divorce and remarriage rates are high, as in the United States, people engage in

**serial monogamy**. That is, they marry several people but one at a time—they marry, divorce, remarry, divorce, and so on.

**Polygamy**, in which a man or woman has two or more spouses, is subdivided into *polygyny*—one man married to two or more women—and *polyandry*—one woman is married to two or more men. Nearly 1,000 cultures around the world allow some form of polygamy, either officially or unofficially (Epstein, 2008).

Although rare, there are pockets of polyandry in some remote and isolated parts of India, and among the Pimbwe in western Tanzania, Africa. Polyandry serves several functions: The family is more likely to survive in harsh environments if there's more than one husband to provide food, and if one husband dies, the others care for the widow (Borgerhoff Mulder, 2009; Polgreen, 2010).

In contrast to polyandry, polygyny is common in many societies, especially in some regions of Africa, South America, and the Middle East. Men benefit from polygyny in several ways: They can have many legal sexual partners, more chances to have male heirs, more income if some of the wives are employed, and high social status because they can support multiple wives and children (Al-Jassem, 2011; Nossiter, 2011).

Western and industrialized societies forbid polygamy, but there are pockets of isolated polygynous groups in the United States, Europe, and Canada. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) banned polygamy in 1890 and excommunicates members who follow such beliefs. Still, males of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS), a polygynous sect that broke away off from the mainstream Mormon Church more than a century ago, head



Adnan Abidi/Reuters

India's Ziona Chana has the world's largest polygynous family—39 wives, 94 children, and 33 grandchildren (so far). They all live together in a 100-room mansion (Sykes, 2015).

**egalitarian family** both partners share power and authority fairly equally.

**marriage market** prospective spouses compare the assets and liabilities of eligible partners and choose the best available mate.

**arranged marriage** parents or relatives choose the children's spouses.

**monogamy** one person is married exclusively to another person.

**serial monogamy** individuals marry several people, but one at a time.

**polygamy** a man or woman has two or more spouses.

an estimated 300,000 families in Texas, Arizona, Utah, and Canada. Wives who have escaped from these groups have reported forced marriage between men in their 60s and girls as young as 10 years old, sexual abuse, and incest (Janofsky, 2003).

## 12-2 HOW U.S. FAMILIES ARE CHANGING

American families have changed considerably since the 1950s. Some of the most important changes are related to marriage, divorce, cohabitation, nonmarital childbearing, and single-parent families.

### 12-2a Marriage and Divorce

The United States has one of the highest marriage and divorce rates in the world. By age 65, 95 percent of Americans have been married at least once; over a lifetime, about half of first marriages end in divorce (Vespa et al., 2013). Despite the high divorce rate, most people aren't disillusioned about marriage. Indeed, nearly 85 percent who divorce remarry, half of them within 4 years, and 8 percent have been married three times or more (Kreider and Ellis, 2011; Livingston, 2014).

#### TRENDS

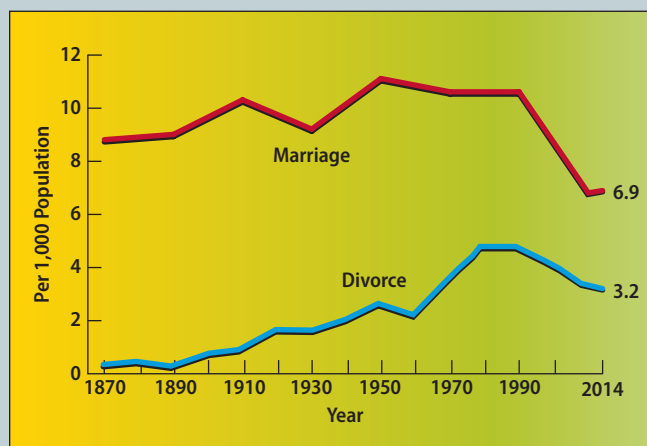
U.S. marriage and divorce rates rose steadily during the twentieth century, but have declined since 1990 (Figure 12.1). In 1960, only 9 percent of U.S. adults age 25 and older had never been married. By 2016, 52 percent had never been married—an historic high.

Marriage rates are expected to decrease further because the number of newlyweds has been falling since 2012 (Wang and Parker, 2014).

In 2004, Massachusetts became the first state to legalize same-sex marriage. In 2017, 10 percent of LGBT adults were married to a same-sex spouse, and 13 percent were married to an opposite-sex partner. About half of people who self-identify as LGBT are bisexual, helping to explain the high proportion who are married to opposite-sex partners. Men (11 percent) are more likely than women (9 percent) to be married to a same-sex partner. The marriage rates are highest among males age 50 and older, but 32 percent of this age group have never married, compared with 11 percent of their non-LGBT counterparts (Jones, 2017; see also Chapter 9). Thus, despite the Supreme Court's legalization of same-sex marriage in 2015, LGBT marriages haven't surged. Like heterosexuals, LGBTs may be postponing marriage or decide to not marry.

In 1970, California was the first state to pass a *no-fault divorce* law; neither partner needs to prove guilt or wrongdoing (e.g., adultery, desertion). Today, in all states, couples can simply give “irreconcilable differences” or “incompatibility” as a valid reason for divorce. As these laws changed, marital dissolutions became quick and cheap, and divorce rates rose to historically high levels, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. Divorce rates are high, but *lower* today than they were between 1980 and 2009 (Figure 12.1). In 2017, 73 percent of Americans said that divorce was morally acceptable, compared with only 53 percent in 1954 (Dugan, 2017). Thus, and despite greater public acceptance, the divorce rate has fallen to its lowest point in decades.

**Figure 12.1 U.S. Marriage and Divorce Rates, 1870–2014**



Sources: Based on Plateris 1973, Table 1; and CDC/NCHS National Vital Statistics System, 2017.

### WHY ARE MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE RATES FALLING?

There are several macro-level reasons for declining marriage and divorce rates. First, U.S. values have been changing. In 2010, 39 percent of Americans said that marriage is becoming obsolete, up from 28 percent in 1978 (Cohn et al., 2011; Fry, 2012). Just 45 percent of millennials say that marriage is an important step in becoming an adult, and only 44 percent of Americans believe that having children is a “very important” reason to marry. Only 31 percent think that premarital sex is immoral, open marriage markets provide many opportunities for nonmarital sex, and nonmarital births are now socially acceptable (Cohn, 2013; Jones, 2017; Vespa, 2017). Thus, the traditional reasons for marriage have waned.

Second, the economy affects marriage and divorce rates. Economic depressions, recessions, and unemployment tend to delay marriage, especially for men. Because of the recent recession, 20 percent of 18- to 34-year-olds have postponed marriage. Moreover, when incomes plummet and people are insecure about their jobs, unhappy married couples tend to stay together: They can't afford to divorce and risk the possibility of not being able to maintain separate households (Cohn, 2012; Martin et al., 2014).

*Demographic variables* also affect marriage and divorce rates. The median age at first marriage is 30 for men and almost 28 for women, compared with 23 for men and 21 for women in 1970 ("Marital Status," 2017).

There are now almost as many single as married Americans (128 million and 129 million, respectively) and, for the first time, single women outnumber married women. Marriage has become an option, rather than a goal, primarily because women are free to pursue a higher education, to have a career, and to cohabit. Thus, many women have become choosier about whether and when to marry (Traister, 2016; "Unmarried and Single . . .," 2017).

About 64 percent of Americans with college degrees are married, compared with 47 percent of those with a high school diploma or less, who are more likely to cohabit than marry. The education-marriage relationship holds even at higher levels. Among women in their early 40s, for example, 80 percent with a Ph.D. or professional degree are married, compared to 63 percent with a bachelor's degree. The highly educated tend to marry other highly educated people, and are almost twice as likely as people with less education to have marriages that last at least 20 years. In effect, then, there's a growing "marriage gap" between the most and least educated (Wang, 2015; Reeves et al., 2016). Such data also challenge stereotypes of highly educated women as sad and lonely "old maids" who lavish attention on a brood of cats.

Americans with a bachelor's or graduate degree also have lower divorce rates than those without college degrees. By age 46, 30 percent of people with a college degree or higher are divorced compared with 59 percent with less than a high school diploma (Aughinbaugh et al., 2013). College graduates have lower divorce rates not because they're smarter but because going to college postpones marriage. As a result, better-educated couples are often more mature and capable of dealing with personal crises. They also have higher

**cohabitation** two unrelated and unmarried people live together and are in a sexual relationship.

incomes and health care benefits, both of which lessen marital stress over financial problems.



Victoria Roberts/The New Yorker Collection/The Cartoon Bank

There are also *micro-level (individual) reasons* for falling marriage and divorce rates. About 84 percent of unmarried Americans say that love is a "very important" reason to marry. As a result, a third are still waiting for their "ideal mate" or "one true love" (Wang and Parker, 2014).

The most common micro-level reasons for divorce include infidelity, communication and financial problems, substance and spousal abuse, premarital doubts, continuous disagreements about how to raise and discipline children, and expecting to change a partner after marriage (see Benokraitis, 2015, for a discussion of these studies). Because many people are delaying marriage, they're usually more mature in handling the challenges of married life, which decreases the likelihood of divorce.

## 12-2b Cohabitation

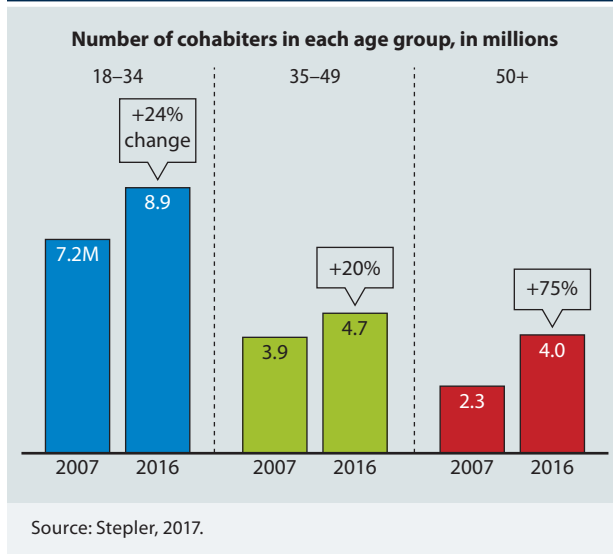
**Cohabitation** is an arrangement in which two unrelated and unmarried people live together and are in a sexual relationship (shacking up, in plain English). Because it's based on emotional rather than legal ties, "cohabitation is a distinct family form, neither singlehood nor marriage" (Brown, 2005: 33).

### TRENDS

Married couples comprise 49 percent of all households, a sharp decline from 78 percent in 1950. The decline is due to falling marriage rates and rising cohabitation. The number of adults in heterosexual cohabiting relationships surged from 430,000 in 1960 to almost 18 million in 2016. This number climbs by another 860,000 if we include same-sex cohabiters. Despite the high numbers, only 7 to 9 percent of the population is cohabiting in any given year ("Characteristics of Same-Sex Households," 2017; Stepler, 2017).



**Figure 12.2 Cohabitation, by Age Groups, 2007 and 2016**



About half of cohabiters are younger than 35. Since 2007, however, the number of cohabiters aged 50 and older has increased faster than other groups (Figure 12.2). Because of high divorce rates and a growing share of people who have never been married in this age group, more people are available for cohabitation (Stepler, 2017).

By age 44, 65 percent of women—compared with 33 percent in 1987—have cohabited. Cohabitation is a common experience at all education levels, but the likelihood of cohabiting decreases as women’s educational levels increase (e.g., 76 percent of women with less than high school vs. 58 percent of women with a bachelor’s or advanced degree). On average, college-educated women cohabit for the shortest period (17 months) and are more likely than those without college degrees to transition to marriage (Copen, 2013; Vanorman and Scommegna, 2016).

Black women are less likely to have ever cohabited (59 percent) than white women (67 percent) or Latinas (64 percent). Among all cohabiting adults, significantly more Asians (46 percent) live with a partner of a different race or ethnicity than Latinos (24 percent), blacks (20 percent), or whites (12 percent) (Vanorman and Scommegna, 2016; Livingston, 2017). The high rate of Asian interracial cohabitation, like intermarriage, may be due to this group’s small population size and shortage of available partners within their own group (see Chapter 10).

## WHY HAS COHABITATION INCREASED?

On a micro level, some people drift gradually into *dating cohabitation*, when a couple that spends a great deal of time together decides to move in together. Dating cohabitation is essentially an alternative to singlehood because the decision may be based on a combination of reasons (e.g., convenience, finances, companionship, and sexual accessibility), but there’s no long-term commitment. In this type of cohabitation, and especially among young adults, there’s considerable *serial cohabitation*, living with different sexual partners over time. Even if there’s an unplanned pregnancy, the man, especially, may decide to move on to another cohabiting arrangement (Manning and Smock, 2005; Wartik, 2005).

For many people, premarital cohabitation is a step between dating and marriage. In *premarital cohabitation*, the couple lives together before getting married. They may or may not be engaged but plan to marry. Such “almost-married” cohabitation may be especially attractive to partners who wonder if they can deal successfully with problems that arise from differences in personalities, interests, finances, ethnicity, religion, or other issues.

On a macro level, and across all ethnic groups, 3 out of 4 people who cohabit say that they’re delaying marriage because “Everything’s there except money.” Many low-income women don’t want to marry because they believe that their live-in partners will be poor providers, unemployed, unfaithful, irresponsible fathers, or immature even though “he’s the love of my life” (Xie et al., 2003; Lichter et al., 2006).

Those with high income and education levels have little to gain from cohabitation. Unlike people in lower socioeconomic groups, they’re more likely to have jobs, to afford their own housing, and, consequently, to have



Tara Moore/Getty Images

Do you think that women or men benefit more from cohabitation? Why?

**Table 12.1** Some Benefits and Costs of Cohabitation

Benefits	Costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Couples can pool their resources instead of paying for separate housing, utilities, and so on. They can also have the emotional security of an intimate relationship but maintain their independence by spending time with their friends and family members separately (McRae, 1999; Fry and Cohn, 2011).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>U.S. laws don't specify a cohabitant's rights and responsibilities. For example, there's no automatic inheritance if a partner dies without a will, and it's more difficult to collect child support from a cohabiting partner than an ex-spouse (Silverman, 2003; Grall, 2013).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Couples who postpone marriage have a lower likelihood of divorce because being older is one of the best predictors of a stable marriage (Copen et al., 2012).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compared with married couples, cohabitants have a poorer quality of relationship and lower levels of happiness and satisfaction (Sassler et al., 2012; Wiik et al., 2012).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Couples find out how much they really care about each other when they have to cope with unpleasant realities (e.g., a partner who doesn't pay bills or rarely showers).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cohabitation dilutes intergenerational ties. Compared with their married peers, the longer people live together, the less likely they are to give or receive help from their parents, and to be involved in extended family activities (Eggebeen, 2005).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children in cohabiting households reap economic advantages by living with two adult earners instead of a single mother (Lundberg et al., 2016).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Because cohabiting parents are more than twice as likely as married parents to break up, children's academic, emotional, behavioral, and financial problems often increase (Fomby and Estacion, 2011; Rackin and Gibson-Davis, 2012).</li> </ul>

more options in living independently even though they're involved romantically (Fry and Cohn, 2011; Sassler and Miller, 2011).

Does cohabitation lead to better marriages? Recent studies show that women who cohabit are no more likely to divorce than those who didn't cohabit if there's a commitment (definite plans to marry) and the cohabitation is short. However, marital success also depends on the cohabitators' age, socioeconomic status, commitment, and attitudes toward marriage (Reinhold, 2010; Manning and Cohen, 2012). Cohabitation, like any other relationship, has benefits and costs (*Table 12.1*).

than 1.6 million, accounting for 40 percent of all births. Thus, 4 in 10 American babies are now born outside of marriage, a new record (Hamilton et al., 2017).

Births to unmarried women vary widely across racial-ethnic groups. White women have more nonmarital babies than do other groups. Proportionately, however, nonmarital birth rates are highest for black women and lowest for Asian American women (*Figure 12.3*).

As in marriage and cohabitation, nonmarital births vary by social class. Among college graduates, only 13 percent of recent births were outside of marriage compared with 57 percent for high school dropouts (*Table 12.2A*).

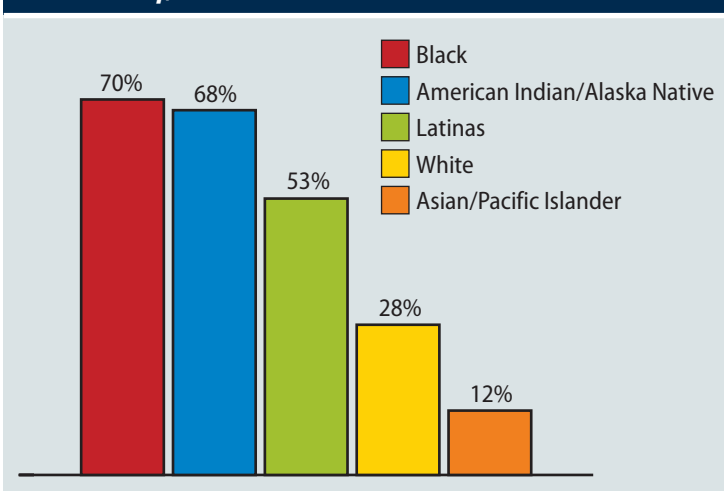
## 12-2c Nonmarital Childbearing

More than 9 in 10 Americans aged 45 or older either have children (86 percent) or wish they had (7 percent). Such positive attitudes toward childbearing are about the same as in 1990, but since then U.S. birth rates have dropped by 11 percent (Martin et al., 2013; Newport and Wilke, 2013).

A notable exception is nonmarital childbearing, which has increased significantly since 1970. Nearly half of American men ages 15 to 44 report that at least one of their children was born outside of marriage, and 31 percent say that all of their children were born outside of marriage (Livingston and Parker, 2011).

### TRENDS

In 1950, only 3 percent of all U.S. births were to unmarried women. In 2016, there were more

**Figure 12.3** Births to Unmarried Mothers, by Race and Ethnicity, 2016

Source: Based on Hamilton et al., 2017, Table 3.

**Table 12.2 Births to Unmarried Mothers, by Education and Household Income**

A. Educational Attainment	
Less than high school	57%
High school graduate	52%
Some college	40%
Bachelor's degree	13%
Graduate or professional degree	7%
B. Annual Household Income	
Under \$10,000	77%
\$10,000 to \$24,999	62%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	45%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	30%
\$100,000 to \$199,999	20%
\$200,000 and above	13%

Source: Based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S1301, and "Fertility of Women in the United States: 2016," Current Population Survey, Table 7. Accessed July 10, 2017 (factfinder.census.gov and census.gov/hhes/fertility/data).

The percentage of nonmarital births decreases as household income increases (*Table 12.2B*). Consequently, the poorest and least-educated women are the most likely to have babies outside of marriage, decreasing the children's chances of moving up the social class ladder (Sawhill and Venator, 2014).

Unmarried teenage births peaked in the early 1990s, have declined steadily since then, and are now at their lowest level since 1968. Teenagers account for 13 percent of all nonmarital births compared with 78 percent for women ages 20 to 34. Thus, the number of births to unmarried women ages 20 to 34 is six times greater than for teenagers. Still, 89 percent of teenage births are nonmarital, compared with 52 percent for women in their 20s, and 22 percent for women in their 30s. Moreover, 20 percent of unmarried teenagers have a repeat birth: 86 percent have a second child, and 15 percent have 3 to 6 children (Gavin et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2017).

### WHY HAS NONMARITAL CHILDBEARING INCREASED?

On a *micro (individual) level*, many teens and young adults use contraception inconsistently or incorrectly because they think they or their partners are sterile, they believe that not taking the pill a few times "doesn't really

## THE NUMBER OF BIRTHS TO UNMARRIED WOMEN AGES 20 TO 34 IS SIX TIMES GREATER THAN FOR TEENAGERS.

matter," or the males don't want to use condoms. Others think that unplanned pregnancies are predetermined or controlled by outside forces like God or fate ("It was meant to happen" or "It's God's plan") (Frohworth et al., 2013; Lindberg et al., 2016).

Unintended pregnancies have decreased by 18 percent since 2008. Nonetheless, 81 percent of pregnancies among never married non-cohabiters, 75 percent of teen pregnancies, and 56 percent of pregnancies among cohabiting women are unintended. Even if the pregnancies are unwanted, women may not get abortions because of personal or religious beliefs (Curtin et al., 2014; Finer and Zolna, 2016).

*Demographic variables* also affect nonmarital childbearing. Social class is a key factor in nonmarital births (*Table 12.2*). Educated women are more likely than less-educated women to postpone parenthood until marriage, to be more aware of family planning, and to have more decision-making power in their relationships, such as insisting that men use condoms (Livingston and Cohn, 2013).

Among college-educated women, 41 percent of black women, compared with 22 percent of Latinas and only 9 percent of white women, choose single motherhood. Nonmarital childbearing is a "rational choice" for black women who don't want to marry less educated black men or across racial lines, believe that they may never marry, or that marriage will come too late for them to bear children (Keels, 2014).

*Macro-level variables* increase nonmarital birth rates in several ways. Until the early 1970s, nonmarital births were rare and kept secret, young people were forced into "shotgun" marriages if the girl was pregnant, and young women—especially white women—were pressured to give their babies up for adoption. Now, almost 75 percent of Americans aged 15 to 44 believe that "it's okay for an unmarried female to have and raise a child." Because attitudes have changed, nonmarital childbearing has become normal. In contrast, only 2 percent of children in Japan and South Korea are born outside of marriage because unmarried mothers are stigmatized (Daugherty and Copen, 2016; "Marriage in Japan," 2016; Chamie, 2017).





Denise Hager/Catchlight Visual Services/Alamy Stock Photo

A recent study found that the reality TV show *16 and Pregnant* reduced U.S. teen births by almost 6 percent in the 18 months following its release (Kearney and Levine, 2014). Should middle schools require adolescents to watch such programs?

Fewer teens, particularly in nonmetropolitan areas, are receiving formal sex education in school than they did a decade ago. Among all 15- to 17-year-olds, 58 percent didn't get information about birth control and 88 percent weren't taught about STDs and HIV/AIDS before they had sex for the first time (Lindberg et al., 2016).

Government policies also affect nonmarital birth rates. Publicly funded family planning services that offer counseling and contraceptives, particularly for teenagers and young adults, reduce unintended nonmarital pregnancies and births. Many states, however, fund only sex-abstinence education, and can now deny federal money to organizations that include contraception services. In 2013, Texas closed nearly half of the state's abortion clinics. Having to travel 200 or more miles for medical services reduced abortion rates by 47 percent. Reducing access to family planning clinics and abortion services can increase nonmarital births, especially among teens (Cunningham et al., 2017; Superville, 2017; see also Chapter 9).

In what some researchers describe as a pattern of "negative assimilation," 41 percent of second-generation Latinas and Asian mothers are unmarried, compared with 23 percent of recent immigrant women ("Second-Generation Americans," 2013). Thus, many second-generation women are espousing U.S. values that births outside of marriage are acceptable.

## 12-2d Single-Parent Households

Most children spend the majority of their childhood living with two parents, but single-parent families are increasingly common. Women head most one-parent families.

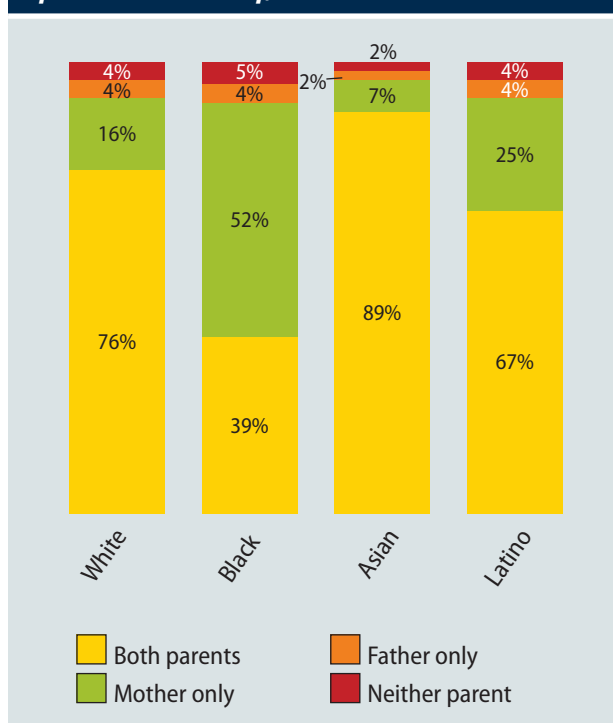
## TRENDS

In 2016, 69 percent of children under age 18 lived with married parents, down from 77 percent in 1980. The number of one-parent families, on the other hand, has nearly doubled—from 16 percent in 1975 to 31 percent in 2015. Compared with other families with children under 18, mother-only families

- ▶ make up nearly 25 percent of all families and 78 percent of one-parent families;
- ▶ comprise 54 percent of black, 29 percent of Latino, 19 percent of white, and 12 percent of Asian families;
- ▶ make up 28 percent of poor families; and
- ▶ are nearly twice as likely as father-only families to be living in poverty, even when the mother works full-time and year-round (Women's Bureau, 2016).

Asian American children are the most likely to grow up in two-parent homes (*Figure 12.4*). Until 1980, married couple families were the norm in African American families. Since then, black children have been more likely than children in other racial-ethnic groups to grow up

**Figure 12.4** Where U.S. Children Live, by Race and Ethnicity, 2016



Note: "Both parents" includes married and cohabiting couples.

Source: Based on U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2016 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table C3, April 6, 2017. Accessed July 11, 2017 (census.gov).

with only one parent, usually the mother. Among Latinos, 67 percent of children live in two-parent families, down from 78 percent in 1970 (Lugaila, 1998; *Figure 12.4*).

Nationally, of the 690,000 same-sex households, 18 percent are raising children under age 18. About 200,000 of these children have married or cohabiting same-sex parents; more than a million LGBT adults who aren't in a couple are raising approximately 2 million children. Even though same-sex individuals and couples are less likely than different-sex couples to be raising children, they're three times more likely to adopt or foster a child (Gates, 2014, 2015). Thus, large numbers of lesbians and gay men—single, partnered, or married—are parents.

### WHY HAVE FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS INCREASED?

On a *micro level*, having sex at an early age, and not using contraception at all, incorrectly, or sporadically increases the likelihood of unintended or unwanted pregnancies and mother-only families, especially among teenagers. Among unmarried parents, 63 percent have multiple partners. In these relationships, most of the fathers invest little time and money in their children because the fathers are young, have low education levels, or are incarcerated. The fathers don't live with their children, know little about them, and move from one sexual relationship to another (Scommegna, 2011; Dodson and Luttrell, 2011).

Mass media routinely feature the “single mother by choice” (SMC). Whether in movies, in newspapers, or on TV shows, SMCs are typically white, well-educated, and successful women in their 30s and 40s who decide to have and raise a baby without a partner. According to some sociologists, however, SMCs are “a relatively rare phenomenon,” more common in the media than in reality, because they make up less than 5 percent of women, most of whom are older and well-educated (Hayford and Guzzo, 2015; Braff, 2016).

*Demographic variables*, especially social class, also affect the rise of female-headed households. College-educated people, as you've seen, tend to postpone marriage, marry rather than cohabit, and delay parenthood—factors that decrease the likelihood of divorce, one-parent households, and, consequently, children's experiencing poverty (Redd et al., 2011).

Not all female-headed households are poor, of course. Among mother-only families, 17 percent of the women have at least a college degree, and 38 percent own their own homes (Vespa et al., 2013). Instead of waiting for “Mr. Right,” some women with economic resources are deciding to raise children on their own.



Karen Struthers/Shutterstock.com

Is the absent black father a stereotype? A recent national study of white, black, and Latino men found that, among fathers who don't live with their children, black fathers were the *most* likely to parent their children from birth to age 18. The parenting included, and on a daily basis, feeding, bathing, dressing, playing with and reading to children, taking them to and from activities, and helping them with or checking homework (Jones and Mosher, 2013).

In many African American and Latino families, adult males (e.g., sons, brothers, uncles, grandfathers) often provide emotional and financial support to female kin who head households (Sudarkasa, 2007). Many black families also welcome **fictive kin**, nonrelatives who they accept as part of the family. Fictive kin have strong bonds with biological family members and provide important services (e.g., caring for children when young mothers are employed or negligent) (Billingsley, 1992; Dilworth-Anderson et al., 1993). A variation of fictive kin involves single mothers—many of whom are white, unmarried, and college educated—who turn to one another for companionship and child care help (Bazon, 2009).

At the *macro level*, values and views about single parenthood have shifted. The share of Americans who view the growing trend of single mothers as a “big problem” decreased from 71 percent in 2007 to 64 percent in 2013 (Wang et al., 2013).

The economy also affects the number of female-headed households. As in the case of cohabitation and non-marital childbearing, low-income women often drift into parenthood with low-income or unemployed men. Men may embrace parenthood and resolve to be good fathers, but already weak bonds with the child's mother can deteriorate further. Seeking financial security and stability, women gain little or nothing by marrying the babies' fathers or other low-income men (Edin and Nelson, 2013).

**fictive kin** nonrelatives who are accepted as part of a family.

## 12-3 FAMILY CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Conflict is a normal part of family life, but violence is *not* normal. Over a lifetime, we're much more likely to be assaulted or killed by a family member or current/former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend than by a stranger (Truman and Langton, 2014).

### 12-3a Intimate Partner Violence

**Intimate partner violence (IPV)** is abuse that occurs between people in a close relationship. The term *intimate partner* refers to current and former spouses, couples who live together, and current and former boyfriends or girlfriends. IPV, which ranges from a single episode to ongoing abuse, includes three prevalent types of behavior:

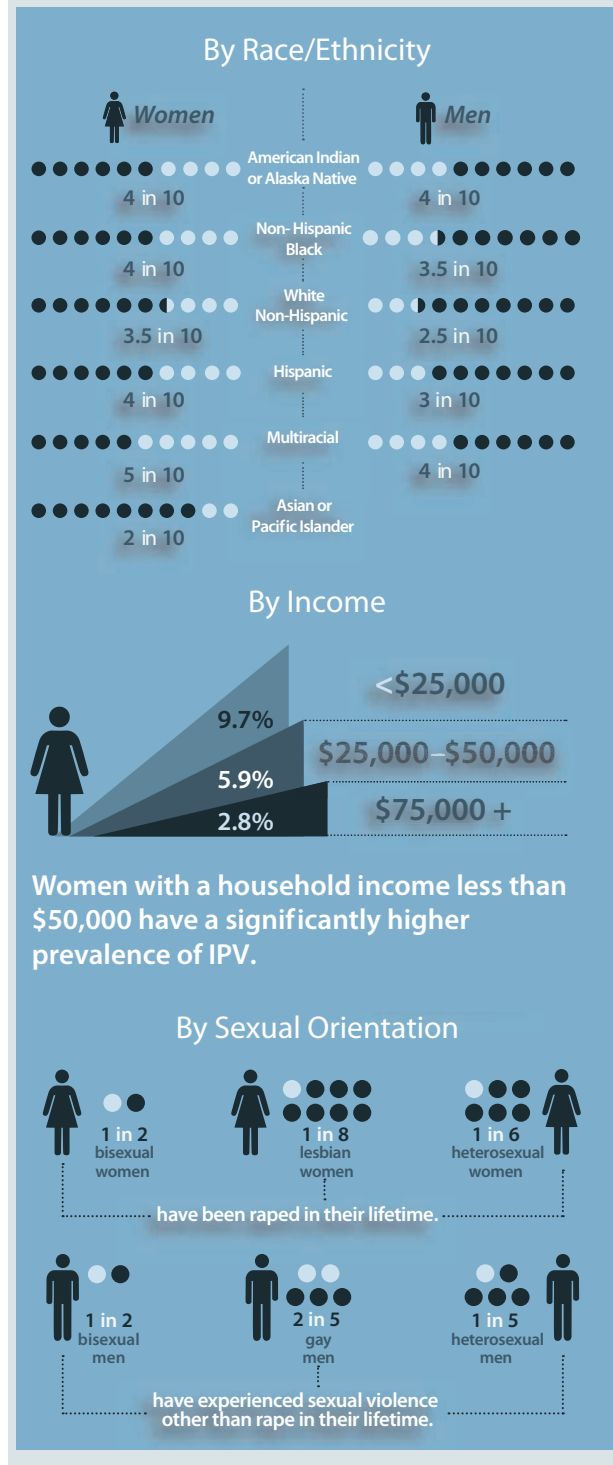
- ▶ **Physical abuse** is threatening, trying to hurt, or hurting someone using physical force (e.g., throwing objects, pushing, grabbing, slapping, biting, choking, beating).
- ▶ **Sexual abuse** is threatening or forcing a partner to take part in a sex act without her or his consent (e.g., unwanted anal, oral, or vaginal sex).
- ▶ **Psychological abuse** (also called *emotional abuse*) is aggressive behavior that threatens, humiliates, manipulates, or controls another person (e.g., criticism, rejection, isolation, name-calling, bullying, stalking).

IPV, which is pervasive in U.S. society (Figure 12.5), begins early in life. Among 12- to 18-year-olds in a recent or current dating relationship, 69 percent have been victims of IPV and 63 percent have perpetrated abuse. Among adults, 36 percent of females and 29 percent of males have been IPV victims at some time in their lives, and nearly half have experienced psychological abuse (Black et al., 2011; Copen et al., 2013; Taylor and Mumford, 2016).

Of the nearly 13,500 homicides in 2015, 30 percent involved IPV; 80 percent of the victims were females. When victims survive assaults, 40 percent of females compared with 5 percent of males suffer a serious physical injury (e.g., gunshot or knife wounds, internal injuries, broken bones) (Catalano, 2013; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016). Women are also much more likely than men to experience IPV over a lifetime regardless of age, race or ethnicity, or social class (Black et al., 2011; Truman and Morgan, 2014).

There are nearly 1.3 million intimate partner victimizations every year, but this number is conservative.

**Figure 12.5** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, and Stalking in Lifetime



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Infographic, 2014. Accessed October 8, 2015 ([cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/infographic.html](http://cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/infographic.html)).

**intimate partner violence (IPV)** abuse that occurs between people in a close relationship.



An estimated 44 percent of victims don't report IPV to the police because they're ashamed, believe that no one can help, or fear reprisal (Reaves, 2017).

## WHY DOES INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE OCCUR?

The reasons for IPV are due to interrelated individual, demographic, and societal factors. On a *micro level*, violence escalates if one or both partners use alcohol or other drugs, if they have more children than they can afford (which intensifies financial problems), or if either partner has been raised in a violent household, has low self-esteem, and a controlling personality. The most common disagreements that can escalate into abuse and violence have four sources: gender role expectations (who does what housework); money (saving and spending); children (especially discipline); and infidelity, both personally and online (Spivak et al., 2014; Benokraitis, 2015).

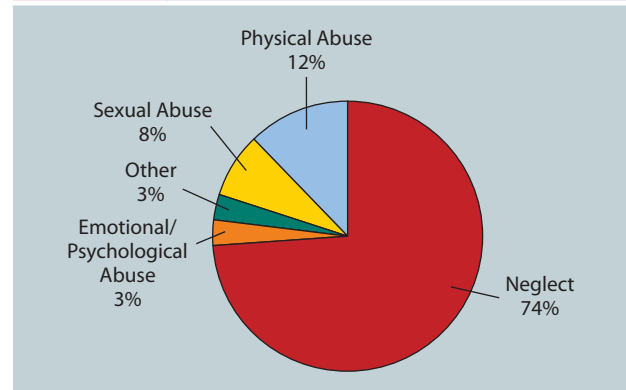
Regarding *demographic variables*, IPV often begins at a young age: 22 percent of females and 15 percent of males are between 11 and 17 years old, and 47 percent of females and 39 percent of males are between 18 and 24 years old (Black et al., 2011). IPV cuts across all social classes, but women living in households with an annual income of less than \$7,500 are nearly four times more likely to be abused than those living in households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more (Figure 12.5).

*Macro-level* variables, particularly unemployment and poverty, increase the likelihood of financial stress and violence. The absence of legal or social sanctions against IPV and a scarcity of shelters discourage victims from trying to escape abuse (Matjasko et al., 2013). A study of girls aged 11 to 16 who had experienced sexual assault concluded that girls (and later women) often didn't report the incidents because such violence had been "normalized in their communities." The girls were ashamed and feared retribution, but also believed that men "can't help it," perceived everyday harassment and abuse as "normal male behavior," and assumed that male authority figures (e.g., police officers, judges) would accuse the girls of overreacting (Hlavka, 2014).

## 12-3b Child Maltreatment

**Child maltreatment** (also called *child abuse*) includes a broad range of behaviors that can result in serious harm, including physical and sexual abuse, neglect, and emotional mistreatment. The victims often experience several types of maltreatment.

**Figure 12.6** Types of Child Maltreatment, 2015



Note: "Neglect" includes medical neglect (almost 2 percent of these cases). "Other" includes categories that some states report, such as a parent's drug/alcohol abuse.

Source: Based on U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017, Table 3-11.

## TRENDS

U.S. child maltreatment rates fluctuate, but have decreased since 2011. In 2015, nearly 684,000 children (9.2 per 1,000 children) experienced child maltreatment, and 1,670 died of abuse and neglect (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). Because only a fraction of the cases are reported, however, federal agencies assume that millions of children experience abuse and neglect every day.

Neglect is the most common type of abuse (Figure 12.6). The most vulnerable children, those younger than 3 years old, account for 28 percent of all child victims; another 19 percent are ages 3 to 5. Victimization rates per 1,000 children vary by race and ethnicity: 15 for African Americans, 14 for American Indian/Alaska Natives, 10 for multiracial, 9 for Pacific Islanders, 8 (each) for whites and Latinos, and under 2 for Asians (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017).

Almost 81 percent of the perpetrators are one or both parents; in 37 percent of the cases, the abusers are mothers alone. An additional 7 percent of assailants are relatives, and 4 percent are the parents' intimate partners, usually boyfriends (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013).

## WHY DOES CHILD MALTREATMENT OCCUR?

On a *micro level*, child mistreatment is most common in households where there is parental substance abuse or mental illness,

**child maltreatment** (also called *child abuse*) a broad range of behaviors that can result in serious emotional or physical harm.



The movie *Precious* (2009) received many awards, but some critics contended that the film stereotyped black female teenagers—especially those in low-income households—as obese, illiterate, and living with abusive mothers (Amusa, 2010). If you’ve seen the movie, do you agree with such criticism or not? Why?

adult or sibling violence, and one or more children have emotional, developmental, or physical disabilities (Finkelhor et al., 2011). *Demographic variables* that increase the likelihood of child abuse include living with a young parent, living in one-parent or stepparent households—particularly those with low socioeconomic status—and experiencing parental conflict before, during, and after a hostile divorce (Truman and Smith, 2012; White and Lauritsen, 2012). On a *macro level*, economic hardship, unemployment, and poverty increase the likelihood of stress that leads to child abuse, including infant deaths due to severe head traumas (Eckenrode et al., 2014).

Almost 26 percent of all children live in homes where parents or other adults are violent (Hamby et al., 2011). Whether children are targets of abuse or see it, violent childhood experiences are associated with lifelong developmental problems, including depression, delinquency, suicide, alcoholism, low academic achievement, unemployment, and medical problems in adulthood (Hibbard et al., 2012; Sacks et al., 2014).

### 12-3c Elder Abuse and Neglect

**Elder abuse** (also called *elder mistreatment*) is any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or other person that causes harm to people age 65 or older. This term includes physical, psychological, and sexual abuse; neglect; isolation from family and friends; deprivation of basic necessities such as food and heat; not providing needed medications; and financial exploitation.

**elder abuse** (sometimes called *elder mistreatment*) any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or other person that causes harm to people age 65 or older.

#### TRENDS

A national study of people ages 60 and older found that almost 12 percent had experienced at least one of

the following types of mistreatment: emotional (4.6 percent), physical (1.6 percent), sexual (0.6 percent), financial (5.2 percent), and neglect (6 percent) (Acierno et al., 2010). The actual rates are probably much higher because only an estimated 20 percent of all elder abuse and neglect is reported (Administration on Aging, 2013).

Who are the victims? About 83 percent are white; the average age is 76; 76 percent are women; 84 percent live in their own homes; 86 percent have a chronic disease or other health condition; 57 percent are married or cohabiting; 53 percent haven’t graduated from high school; 50 percent suffer from dementia, Alzheimer’s, or other mental illness; 46 percent feel socially isolated; and the average combined household income is less than \$35,000 a year (Acierno et al., 2010; Jackson and Hafemeister, 2011). These data suggest that the most likely victims of elder abuse are those who are the most vulnerable physically, mentally, socially, and financially.

Who are the perpetrators? Most are adult children, spouses or cohabiting partners, or other family members. Less than a third are acquaintances, neighbors, or nonfamily service providers. The average age of the abuser is 45; 77 percent are white; 61 percent are males; 82 percent have a high school diploma or less; 50 percent abuse alcohol and/or other drugs; 46 percent have a criminal record; 42 percent are financially dependent on the elder; 37 percent live with the older person; 29 percent are chronically unemployed; and 25 percent have mental health problems (Jackson and Hafemeister, 2011).

#### WHY DO ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT OCCUR?

On a *micro level*, abuse of alcohol and other drugs is more than twice as likely among family caregivers who abuse elders as among those who don’t. Both victims and offenders often report a childhood history of witnessing or experiencing family violence, poor family relationships in the past and currently, and communication problems. In addition, older people with cognitive impairment—due to dementia (deteriorated mental condition) after a stroke, or the onset of Alzheimer’s disease—are abused at higher rates than those without such disabilities (Heisler, 2012; National Center on Elder Abuse, 2012).

On a *macro level*, a shared residence is a major risk factor for elder mistreatment because the caregiver(s) may depend on the older person for housing, whereas the elder is dependent on the caregiver(s) for physical help. These situations compound the likelihood of everyday tensions and conflict. Financial stress may also increase the risk of abuse. Unlike low-income families, those in the middle class aren't eligible for admission to public facilities, yet few can pay for the in-home nursing care, high-quality nursing homes, and other services that upper-class families can afford (Aciermo et al., 2010; Jackson and Hafemeister, 2011).

## 12-4 OUR AGING SOCIETY

One of our friends, 55, was shocked and insulted when he ordered a meal at a fast-food restaurant, and the young worker called out “one senior meal!” The *Baltimore Sun* (2012) recently reported on the death of an “elderly” man in a house fire. He was 62.

### 12-4a When Is “Old”?

What images come to mind when you hear the word *old*? In a recent national survey, people in their 40s said that a person is old at age 63, those in their 70s said age 75, and a 90-year-old woman said that a woman isn't old “until she hits 95” (*AARP Magazine*, 2014: 40). So, how old is “old”?

It depends on whom you ask because “old” is a social construction. In some African nations, where people rarely live past 50 because of diseases and civil wars, 40 is old. In industrialized societies, where the average person lives to age 78, 40 is considered young. Still, regardless of how we feel physically, society usually defines old in chronological age. In the United States, for instance, people are deemed old at age 65, 66, or 67 because they can retire and become eligible for Medicare and Social Security benefits.

Many older Americans are vigorous and productive, but others experience physical and mental limitations as they age. There are significant differences between the *young-old* (65–74 years old), the *old-old* (75–84 years old), and the *oldest-old* (85 years and older) in health, living independently, and working. Generally, for example, a 75-year-old is much less likely than an 85-year-old to need caretaking.

### 12-4b Life Expectancy

**Life expectancy** is the average expected number of years of life remaining at a given age. American children born in 2010 have a life expectancy of almost 79 years (compared with 71 in 1970 and 47 in 1900). Despite our



AP Images/Tsuo Inouye

Between the ages of 65 and 91, avid mountaineer Hulda Crooks scaled Mount Whitney (the highest mountain in the continental United States) 23 times. She died at the age of 101 in 1997.

nation's enormous wealth, the United States ranks just 42nd globally in life expectancy (Schwartz, 2017).

Life expectancy varies by sex, social class, and race-ethnicity. Historically, currently, and across all racial-ethnic groups, women live longer than men, and Asians have the longest lifespans (*Figure 12.7*).

The higher rates of cigarette smoking, heavy drinking, gun use, employment in hazardous occupations, and risk-taking in recreation and driving are responsible for many males' shorter lifespans. The life expectancy gender gap has narrowed since the 1990s, however, because there's been an increase in women's smoking, use of alcohol and other drugs, obesity (which increases the risk of hypertension and heart disease), and stresses due to multiple roles (e.g., juggling employment while caring for children and older family members) (“Catching Up,” 2013; see also Chapter 14).

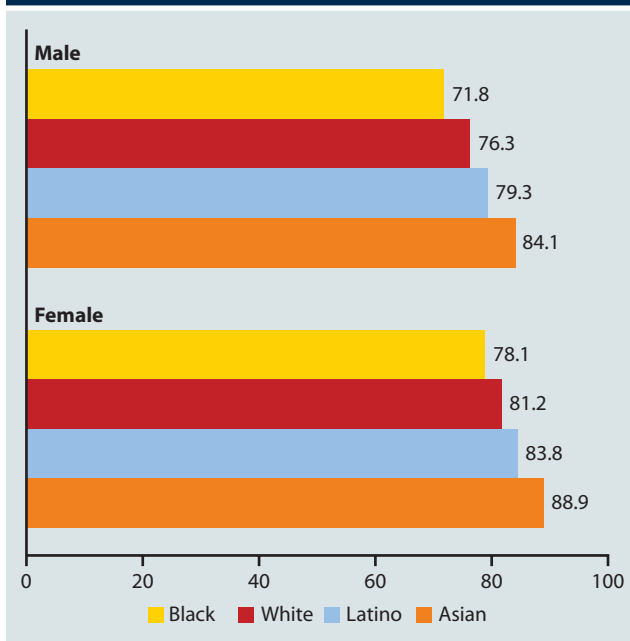
Generally, higher socioeconomic levels increase life expectancy. People with a college degree and higher are more likely than less educated adults to be employed, to be financially secure, and to have employment-related health insurance. They're also more likely to exercise, not smoke, drink alcohol in moderation, and maintain a healthy body weight.

Asian Americans die from the same diseases as other groups, but do so later in life. They're the

**life expectancy** the average expected number of years of life remaining at a given age.



**Figure 12.7 U.S. Life Expectancy at Birth, by Sex and Race-Ethnicity, 2015**



Source: Based on National Center for Health Statistics, 2017, Figure 6; USA Life Expectancy, 2016.

highest-income and best-educated minority in the United States (see Chapter 10). About 97 percent live in or near a major city with access to high-quality health care and have strong family support networks during illness. They're also more likely than other racial-ethnic groups to cook healthful traditional meals, smoke less, and maintain a healthy body weight (Acciai et al., 2015). There are no definitive reasons for Asians' longevity, but these factors prolong life.

#### 12-4c How Our Graying Nation Is Changing

The 65 and older population is booming, and becoming more ethnically and racially diverse. For example,

- ▶ 49 million Americans (15 percent of the total population) are 65 or older, a dramatic increase from just 4 percent in 1900, and will comprise 21 percent of U.S. residents by 2030.

**baby boomers** people born between 1946 and 1964.

**old-age dependency ratio** (also called the *elderly support ratio*) the number of working age (18 to 64) adults for every person aged 65 and older.

- ▶ One of the fastest-growing groups is the oldest-old, whose numbers increased from 100,000 in 1900 to 6.3 million in 2015. By 2030, this group will comprise almost 3 percent of the population.

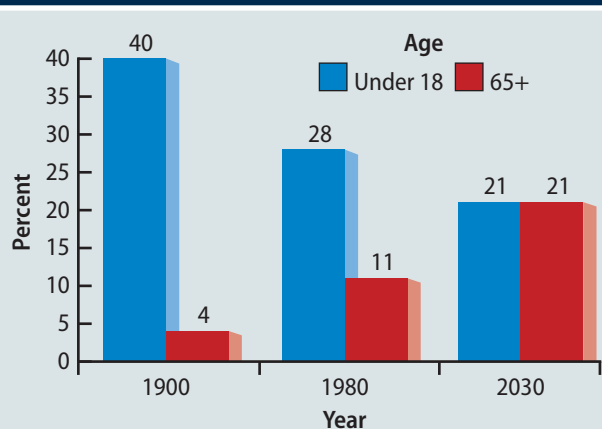
- ▶ By 2030, 28 percent of the 65-and-older population will be minority, up from 20 percent in 2010; 23 percent of the 85-and-older population will be minority, up from 15 percent in 2010 (Colby and Ortman, 2015; "The Nation's Older Population...", 2017; "Older Americans Month...", 2017).

Our aging population has four important (and inter-related) implications. First, as you'll see shortly, health care and caregiving needs, services, and costs will surge. Second, the number of older Americans is increasing, whereas the proportion of young people is falling (Figure 12.8). As a result, many adult children—even in their 60s—will be caring for aging parents, grandparents, and other older relatives for more years than in the past.

Third, disability rates among older Americans have increased, particularly among **baby boomers** (people born between 1946 and 1964) and those 10 years younger than baby boomers. The higher disability rates are due to better medical diagnoses, but baby boomers are more likely than the previous generation to be obese and to have diabetes and high blood pressure (Scommegna, 2013). Thus, the boomer generation might be sicker and for more years than their predecessors who had lower life expectancies.

Fourth, as the number of older people increases, so does the **old-age dependency ratio** (also called the *elderly support ratio*)—the number of working age (18 to 64) adults for every person aged 65 and older. The ratio is an approximation because some people work into their late 60s and 70s, but it's a useful measure of the burden of workers who support the older population. The old-age dependency ratio has dropped from 14 workers per

**Figure 12.8 The Young and the Old in the United States, 1900–2030**



Sources: Based on U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging et al., 1991: 9, and Colby and Ortman, 2015, Figure 4.

older person in 1900. By 2020, only three working adults will be supporting each older person, and the ratio could drop to two by 2060 (Ortman et al., 2014; Mather et al., 2015). Thus, many people will have to pay much higher federal and state taxes to support our ever-growing older population.

### 12-4d Some Current Aging Issues

The *sandwich generation* is composed of midlife people who care for aging parents, are raising a child under age 18, or supporting an adult child. About 71 percent who do so are ages 40 to 59 (Parker and Patten, 2013). In an aging society, the sandwich generation and older people experience many changes, including the rise of multigenerational households, work and retirement options, right-to-die issues, and competition for scarce resources.

## MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSEHOLDS

The share of the U.S. population living in multigenerational households rose from 12 to 16 percent between 1980 and 2010. Asians (28 percent) are more likely to live in multigenerational households than blacks (26 percent), Latinos (25 percent), and whites (14 percent).

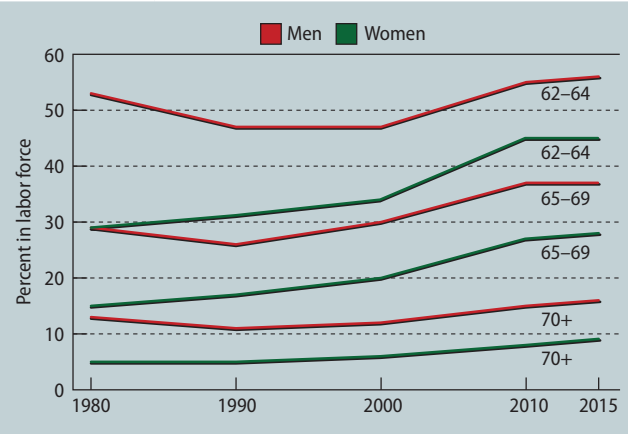
Why are several generations living under one roof? Graying boomers may move in with their adult children and grandchildren to avoid poverty. More grandparents are raising children because drug-addicted parents neglect them, abandon them, or die from an overdose. Adult children may move back home with their parents (often with children and girlfriends/boyfriends in tow) because of unemployment, low wages, or divorce. Extended family living provides intergenerational support, including child care for employed parents. Cultural values, particularly among recent immigrants, reflect long-standing practices of caring for aging parents and grandparents in one's own home (Ellis, 2013; Fry and Passel, 2014; Wiltz, 2016).

The effects of multigenerational households are mixed. Grandparents who live with their adult children and grandchildren may provide crucial economic and child care support. On the other hand, if the multigenerational household is struggling financially, if the grandparents are also raising their own children, and if there's mother-grandmother conflict, grandparents experience emotional problems, including unhappiness, stress, worry, and anger (Deaton and Stone, 2013).

## WORK AND RETIREMENT

Many older Americans are postponing retirement. In 2017, almost 19 percent of people aged 65 and older were working—up from 14 percent in 2000 (Kromer and

**Figure 12.9** The U.S. Labor Force Is Growing Older



Source: Based on Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, 2016, Table 12.

Howard, 2013; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). The labor force participation rates have increased for both men and women, even for people aged 70 or over (Figure 12.9).

Most work out of necessity. A consequence of longer life expectancy is that people need to finance more years of retirement, but are they doing so? Almost a third of employed adults with \$10,000 or more in investments give financial assistance to an adult child, a parent, or both (Saad, 2017). The contributions increase family stability and strengthen family ties, but also deplete retirement savings.

Since the early 1990s, many large companies (especially in the steel, airline, and auto industries) have greatly reduced or eliminated employee pension plans, but only about half of private sector workers participate in a 401(k) or similar retirement savings program. Among those with savings, the median account value is just \$148,00 for households aged 65 and older. In 2015, the average Social Security payment for people aged 65 and older was only \$1,342 a month, but 60 percent rely on Social Security for half or more of their family income ("Who Pays the Bill?" 2013; Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2016; Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, 2016).

Social class is a key factor in living well after retirement. People in higher social classes have more savings, pensions, and property (including homes with paid-off mortgages); higher Social Security income because they had higher lifetime earnings; and 401(k)s that have increased in value over the years. Because of such assets, 64 percent of nonretirees with annual household incomes of \$75,000 or more expect to live comfortably in retirement, compared with only 32 percent with annual incomes below \$30,000 (Norman, 2016).

For older women, particularly, working is often a necessity rather than a choice. Did you notice, in *Figure 12.8*, that larger numbers of women in their 60s and 70s are in the labor force? You'll see shortly that divorce rates after age 50 have been increasing. Divorced women, especially if they don't get the house or a favorable legal settlement, may have to enter (or re-enter) the labor force because they have few economic resources. In other cases, women in their 60s and 70s are staying in the workforce longer because, compared with prior generations, they have more education, work experience, and access to better jobs (Goldin and Katz, 2016).

## THE RIGHT TO DIE

Living longer and with more years of chronic diseases and disabilities raises questions about later-life choices. Both historically and currently, one of the most controversial issues involves end-of-life decisions. Oregon's Death with Dignity Act, which took effect in 1997, authorized lethal prescriptions when two doctors agreed that a patient would die within six months and freely chose *physician-assisted suicide* (also called *physician-aid-in-dying*). Modeling Oregon's law, six states and the District of Columbia have passed similar legislation.

In a recent Gallup poll, 73 percent of Americans said that doctors should be allowed to "end the patient's life by some painless means" (Wood and McCarthy, 2017).



Medical care for patients age 65 and older in the last year of life accounts for about 25 percent of annual Medicare costs (Cubanski et al., 2016). Is this a good investment of our resources?

Advocates argue that terminally ill people who face a long and painful death and huge medical costs should have the legal right to die with dignity on their own terms instead of lingering in a nursing home, hospital, or hospice. Opponents maintain that actively ending a life, regardless of a person's frailty or suffering, is a moral violation, and that patients might be pushed to die early for the caregiver's convenience (Eckholm, 2014).

## COMPETITION FOR SCARCE RESOURCES

When Congress passed the Social Security Act in 1935, life expectancy was about 62 years compared with almost 79 today. In the future, the growing older population will put a significant strain on the nation's health care services and retirement income programs.

The older population is about half as large as the 18 and younger population. Nonetheless, the federal government spends nearly \$6 on older people for every \$1 it spends on children (Hahn et al., 2014). The older people get, the higher the medical costs. For example,

- ▶ Among Medicare recipients, the average annual health care costs are almost \$17,000 for someone aged 65 to 74, compared with almost \$26,000 for people aged 85 and over (Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, 2016).
- ▶ A study of 1.8 million Medicare recipients who died in 2008 found that nearly 20 percent had surgery in the last month of life, and nearly 10 percent had surgery in the last week of life. Among those undergoing end-of-life surgery, almost 60 percent were 80 and older (Kwok et al., 2011).
- ▶ About 60 percent of prostate cancer is diagnosed in men aged 65 or older. It costs \$93,000 per patient to treat advanced prostate cancer; the treatment prolongs life by an average of four months (Beil, 2012).

Many older people maintain that they deserve all the medical benefits they can get because they paid taxes over many years. In fact, an average two-earner couple that retired in 2015 will draw about \$212,000 more from Medicare and Social Security than they paid in taxes to support these programs (Steuerle and Quakenbush, 2013).

Younger generations can't count on federally financed health care and retirement benefits in the future. Medicare funds are supposed to last until 2026, and Social Security through 2033 (The Board of Trustees..., 2013), but there are no guarantees. As baby boomers age, the costs of these programs will mushroom. Because boomers have higher educational levels than previous generations, they're likely to demand more and more expensive health care services (see Chapter 14).



Despite rising health care costs, 20 percent of Americans want to live to age 100—about 21 years longer than the current average U.S. life expectancy. Moreover, 38 percent support medical treatments that would allow them to live to at least age 120 (Lipka and Stencel, 2013; Lugo et al., 2013). Who'll pay for such radical life extensions?

## 12-5 SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF FAMILY AND AGING

The four sociological perspectives are useful in understanding families and aging. *Table 12.3* summarizes the key points of these theories.

### 12-5a Functionalism

We began this chapter by looking at the vital functions that families perform—such as procreation and economic security—that promote societal stability and individual well-being. Functionalists recognize that families differ in structure (e.g., nuclear vs. extended), but believe that their similar functions ensure a society's continuity.

#### STABILITY AND ACTIVITY

For functionalists, marriage, followed by procreation, is critical in fostering social order and cohesion. Parenthood is a crucial social role. One of its tasks, socialization, is essential to maintaining any culture. Problems arise, for instance, when parents can't or don't provide their children with the necessary financial and emotional support or when they divorce.

Kinship ties involve responsibilities, but they also help keep families together, especially in time of trouble.

Extended family members offer financial assistance, emotional support, and help to care for young children and aging adults. Nearly 1.5 million employed grandparents are responsible for most of the basic care of grandchildren who live with them (“National Grandparents Day...,” 2017).

Retirement benefits society because it provides younger people jobs. Even in retirement, however, **activity theory** proposes that many older people remain engaged in numerous roles and activities, including work. Moreover, those who are active adjust better to aging and are more satisfied with their lives (see Atchley and Arush, 2004, for a summary of some of this research).

#### CRITICAL EVALUATION

Functionalism has several weaknesses. First, it's questionable whether some family functions are as universal or necessary as functionalists claim. Procreation often occurs outside of marriage and divorce rates have tripled among people aged 65 and older since 1990. Also, the government has assumed some of the family's functions, including caring for some children (as in foster homes) and the aged (through Medicare, for example) (Lundberg and Pollak, 2007; Stepler, 2017).

Second, is activity theory as representative of older people as some functionalists claim? People may continue to work even in their 80s, but usually not by choice. They can't afford to retire, even though they're in poor health and unhappy in their low-income jobs. As health deteriorates, many older people become less active and more isolated (Lee, 2009).

**activity theory** proposes that many older people remain engaged in numerous roles and activities, including work.

**Table 12.3** Sociological Perspectives on Families and Aging

Theoretical Perspective	Level of Analysis	Key Points
<b>Functionalist</b>	Macro	Families are important in maintaining societal stability and meeting family members' needs. Older people who are active and engaged are more satisfied with life.
<b>Conflict</b>	Macro	Families promote social inequality because of social class differences. Many corporations view older workers as disposable.
<b>Feminist</b>	Macro and micro	Families both mirror and perpetuate patriarchy and gender inequality. Women have an unequal burden in caring for children as well as older family members and relatives.
<b>Symbolic Interactionist</b>	Micro	Families construct their everyday lives through interaction and subjective interpretations of family roles. Many older family members adapt to aging and often maintain previous activities.

Third, 10 percent of the huge wave of baby boomers say that they'll never retire, primarily because they've saved very little and carry too much debt (Harter and Agrawal, 2014). This means that there isn't always an orderly progression to retirement and opening up job slots to the younger generation.

### 12-5b **Conflict Theory**

Conflict theorists agree that families serve important functions, but point out that some groups benefit more than others. Families are sources of social inequality that mirror the larger society, and the inequities persist from birth to old age (Cruikshank, 2009).

### **INEQUALITY, SOCIAL CLASS, AND POWER**

For conflict theorists, families in high-income brackets have the greatest share of capital, including wealth that they can pass down to the next generation. An inheritance reduces the likelihood that all families can compete for resources such as education, decent housing, and health care (see Chapter 8).

Economic inequality affects all aspects of family life. Child abuse and neglect are highest in U.S. counties with the greatest gaps between rich and poor. Moreover, the more distance between these social classes, the less likely that the poor will receive needed services and support that reduce child maltreatment rates (Eckenrode et al., 2014).

Unequal access to resources continues into old age. Most employers insist that they value older workers' loyalty, work ethic, reliability, and experience, but many are less likely to hire or retain older people because they're usually more expensive than younger workers. Because many large companies have cut their pension plans, numerous older workers must work long after they expected to retire (Kromer and Howard, 2013; Winerip, 2013).

### **CRITICAL EVALUATION**

Conflict theory is limited for several reasons. First, conflict theorists tend to overlook the fact that many families, especially those in the middle and upper classes, fund public assistance programs such as Medicaid (a social health care program for low-income individuals and families). They also pay billions each year to cover the costs of unintended pregnancies and the resulting infant care expenses for poor women (Sonfield and Kost, 2013).

Second, conflict theory links family inequality to capitalism and social class, but there's also considerable family inequality in countries that aren't capitalist (see Chapters 8 and 11). Thus, social class affects but doesn't determine whether a child will succeed economically.



Michael Hall/Taxi/Getty Images

The average 65-year-old can now expect to live for another 20 years, half of them free of disability. For functionalists, older adults are happiest when they stay active and maintain social relationships.

Third, many older people don't have to struggle for resources. As you saw earlier, the U.S. government's spending on children has declined but increased for people age 65 and older. Older people, regardless of social class, have generous health care coverage through Medicare or Medicaid. They vote in large numbers, have influential lobbyists in Congress, and flood lawmakers with hundreds of thousands of letters and email messages when there's a threat of cutting Medicare or Social Security payments (Johnson, 2011; see also Chapter 11).

### 12-5c **Feminist Theories**

Feminist scholars agree with conflict theorists that there's considerable inequality between low-income and wealthy families in accessing necessary resources. However, feminist theorists emphasize the inequality of gender roles in families, especially in patriarchal societies (including the United States).

### **GENDER ROLES AND PATRIARCHY**

For feminist scholars, families both mirror and perpetuate patriarchy and gender inequality. In most countries, males pass laws about property and inheritance rights, marriage and divorce, and many other regulations that give men authority over women. The United States is similar to many other nations in men (particularly lawmakers and Catholic Church officials) controlling women's decisions about reproduction and access to abortion that, in turn, increases unwanted pregnancies and nonmarital birth rates.

Male aggression against women and children is common in patriarchal societies where men hold most of the power, status, and privilege. Females, on the other



In most Latino communities, the *quinceañera* (pronounced “keen-say-ah-NYAIR-ah”) is an important coming-of-age ritual that celebrates a girl’s entrance into adulthood on her fifteenth birthday. It’s an elaborate and dignified religious and social event that reinforces strong ties with family, relatives, and friends.

mistreat their children, and almost 40 percent of the perpetrators of elder abuse are women (Jackson and Hafe-meister, 2011).

hand, are marginalized and socialized to accept male domination. In many cases, legal, political, and religious institutions don’t take violence against women and children seriously (Lindsey, 2005). Recently, for instance, a judge in Florida “sentenced” a man charged with domestic battery to take his wife, the victim, to Red Lobster for dinner and then bowling (McEwan, 2012). Thus, some judges still view domestic violence charges as frivolous.

Out of 190 nations, the United States, Papua New Guinea, and Swaziland are the only countries that have no national paid parental leave policy. As a result, caregivers, who are predominantly women, must often leave their jobs or work only part-time to care for children and aging parents. Working part-time or stepping out of the workforce reduces women’s earnings, career advancement, retirement income, and their families’ living standards. Among those who take time off from work following the birth or adoption of a child, women are nearly twice as likely as men (25 percent and 13 percent, respectively) to say that doing so had a negative impact on their job or career (Fry, 2017; Horowitz, 2017; Rossin-Slater, 2017).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Feminist explanations of families and aging have several limitations. First, according to critics, feminist scholars overstate women’s domination by men. For example, a record 40 percent of all households with children under the age of 18 include mothers who are either the sole or primary source of family income, up from just 11 percent in 1960 (Wang et al., 2013).

A second criticism is that feminist theories tend to gloss over data which show that intimate partner violence is often mutual. Several dozen studies have found that women initiate from 30 to 73 percent of violent incidents (Straus, 2011, 2014). You’ll recall that mothers

Third, the poorest older adults are minority women, but social class and marital status are important factors. Older married women and those in higher socioeconomic levels are less likely to experience poverty in later life than women who are single (never married, divorced, or widowed) and from lower socioeconomic levels (Hokayem and Heggeness, 2014; Hunter, 2014). Thus, social class may be more significant than patriarchy in shaping women’s later life outcomes.

## 12-5d Symbolic Interaction

For symbolic interactionists, people create subjective meanings of what a family is and does. Thus, people learn, through interaction with others, how to act as a parent, a grandparent, a teenager, a stepchild, and so on throughout the life course.

## LEARNING FAMILY AND AGING ROLES

Throughout the socialization process, family members establish trust and develop emotional bonds. Between 90 and 97 percent of Americans believe that it’s important for *both* mothers and fathers to provide discipline and emotional support, and to teach values (“The New American Father,” 2013).

Interactionists often use exchange theory to explain mate selection and family roles. The fundamental premise of **exchange theory** is that people seek through their social interactions to maximize their rewards and minimize their costs. In mate selection, people trade their resources (e.g., wealth, good looks, youth, and/or status) for more, better, or different assets. People may stay in unhappy marriages and

**exchange theory** people seek through their social interactions to maximize their rewards and minimize their costs.



other intimate relationships because the rewards seem equal to the costs. Many women tolerate abuse because they fear loneliness or losing the economic benefits that a man provides (Khaw and Hardesty, 2009; see also *Table 12.1* on the benefits and costs of cohabitation).

A well-known psychologist who interviewed more than 200 couples over a 20-year period found that the difference between lasting marriages and those that split up was a “magic ratio” of 5 to 1. That is, if partners have five positive interactions for every negative one, the marriage is likely to be stable over time (Gottman, 1994). Thus, we can improve our family relationships by learning to interact in positive ways.

Stereotypes about older people are deeply rooted in U.S. society. About 84 percent of Americans age 60 and older encounter **ageism**, discrimination against older people, including insulting jokes, disrespect, and patronizing behavior (Roscigno, 2010).

Our language is full of ageist words and phrases that stereotype and disparage older people (e.g., *biddy*, *old bat*, *old fart*, *old fogey*, *geezer*, *over the hill*, *doddering*). Because it’s legal to ask about age (but not sex or race), age discrimination is a major barrier in getting a job. If employers assume that older workers are less productive, “technophobic,” or inflexible, older applicants—even those applying for low-skilled jobs—are half as likely as people aged 29 to 31 to get a callback. Ageism, especially in hiring practices, helps explain why people try to look younger. In 2016, for example,

people aged 40 to 54 had the most plastic surgery (American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2017; EEOC, 2017; Newmark et al., 2017; Rosenblatt, 2017).

**ageism** discrimination against older people.

**continuity theory** older adults can substitute satisfying new roles for those they’ve lost.

**Continuity theory** posits that older adults usually maintain the same activities, behaviors, social roles, personalities, and past relationships. The theory also proposes that older people adapt to changes by substituting satisfying new roles for those they’ve lost (Atchley and Barusch, 2004). For example, a retired music teacher can join a local chorus or orchestra. Thus, developing new roles may lessen some of the emotional distress due to ageism.

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

A common criticism is that symbolic interaction, a micro-level perspective, doesn’t address macro-level constraints. For example, U.S. nonmarital teen births have fallen primarily because of structural factors (e.g., greater access to family planning services, expanded educational opportunities for disadvantaged young women) rather than teen attitudes about childbearing (Kearney and Levine, 2014).

Second, exchange theory is limited because people don’t always calculate the potential costs and rewards of every decision. In the case of women who care for older family members, genuine love, concern, and a sense of obligation override cost-benefit decisions, even when the person receiving care is abusive (Jackson and Hafemeister, 2013).

Third, continuity theory doesn’t distinguish normal aging from disease and disability. Older people who experience chronic illness may be too sick to continue their activities and relationships. Continuity theory also overlooks structural obstacles that discourage older people from pursuing current or new roles. Poverty, for example, can affect physical and mental health which, in turn, weakens social networks and limits housing, medical, and recreational options.

## STUDY TOOLS 12

### READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you’ve read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.



# 13

## Education and Religion



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### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 13-1 Differentiate between education and schooling.
- 13-2 Compare and evaluate the sociological perspectives on education.
- 13-3 Identify, describe, and illustrate some of the contemporary issues in U.S. education.
- 13-4 Explain how religion, religiosity, and spirituality differ.
- 13-5 Describe and illustrate religious organization and some of the major world religions.
- 13-6 Explain how and why U.S. religion is diverse, and whether or not secularization is increasing.
- 13-7 Compare and evaluate the sociological perspectives on religion.

After finishing  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 281** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**



Education and religion, two important social institutions, teach values, shape attitudes, maintain traditions, bring people together, control behavior, and grapple with social change. The second half of this chapter examines U.S. and global religions. Let's begin with education.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I'm optimistic about getting a good job after graduating from college.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree						strongly disagree

### 13-1 EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

**Education** transmits attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, values, norms, and skills to a society's members. Education can be formal or informal and can occur in a variety of settings. **Schooling**, a narrower term, is formal training and instruction provided in a classroom setting.

U.S. education and schooling have undergone four significant changes since the beginning of the twentieth century: Universal education has expanded, community colleges have flourished, public higher education has burgeoned, and student diversity has increased as more women and racial-ethnic groups enrolled at colleges and universities. As a result of these and other changes, a record number of Americans have completed high school (92 percent) and obtained a bachelor's or higher degree (36 percent) (McFarland et al., 2017).

### 13-2 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION

Sociologists agree that education and schooling are important, but offer different insights into their purpose and outcomes. *Table 13.1* summarizes the four major perspectives.

#### 13-2a Functionalism: What Are the Benefits of Education?

For functionalists, education contributes to society's stability, solidarity, and well-being, and provides people with an opportunity for upward mobility. In their

analyses, functionalists distinguish between manifest and latent functions.

#### MANIFEST FUNCTIONS OF EDUCATION

Some of the functions of education are *manifest*; that is, they're open, intended, and visible. For example:

- ▶ Schools are *socialization agencies* that teach children how to get along with others and prepare them for adult economic roles (Durkheim, 1898/1956; Parsons, 1959).
- ▶ Education *transmits knowledge and culture*. Schools teach skills like reading, writing, and counting; they also instill cultural values that encourage competition, achievement, and democracy (see Chapter 3).
- ▶ Similar values increase *cultural integration*, the social bonds that people have with each other and with the community at large, and *societal cohesion*.
- ▶ Education promotes *cultural innovation*. Faculty at research universities receive billions of dollars every year to develop computer technology, treatments for diseases, and programs to address social problems.
- ▶ Education *benefits taxpayers* because more highly educated people tend to pay higher taxes, are less likely to rely on public assistance programs, and lead healthier lifestyles, reducing state and federal health care costs (Baum et al., 2013).

Many Americans agree with functionalists that a college degree is "very important": 74 percent say that a college degree leads to a better quality of life, and in a survey of incoming first-year college students, 88 percent said that the most important reason for going to college is to get a good job (Schneider, 2013; Calderon and Sorenson, 2014; Jones, 2016). Among college graduates, 74 percent said their education helped them grow intellectually (Parker et al., 2011).

Besides expanding a person's intellectual horizons, education increases earnings. On average, college graduates earn 60 to

**education** transmits attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, values, norms, and skills.

**schooling** formal training and instruction provided in a classroom setting.

**Table 13.1 Sociological Explanations of Education**

Theoretical Perspective	Level of Analysis	Key Points
<b>Functionalist</b>	Macro	Contributes to society's stability, solidarity, and cohesion and provides opportunities for upward mobility
<b>Conflict</b>	Macro	Reproduces and reinforces inequality and maintains a rigid social class structure
<b>Feminist</b>	Macro and micro	Produces inequality based on gender
<b>Symbolic Interactionist</b>	Micro	Teaches roles and values through everyday face-to-face interaction and behavior

80 percent more per year than high school graduates. Even academically marginal students who manage to get a four-year degree have earnings that are as high, on average, as those of their peers with higher grades (Oreopoulos and Petronijevic, 2013).

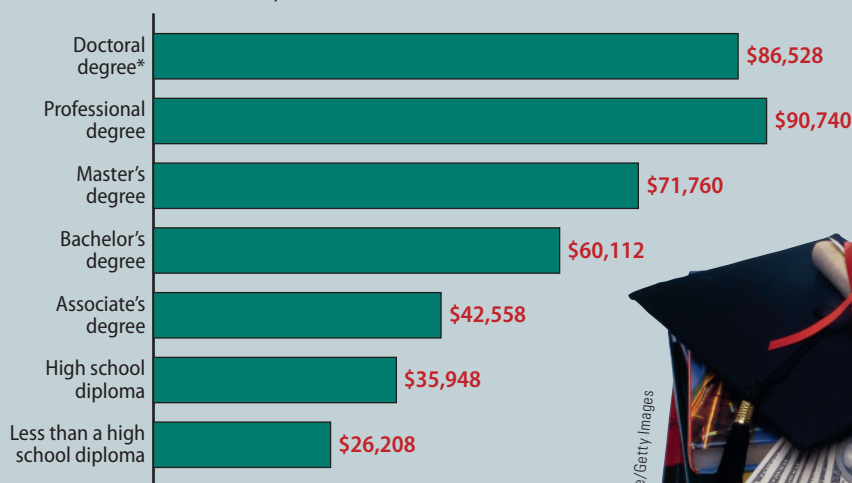
As peoples' educational attainment rises, their earnings increase (*Figure 13.1*). Over a lifetime, education affects earnings five times more than other demographic factors like sex, race, ethnicity, and age (Schramm et al., 2013; Daly and Bengali, 2014). By age 64, people with a bachelor's degree earn six times more than those with only a high school diploma (Selingo, 2013).

Regardless of race, ethnicity, family background, and marital status, people with a bachelor's degree live longer, report better physical and emotional health, and are better able to handle stress because of their economic and social position. They're also more likely than non-college graduates to hold jobs that offer a greater sense of accomplishment, more autonomy, more opportunities for creativity, and more social interaction with coworkers (Rheault and McGeeney, 2011; Oreopoulos and Petronijevic, 2013).

What people study affects their financial payoff, but lifetime earnings vary by occupation, even with the same major field of study. Someone with a degree in the social sciences who works in management can earn \$3.4 million versus \$1.9 million in education (Julian, 2012; Carnevale and Cheah, 2013). Thus, the combination of what people study in college *and* the careers they pursue after graduation can make a big difference in lifetime earnings.

**Figure 13.1 Education Pays Off**

Median annual earnings for full-time, year-round workers by educational attainment, 2016



\*Includes Ph.D., Ed.D., D.M.A., D.Sc., D.A., and D.M.

Source: Based on Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017, "More Education: Lower Unemployment, Higher Earnings," April. Accessed July 25, 2017 (bls.gov/emp).



## LATENT FUNCTIONS OF EDUCATION

Education also has *latent functions*—hidden, unstated, and sometimes unintended consequences. For example:

- ▶ Schools *provide child care*, particularly after-school programs, for the growing number of single-parent and two-income families.

- ▶ High schools and colleges are *matchmaking institutions* that bring together unmarried people.
- ▶ Education *decreases job competition*; the more time that young adults spend in school, the longer the jobs of older workers are safe.
- ▶ Educational institutions *create social networks* that can lead to jobs or business opportunities.
- ▶ Education is *good for business*. Thousands of companies offer services that tutor and test students and produce textbooks and related materials.

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Do functionalists exaggerate education's benefits? About 35 percent of the world's billionaires don't have a bachelor's degree, and some even dropped out of high school; 18 members of the 115th Congress have only a high school diploma (Wealth-X and UBS, 2014; Manning, 2017). Moreover, some of the highest paying jobs (e.g., radiation therapists, dental hygienists, commercial pilots, registered nurses) that will be in high demand in the coming decades require only a two-year degree or vocational training (Ogunro, 2012; Reich, 2015).

Also, according to some critics, functionalists tend to gloss over education's dysfunctions, including rising college costs and student loan debt, topics we'll consider shortly. Conflict theorists, especially, argue that educational institutions produce and reproduce inequality.

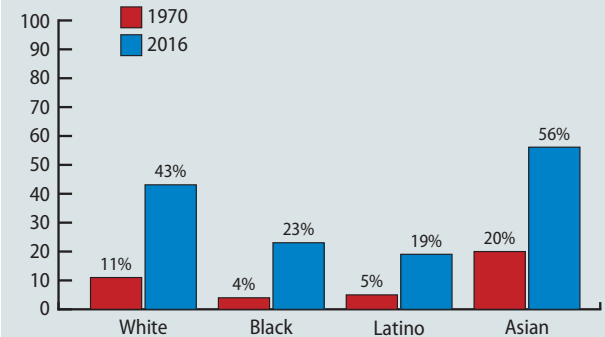
### 13-2b Conflict Theory: Does Education Perpetuate Social Inequality?

From preschool to graduate school, conflict theorists maintain, education creates and perpetuates social inequality based on social class, race, and ethnicity. Schools are also gatekeepers that control and maintain the status quo.



BananaStock/Jupiter Images

**Figure 13.2** Attainment of Bachelor's Degree or Higher, by Race and Ethnicity, 1970 and 2016



Note: 1970 data aren't available for American Indians/Alaska Natives and Pacific Islanders. In 2016, 10 percent and 20 percent, respectively, had a bachelor's or higher degree.

Sources: Based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2012, Table 229; McFarland et al., 2017, Figure 4.

## SOCIAL CLASS AND ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

Countries like the United States, with high income and wealth inequality levels, also have large achievement gaps (Chmielewski and Reardon, 2016; see also Chapter 8). An **achievement gap** is a persistent and significant disparity in academic performance between different groups of students (e.g., males and females, white students and minorities, higher-income and lower-income students). The most common measures of achievement gaps are standardized test scores, GPAs, high school dropout rates, and college enrollment and completion rates.

College enrollments have surged since 1990, especially among minority groups, but who graduates? Asian Americans have made the largest gains (Figure 13.2), but there's considerable variation across subgroups. Of the many Asian subgroups, for example, 72 percent of Asian Indians have at least a bachelor's degree compared with only 14 percent of Cambodians, Hmong, and Laotians (Ramakrishnan and Ahmad, 2014). Such variations, as with other minority subgroups, are due to many factors, including English language proficiency, but the best predictor of educational attainment is social class.

Fifty years ago, the largest achievement gap was between blacks and whites; today it's between social classes. The gap between children from high- and low-income families has grown by about 40 percent since the 1960s (Reardon, 2011), but a mix of race/ethnicity and social class variables

**achievement gap** a persistent and significant disparity in academic performance between different groups of students.





produces accumulated educational advantages or disadvantages over the course of a person's life

### CUMULATIVE REASONS FOR ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

When the 2007–2009 recession began, a number of schools experienced federal, state, and local budget cuts. Five years after the recession, class sizes at many public schools increased, but staff positions—including teachers, reading and math specialists, and guidance counselors—continued to decrease. Wealthier communities, in contrast, increased property taxes to accommodate higher enrollments (Rich, 2013).

Many of the nation's schools now have a high level of “double segregation” because students are increasingly separated not only by race but also by income. Nationally, 40 percent of black students attend a high-poverty public school compared with only 6 percent of white students. Educational problems linked to poverty *and* racial segregation include less-experienced and less-qualified teachers, high teacher turnover, inadequate facilities (e.g., computers, science labs), outdated textbooks, high dropout rates, and school buildings that are falling apart (Reich, 2014; Carnoy and García, 2017).

Poverty and inferior schooling are significant academic roadblocks for low-income students. They're less likely to attend high schools that offer high-level courses in mathematics and science. This can mean the difference between passing or failing required courses dur-

ing the first few years of college. Even when top students from low-income public high schools enter selective colleges, they often struggle to maintain passing grades. (“Selective” schools are those that admit a relatively low percentage of applicants.)

**hidden curriculum** school practices that transmit nonacademic knowledge, values, attitudes, norms, and beliefs.

**credentialism** an emphasis on certificates or degrees to show that people have certain skills, educational attainment levels, or job qualifications.

Low- and middle-income students who receive free help from tax professionals to fill out the complicated federal financial aid forms are substantially more likely than students who receive only financial information to submit a college application, to enroll the following fall, and to be awarded financial aid (Bettinger et al., 2012).

Many college youths from low- and middle-income families must also work part-time or full-time and, consequently, have more stress and less time for academic work (Ross et al., 2012; Black et al., 2014).

### EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Functionalists see education as an avenue for upward mobility. Conflict theorists maintain that education restricts upward mobility because of a hidden curriculum, credentialism, and privilege.

**Hidden Curriculum.** Every school has a formal curriculum that includes reading, writing, and learning other skills. Schools also have a **hidden curriculum**, practices that transmit nonacademic knowledge, values, attitudes, norms, and beliefs that legitimate “economic inequality and the staffing of unequal work roles” (Bowles and Gintis, 1977: 108).

Schools in low-income and working-class neighborhoods tend to stress obedience, following directions, and punctuality so that students can fill low-paid jobs (e.g., restaurants, nursing homes, hospitals) that require these characteristics (Kozol, 2005). Schools in middle-class neighborhoods emphasize proper behavior and appearance, cooperation, conforming to rules, and deference to authority because many of these students will go to college and work in bureaucracies that require such attributes (Hedges, 2011). In contrast, selective schools encourage leadership, creativity, independence, and people skills—all prized traits in elite circles (Persell and Cookson, 1985; see also Chapter 8). In effect, then, the hidden curriculum reproduces the existing class structure and provides workers for jobs and occupations in the stratification hierarchy.

**Credentialism.** Have you noticed that many faculty, doctors', lawyers', and dentists' offices are usually wall-papered with framed degrees? Such tangible symbols of achievement reflect **credentialism**, an emphasis on certificates or degrees to show that people have certain skills, educational attainment levels, or job qualifications.

Functionalists maintain that credentialism rewards people for their accomplishments, sorts out those who are the most qualified for jobs, and stimulates upward social mobility. Conflict theorists contend, however, that for many positions, people can gain skills on the job with a few weeks of training or succeed because of ability or other factors.

Because of a large supply of high school graduates, employers can demand higher levels of education even though some jobs (e.g., retail sales, law enforcement) don't require a college degree for competent performance, a process called *credential inflation*. As more people obtain a college degree, its value diminishes, and students from low-income families, who are the least likely to have access to a college education, fall further behind (Bollag, 2007).

Largely because of rising college costs and student loan debt, postsecondary certificates have become increasingly popular. A *certificate* is a credential showing that a person has completed educational courses in a specific field (e.g., information systems security, business and office management). Certificates take anywhere from a few months to two years to complete, match skills employers want with a job candidate's qualifications, can be "stacked" as students move in and out of college or a shifting job market, are high paying in some fields, and can be stepping stones to further education, including a



Universal Pictures/Fotos International/Getty Images

How important is graduating from a prestigious college or university? Nationally, 84 percent of business leaders say that the amount of knowledge a job candidate has in a particular field is "very important." Only 9 percent say that where a person attended school is very important (Calderon and Sidhu, 2014). Steven Spielberg, the well-known movie producer and director, graduated from California State University at Long Beach after being rejected by the more prestigious University of Southern California and University of California at Los Angeles film schools.



Bob Daemrich/Alamy Stock Photo

college or advanced degree (Blumenstyk, 2015; Mangan, 2015).

**Privilege.** According to one observer, "We're the only rich nation to spend less educating poor kids than we do educating kids from wealthy families" (Reich, 2014). Many colleges claim that they're committed to admitting talented low-income students, but award more financial aid and merit-based scholarships to students from high-income families. Among students with similar high school GPAs and SAT scores, the proportion of high-income students receiving scholarships from colleges, the federal government, or the states has increased since 1995, but the proportion for low-income students has fallen (Burd, 2013; Carey, 2013; Mettler, 2014).

Among the nation's 342 selective four-year public colleges, almost a third of all students come from wealthy households compared with just 8 percent from low-income families. A mere 4 percent of all colleges and universities (138 institutions) hold 75 percent of all postsecondary endowment wealth. Instead of supporting low-income students, "many super wealthy colleges are playgrounds for the children of the wealthiest in our country and the world" (Nichols and Santos, 2016: 1; Halikias and Reeves, 2017).

Another privileged group is *legacies*, the children of alumni who have "reserved seats" regardless of their accomplishments or ability. For example, President George W. Bush—who had mediocre high school grades and standardized test scores—was admitted as a legacy at Yale University, which his father and grandfather had attended (Golden, 2006). Legacies also include students with inferior academic records whose parents, including celebrities, make million-dollar donations. Among selective colleges and universities, almost 75 percent use legacies, which account for up to 30 percent of some universities' student body (Massey, 2007; Hurwitz, 2011).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Conflict theories have several weaknesses. First, a hidden curriculum doesn't necessarily determine job placement because many students aren't passive recipients of educational systems. Below the bachelor's degree level, for example, nearly 25 million U.S. adults have acquired professional certificates and licenses in wide-ranging fields. These and other "alternative credentials" have labor market value that increases employment and earnings (Ewert and Kominski, 2014). Conflict theorists may denounce credentialism and credential inflation, but employers often view credentials as useful initial screening tools that signal job candidates' discipline and drive.

Second, do conflict theorists overstate the importance of social class achievement gaps? A study tracked more than 5,200 Asian American and white students from kindergarten through high school and found that the former, regardless of social class, performed better than their white counterparts. The researchers attributed the Asian American students' greater success to cultural beliefs that achievement is learned rather than innate, parental pressures to succeed, and, especially among recent immigrants, ethnic community resources such as private tutoring and vital information about navigating the education system (Hsin and Xie 2014; see also Chapter 10).

## 13-2c Feminist Theories: Is There a Gender Gap in Education?

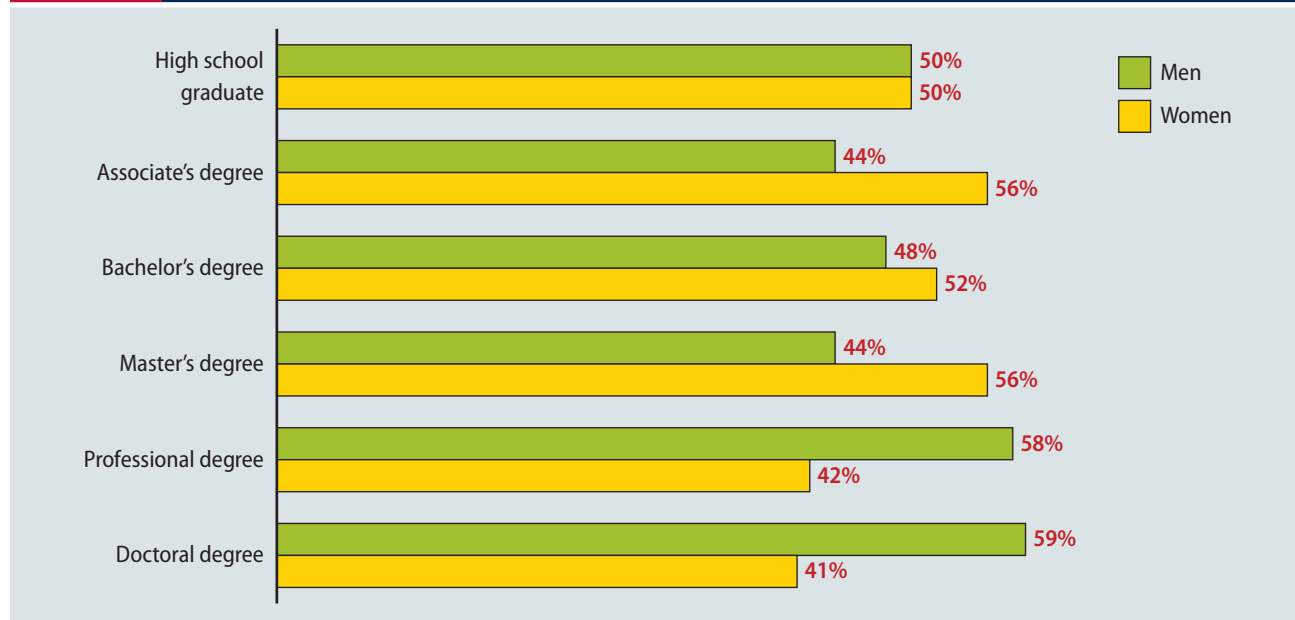
Since 1982, women have been graduating from college at higher rates than men. Some view this trend as an indicator of greater gender equality; others are alarmed about the supposed "male crisis" in and "feminization" of higher education (Mullen, 2012; see also Chapter 9). Has women's progress come at the cost of men? Or are there still gender gaps, particularly in higher education?

### WHO'S GETTING DEGREES

Equal numbers of girls and boys are high school graduates. Women earn more associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees than men, but their percentage of professional and doctoral degrees drops considerably (Figure 13.3).

Across all racial-ethnic groups, students from affluent families are the most likely to earn a bachelor's degree, but men are more likely to do so than women (Mullen, 2012). Among people with a bachelor's or an advanced degree, Asian males (59 percent) have higher rates than Asian females (53 percent), white males and females are about the same (37 percent), and Latinos have slightly higher rates than Latinas (16 percent and 15 percent, respectively). Only black women (25 percent) have

**Figure 13.3** Educational Attainment, by Sex, 2016



Source: Based on U.S. Census Bureau, "Educational Attainment in the United States, 2016, Detailed Tables," Table 2. Accessed August 5, 2017 (census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education).



higher rates than their male counterparts (22 percent) (“Educational Attainment...,” 2017). Such data contradict the description of higher education as feminized, but why do women achieve more degrees than men up to the master’s level?

In both high school and college, women spend more time than men studying, earn better grades, hold more leadership positions, and are more involved in student clubs and community volunteer work. In high school, boys are twice as likely as girls to describe school as a “waste of time.” This may be one reason why women are less likely to drop out of high school or college. Regardless of the reasons for women’s success, many colleges have been giving men preferential treatment in admissions to avoid large gender imbalances in their student bodies (Gewertz, 2009; Kahlenberg, 2010; “Gender, Education, and Work,” 2015).

## MAJORS AND CAREERS

A major gender gap is women’s underrepresentation in the high-paying fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). In elementary, middle, and high school, girls and boys take math and science courses in roughly equal numbers, and about the same numbers leave high school planning to pursue STEM majors in college. After a few years, however, men outnumber women

in nearly every STEM field, and in some—mathematics, engineering, and computer science—women earn only 10 to 20 percent of the bachelor’s degrees. Their numbers decline further at the graduate level and yet again in the workplace (Landivar, 2013; Snyder and Dillow, 2013; Munoz-Boudet and Ravenga, 2017).

Why is there a gradual attrition? In college, females are initially as persistent as men in a STEM major and earn higher grades. However, they’re less satisfied than men with the core courses and more likely to doubt their ability to succeed in a male-dominated discipline. As a result, women’s self-confidence falters and they change majors (Shapiro and Williams, 2012; Jagacinski, 2013).

The exit from a STEM major is also associated with having few female faculty role models, and some science professors’ beliefs that female students won’t benefit from mentoring because they’re less competent than men. “Chilly climates”—uncomfortable work environments for women—are common in male-dominated jobs, including STEM occupations. Chilly climates decrease women’s job satisfaction and increase the likelihood of leaving a job (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012; Kahn and Ginter, 2017).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

A common criticism is that feminist scholars address women’s education barriers but not their choices. Socialization, gender stereotypes, and teachers’ expectations affect our behavior (see Chapters 4 and 9), but it’s still unclear why many women choose fields of study that they know are on the lower end of the pay scale (e.g., health, education).

Some fault feminist theorists for being more interested in women’s than men’s educational attainment gaps. There’s also the question of why feminist scholars devote little attention to issues such as why boys are more disruptive in elementary school. The disruptions lead to suspensions and decrease the chance of attending college by at least 16 percent for each suspension (Bertrand and Pan, 2011).



A recent survey of 27 prominent U.S. universities (including all but one of the Ivy League schools) found that 23 percent of undergraduate women and 5 percent of undergraduate men were victims of non-consensual sexual contact—ranging from penetration to sexual touching. Even in the most serious assaults that included penetration, 72 percent of victims didn’t report the assaults because they were “...embarrassed, ashamed or thought it would be too emotionally difficult” or “...didn’t think anything would be done about it” (Cantor et al., 2015).

## 13-2d Symbolic Interaction: How Do Social Contexts Affect Education?

None of us is born a student or a teacher. Instead, these roles, like others, are socially constructed (see Chapters 3–5). For symbolic interactionists, education is an active *process* that involves students, teachers, peers, and parents and which includes tracking, labeling, and student engagement.

## TRACKING

Beginning in kindergarten, practically all schools sort students by aptitude. Such sorting results in **tracking**, assigning students to specific educational programs and classes on the basis of test scores, previous grades, or perceived ability.

Some educators believe that tracking is beneficial because students learn better in groups with others like themselves, and it allows teachers to develop curricula for students with similar ability. Many interactionists maintain, however, that tracking creates and reinforces inequality.

- ▶ High-track students take classes that involve critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity that high-status occupations require. Low-track students take classes that are limited to simple skills (e.g., punctuality and conformity) that usually characterize lower status jobs.
- ▶ High-track students have more homework, better quality instruction, and more enthusiastic teachers. One result is that high-track students are more likely to see themselves as “bright,” whereas low-track students see themselves as “dumb” or “slow.”
- ▶ The effects of tracking are usually cumulative and lasting. Teachers tend to have low expectations for low-track students, who therefore fall further behind every year in reading, mathematics, and interaction skills (Oakes, 1985; Hanushek and Woessman, 2005).

Middle school and high school become even more stratified as high-track students are sorted into gifted, honors, and advanced courses. In college, students continue to be tracked and sorted into honors programs and accelerated undergraduate courses.

## LABELING

Tracking often leads to labeling, a serious problem because “there’s a widespread culture of disbelief in the learning capacities of many of our children, especially children of color and the economically disadvantaged”

(Howard, 2003: 83). Labeling, in turn, can result in a *self-fulfilling prophecy*. That is, students live up or down to teachers’ expectations and evaluations that are influenced by a student’s social class, skin color, hygiene, accent, and test scores (see Chapter 5).

**tracking** assigning students to specific educational programs and classes on the basis of test scores, previous grades, or perceived ability.

**Implicit bias** unconscious prejudices or stereotypes that affect our attitudes, actions, and decisions.

**Implicit bias**—unconscious prejudices or stereotypes that affect our attitudes, actions, and decisions— influences teachers’ expectations and interactions with students. Both black and white preschool teachers watch black children, particularly boys, more closely than white children for misbehavior. When these very young children take other students’ toys or hit classmates or instructors, for example, teachers punish black boys the most severely. One result is that black children, especially boys, are almost four times more likely than white children to be suspended from preschool (Gilliam et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Implicit bias and labeling also affect girls’ education. Among seventh- to twelfth-grade students, for example, 46 percent of females, compared with 62 percent of males, are confident that they can learn computer science. Only 4 to 10 percent of parents and teachers think that girls are interested in computer science. In contrast, 64 percent say that boys are interested in computer science and more likely to succeed at it than girls. Viewing computer science as a male field helps explain why the share of women earning a bachelor’s degree in computer science slipped from 37 percent in the mid-80s to barely 18 percent by 2008. Women’s drop in computing majors is due to many factors, including chilly classroom and work environments (U.S. Department of Education, 2012; Keating and English, 2015; Sherman, 2015). Teachers’ and parents’ implicit biases, however unintentional, shape students’ choices and outcomes.

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Many schools assess performance not only through tests but also through *student engagement*, how involved students are in their own learning. A team of researchers who studied more than 2,500 elementary school classrooms concluded that the typical U.S. child has only a 1 in 14 chance of being in a school that encourages her or his engagement. Because of standardized tests, teachers in public elementary schools spend most of the day on basic reading and math drills and little time on problem solving, reasoning, science, and social studies (Pianta et al., 2007).

By the time they reach middle school, minority students—particularly blacks and Latinos—believe that teachers discipline them more harshly than their white peers for similar behavior (e.g., not having a hall pass, disobedience). Students’ perceptions that teachers are biased often lead to distrust, defiance, disengagement, underperformance, acting out, and suspensions or

LABELING

IS A

PROBLEM

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Dean Drobot/Shutterstock.com

Large shares of full-time undergraduates—46 percent at community colleges and 42 percent at 4-year colleges—are employed (McFarland et al., 2017). Is working while in college a necessity or a preference? And, how does balancing work and academic obligations affect student engagement?

expulsions. Teachers can counteract such self-fulfilling prophecies by sending the message that their students are capable, valued, and respected (Yeager et al., 2017).

U.S. high school students aren't as engaged in their education as they could be: 26 percent admit that they usually don't do their homework. The students who are most likely to be disengaged are from low-income families, African American or Latino, don't live with both biological parents, attend financially strapped urban public high schools that are typically overcrowded and understaffed, and have fewer resources such as computers and even textbooks (Planty et al., 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

About 20 percent of first-year college students have difficulty learning course material and getting help with coursework. Students who are the most likely to be engaged in their coursework have mentors, participate in faculty projects, have internships, and are involved in several extracurricular activities (Busteed, 2015; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2016). Such opportunities encourage engagement and decrease attrition.

On average, even full-time college students study only 14 hours a week compared with 24 hours a week in 1961 (Babcock and Marks, 2011). This is well below the 24 to 30 hours faculty members say students should be spending on class preparation if they're taking three courses.

According to one college instructor, "Education is the only business in which the clients want the least for their money" (Perlmutter, 2001: B1). However, some analysts also blame professors for students' not studying. Many faculty have watered down their required readings, say nothing when students don't prepare for classes or do assignments, and often give easy exams to avoid

complaints about low grades. Only 55 percent of first-year college students and 61 percent of seniors say their courses "challenged them to do their best work" (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2013: 9). When faculty dilute their course requirements and tests, some students don't study because they're bored by courses that don't stimulate them (Benton, 2011; Glenn, 2011).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

One weakness is that interactionists presume that once a person (or group) is labelled, a self-fulfilling prophecy will follow. People can overcome labelling effects by changing a situation. In middle school, for example, placing higher-achieving minority children into "gifted" tracks and programs significantly boosts their academic performance—even in the poorest neighborhoods of large urban school districts—because students have high-quality teachers and textbooks, as well as positive peer pressure to learn and succeed (Card and Giuliano, 2016).

Another limitation is that interactionists, because of their micro-level analysis, overlook the macro-level structural constraints that affect education. Educational success varies greatly depending on factors such as the availability of high-quality preschools and kindergartens, neighborhood resources (like property taxes) devoted to education, and well-funded and well-staffed high schools. Even more importantly (as you'll see shortly), politicians—with little or no experience in education—sometimes establish policies that perpetuate racial/ethnic and social class inequality.

## 13-3 SOME CURRENT ISSUES IN U.S. EDUCATION

In an open-ended question about "the most important problem facing this country today," only 5 percent of Americans named education (Riffkin, 2014). A dysfunctional government and weak economy ranked the highest, but the U.S. education system has problems at all levels, some more controversial than others.

### 13-3a Elementary and Middle Schools

Advanced economies, including ours, rely not on physical labor but on "cognitive labor" that requires formal analytical abilities, written communications, and specific technical knowledge—skills that people acquire and cultivate beginning in preschool (Autor, 2014). Three of the ongoing issues regarding elementary and middle schools are low test scores, achievement gaps, and effective teaching.



## LOW TEST SCORES AND ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

Children who read proficiently by the end of the third grade are more likely to do well in other subjects, including mathematics, and to graduate from high school. Since 1990, eighth-grade reading and math scores have increased, but there are racial and ethnic gaps. On a scale of 0 to 500, Asian/Pacific Islander students have the highest scores in both subjects, and black students the lowest, but both blacks and Latinos have narrowed achievement gaps (*Figure 13.4*).

Social class explains some of the variations. In 2015, 48 percent of 3- to 5-year-olds whose parents had either a graduate or professional degree, compared with 29 percent of those whose parents had only a high school diploma, were enrolled in kindergarten, preschool, and nursery school programs that provided enriching educational experiences. Nearly 80 percent of fourth graders in low-income families are below proficiency in reading compared with 49 percent of higher-income children (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013; McFarland et al., 2017).

Social class alone doesn't explain student performance, however. Homework also affects test scores. Many elementary and middle school children aren't getting or doing their homework, but parents and the public often blame teachers for the students' poor academic performance (Loveless, 2014).

## EFFECTIVE TEACHING

A multi-year project concluded that the most accurate way to evaluate elementary school teachers is to use a three-pronged approach that includes student test

scores, multiple classroom observations, and student evaluations (Cantrell and Kane, 2013), but 40 states use only student test scores to evaluate teachers. Much research shows that test scores are invalid and unreliable measures of teacher effectiveness. Other factors affect test scores, including a teacher's quality of undergraduate education, years of experience, being assigned to low-track or high-track classrooms, whether or not students study, and school funding (Kalogrides et al., 2013; Amrein-Beardsley, 2014; Polikoff and Porter, 2014).

## EDUCATION AND POLITICS

Many teachers believe that politics threaten public education. As this book goes to press, the Trump administration has rolled back consumer protections for student loan borrowers, slashed federal education funding, and expanded private school *vouchers*. (Vouchers allow parents to use taxpayer money to pay for all or some of a child's private school fees.) The administration has also proposed cutting federal funding for teacher training, after-school programs, and work-study programs for college students, as well as implementing affirmative action policies for white students.

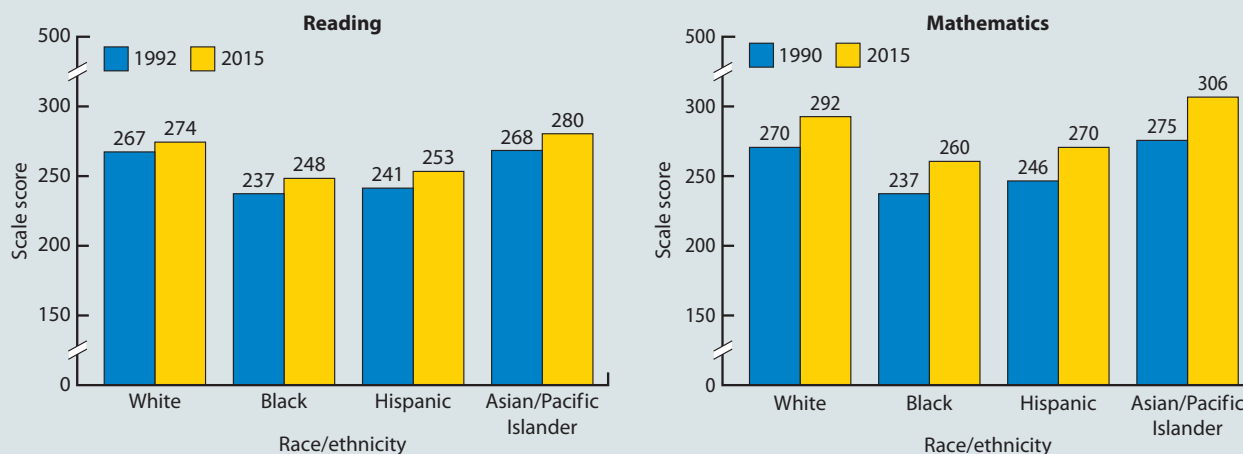
### 13-3b High Schools

High schools, like elementary and middle schools, must grapple with low achievement scores and effective teaching. In addition, the SAT is becoming an increasingly controversial issue.

## INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

Among 71 countries, U.S. 15-year-olds rank 38th in math and 24th in both science and reading. U.S. students are

**Figure 13.4** Average Reading and Mathematics Scores of U.S. 8th-Grade Students, by Race and Ethnicity



Source: Based on McFarland et al., 2017, Figure 3.

About 6 percent of Americans ages 16 to 24 are high school dropouts, down from 11 percent in 2000. The dropout rate, which is slightly higher for males than for females, is highest among foreign-born Latinos and youth whose families are in the bottom 25 percent of all family incomes (Snyder et al., 2016; McFarland et al., 2017).



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roughly in the middle in reading and science, but math performance, which is below average, has declined since 2009. In Singapore, which consistently has the highest achievement, average high school students are roughly three years ahead of their American peers in math. Compared with 35 other wealthy industrial nations, the United States ranks only 30th in math and 19th in science (“Education,” 2016; Sparks, 2016; DeSilver, 2017).

The United States is one of the wealthiest countries in the world; spends more per student from the ages of 6 to 15 than 30 other industrialized countries; ranks above average in the share of high-SES high school students; and has fewer non-English speaking students than other Western countries, including Canada (Carnoy and Rothstein, 2013; OECD, 2013). Why, then, are U.S. students doing so poorly? A major difference between the United States and other developed nations is teacher preparation and quality.

## TEACHER PREPARATION AND QUALITY

American teachers spend, on average, 20 to 50 percent more hours teaching in class than do their Australian, Canadian, and Finnish counterparts, all of whose students outrank Americans in international tests (Lawrence, 2013). A combination of structural factors helps explain why, despite their individual efforts, many U.S. teachers aren’t as effective as they could be.

First, the top-performing countries accept only the top applicants for education programs. Finland, Singapore, and South Korea recruit the top 5 to 30 percent of high school graduates, but accept only 10 percent who have high standardized test scores in science, math, and reading (Auguste et al., 2010; Sawchuck, 2012).

Several recent reports described U.S. teacher preparation programs as “an industry of mediocrity”

that has low or no academic entry standards, easy coursework, and gives out many easy A’s (Greenberg et al., 2013; Putnam et al., 2014). In top-performing countries, 100 percent of teachers are in the top third of their college graduating classes. In the United States, 47 percent of kindergarten through twelfth-grade teachers come from the bottom third. “In other words, we hire lots of our lowest performers to teach, and then we scream when our kids don’t excel” (Cloud, 2010: 48).

Second, compared with teachers in top-performing countries, a higher number of U.S. teachers don’t have a bachelor’s degree or higher in the subjects they teach. For example, 30 percent of public high school teachers who teach math and 54 percent who teach chemistry didn’t major in these subjects (Hill et al., 2015).

Third, the top-performing countries offer teachers competitive salaries. In South Korea and Singapore, teachers on average earn more than lawyers and engineers. In these countries, Finland, and many others, teachers are highly regarded and enjoy the same prestige as physicians and other high-status professions and have lifelong careers, resulting in very low teacher attrition. In contrast, 40 to 50 percent of new U.S. teachers leave the profession within their first 5 years on the job. High turnover rates are especially harmful to students in low-performing schools: Replacing a teacher—especially a good one—is costly, disruptive, and demoralizing for both students and parents (Ronfeldt et al., 2011; “Schools in Finland,” 2016; Startz, 2016).

Fourth, high-performing countries endorse egalitarian, student-directed policies and learning environments. Unlike the United States, they (1) enroll most children in high-quality preschools; (2) direct more resources to the most disadvantaged pupils; (3) delay steering children into academic or vocational programs until they’re 15 or 16 years old, which decreases SES gaps due to tracking; (4) have small class sizes (one teacher for every 12 high school students in Estonia, one of the top-performing countries); (5) apply rigorous, consistent standards across all classrooms; and (6) give principals (not politicians) considerable autonomy over resources, curricula, and other school policies (“Education,” 2016; OECD, 2016; Ripley, 2016).

## THE GROWING CONTROVERSY OVER SATs, ACTs, AND AP COURSES

In 2013, about 3.5 million high school students took either the SAT or the ACT, standardized college entrance examinations. The administrators/owners of both exams say that the scores indicate where students are falling



Finnish high school students routinely score at or near the top on international reading, science, and math tests. Why?

behind in college readiness, measure students' capability to do college-level work, and predict college success (College Board, 2013; ACT, Inc., 2014).

A growing number of critics, including college officials, contend that the tests are little more than gatekeeping tools: They exclude lower socioeconomic students from higher education, don't predict college success, and the test scores reflect accumulated life advantages and disadvantages rather than the ability to do college-level work. As a result, 850 four-year colleges don't require applicants to submit SAT or ACT scores (Botstein, 2014; Fraire, 2014; Hiss and Franks, 2014; Reeves, 2017).

Advanced Placement (AP) offers high school students college-level curricula and exams. About 78 percent of degree-granting colleges and universities give course credit to students who get high scores on the exams (Berrett, 2014). Thirty percent of high school students take at least one AP exam; 27 percent are low income, and only 48 percent of this group score high enough to get college credit (College Board, 2014).

Like the ACT and SAT, AP is becoming more controversial. First, AP courses are rarely as demanding as college courses and don't offer the same content. Second, to increase a high school's prestige, superintendents and principals may pressure teachers to offer AP courses and students to take them. Both groups may be unprepared to do so, and failure can make students and teachers feel inferior. Finally, only about 45 percent of the nation's public high schools offer AP courses, and those that do so are

**meritocracy** a system that rewards people because of their individual accomplishments.

typically in high-income and predominantly white neighborhoods (Simon, 2013; Berrett, 2014).

## 13-3c Colleges and Universities

Public postsecondary institutions often feel embattled by numerous constituencies and external pressures. Many colleges and universities are grappling with affirmative action issues, grade inflation and cheating, low graduation rates, and rising student loan debt.

### AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

In higher education, *affirmative action* refers to admission policies that provide equal access for groups, particularly women and minorities, that have been historically excluded or underrepresented. The enrollment rates of these groups has increased steadily since the 1970s, but using race and ethnicity in college admission decisions has been, and continues to be, a hotly debated topic (see "The Affirmative Action Debate in Higher Education").

In 2006, Michigan voters approved an amendment to the state's constitution to ban using race as a factor in deciding who's admitted to the state's public universities. In 2014, the U.S. Supreme Court (*Schuetz v. Coalition to Defend Affirmation Action*) ruled that Michigan's ban was constitutional. The court's decision legitimated similar laws in seven other states (Schmidt, 2014). Affirmative action opponents praised the decision for reinforcing **meritocracy**, a system that rewards people because of their individual accomplishments. We say things like "work hard and you'll get ahead" and "pull yourself up by your bootstraps," but is that what happens? As you've seen, the best predictor of who goes to college isn't ability but income.

### GRADE INFLATION AND CHEATING

Grade inflation is widespread across all education levels, and some children start cheating on tests as early as the third grade. The consequences of grade inflation and cheating in postsecondary education are more serious, however, because someone who cheated her or his way through college or graduate school may be your dentist, lawyer, doctor, or tax accountant.

**Grade Inflation.** Has an A replaced the C of the 1970s? In 1971, only 26 percent of first-year college students expected to earn at least a B average in college, compared with 52 percent in 1995, and a whopping 70 percent in 2010 (Pryor, 2011), and even though students are studying less than in the past.

Many faculty give high grades because it decreases student complaints, involves less time and thought in grading exams and papers, and reduces the chances of students' challenging a grade. Some faculty believe that they can get favorable course evaluations from students



## WOULD YOU WANT A MILITARY OFFICER, A FINANCIAL PLANNER, A DENTIST, OR A DOCTOR WHO CHEATED HER OR HIS WAY THROUGH COLLEGE OR GRADUATE SCHOOL?

by handing out high grades, and others accept students' view of high grades as a reward for simply showing up in class. Inflating grades decreases student attrition and satisfies administrators, especially when state legislators base funding on graduation rates (Bartlett and Wasley, 2008; Gillespie, 2014).

**Cheating.** Despite grade inflation, cheating is common in college and graduate school. Many studies have uncovered cheating at the Air Force Academy and in many graduate programs, including business administration and dentistry.

Policy analyst David Callahan (2004) contends that dishonesty is prevalent because we live in a “cheating culture,” which rationalizes deceit (e.g., “everybody’s doing it”), and rewards cutting corners to make money and to succeed. As competition increases and more

people become afraid of falling behind, even usually honest people don’t feel guilty for cheating at tax time, at work, or in higher education. For many college students, cheating “isn’t a big deal,” perhaps because they see it everywhere—on Wall Street, by sports stars, and by celebrities. Political (and particularly White House) dishonesty is so common, *Time* magazine offers a weekly list of “Facts vs. Alternative Facts,” meaning lies (see Chapter 7 on widespread corporate, white collar, and consumer retail fraud).

More than two-thirds of college students admit having cheated at least once on tests and assignments: “To them, higher education is just another transaction, less about learning than about obtaining a credential” (Wolverton, 2016: A42). Students cheat because they can. At least 41 percent of faculty don’t take disciplinary action against students they know are cheating (Coren, 2011). Students are rarely caught and, if caught, seldom punished. Despite widespread grade inflation and cheating, millions of students don’t graduate from college.

### GRADUATION RATES

The United States has one of the lowest college graduation rates in the developed world. Only 59 percent of full-time students at four-year colleges complete a bachelor’s degree within 6 years, and 29 percent at 2-year colleges earn a certificate or associate’s degree within 3 years (McFarland et al., 2017).

Once on campus, 40 percent must take one or more remedial courses. Dropout rates are higher for males than females, part-time than full-time students, and

## The Affirmative Action Debate in Higher Education

### Supporters argue that affirmative action programs...

- ▶ give disadvantaged and underrepresented students a needed boost in overcoming past and current discrimination
- ▶ have doubled or tripled the number of minority applications, resulting in student populations that are more representative of the surrounding community
- ▶ have increased minorities’ upward social and economic mobility
- ▶ promote diversity and encourage people to work together effectively in a multicultural society

### Opponents argue that affirmative action programs...

- ▶ are discriminatory because they’re based on race rather than academic achievement
- ▶ benefit primarily middle- and upper-class minorities
- ▶ are condescending because they imply that minorities can’t succeed without preferential treatment
- ▶ admit students who often can’t live up to an institution’s academic standards, resulting in high failure rates

*What else would you add to either side of the debate?*

Sources: Messerli, 2012; Krishnamurthy and Edlin, 2014.



Keith Brofsky/Getty Images

students from lower-income families. At four-year colleges, the more selective the institution, the higher the graduation rate: 35 percent at colleges with open admission policies, 61 percent at colleges that accept 50 percent or more of applicants, and 85 percent at colleges that accept only 25 percent of applicants (Snyder et al., 2016).

Higher graduation rates at more selective institutions don't necessarily mean that the students are more intelligent than those at open admission colleges. Instead, selective colleges require higher GPAs and standardized test scores, both of which screen out students who may be unmotivated or unprepared for college. Selective colleges also have higher tuition and fees that, in turn, generate more financial aid, on-campus resources and support services, and enriching extra-curricular activities—all of which increase the likelihood of earning a degree.

Social class and family relationships also affect college completion. Students whose family income is in the top 25 percent are nearly five times more likely to attain a bachelor's degree than those from the lowest 25 percent (58 percent vs. 12 percent). Fully three-quarters of undergraduates are managing some combination of family responsibilities, jobs, and commuting to class. Working while in college, living at home, and experiencing family-related stresses (e.g., parents' divorce, job loss, illness) decrease the odds of graduating from college (Princiotta et al., 2014; Wilbur and Roscigno, 2016; Cahalan et al., 2017). Students also drop out because they get sick, accept attractive job offers, or decide that college isn't for them, but cost is a major reason for attrition.

## STUDENT LOAN DEBT

Student loan debt, which has almost tripled since 2004 to more than \$1.4 trillion, is now second

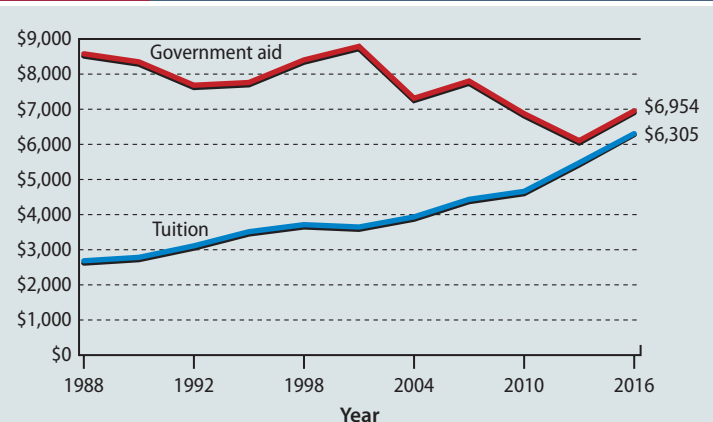
only to mortgage debt. About 70 percent of students who graduated from public and private nonprofit four-year colleges in 2015 had debt, which ranged from \$3,000 to \$53,000 and averaged \$30,100 (up from \$9,500 in 1993). Those at for-profit colleges (e.g., University of Phoenix) owed much more—almost \$40,000 on average (Institute for College Access & Success, 2016; Student Loan Report, 2017).

The rising student loan debt depends on factors like an institution's endowment, in-state and out-of-state tuition prices, whether the college is public or private, and the growing number and costs of full-time administrators (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2014). However, a major reason for the rise is that, since 2000, public spending on higher education has dropped 30 percent even though enrollment at public colleges has jumped 34 percent (Kena et al., 2014). As state funding has decreased, tuition has increased (*Figure 13.5*), and so has borrowing to cover tuition, fees, and, for many students, the costs for room and board.

## 13-4 RELIGION AND SOCIETY

Like education, religion has a profound effect on society. Some form of religion exists in all societies and cultures. Throughout history, religion has been a central part of the human experience, affecting the family, economy, and other social institutions. Why is religion important to many people? And does it always benefit society? The four theoretical perspectives offer different insights in answering these and other questions.

**Figure 13.5** Why College Costs More Than It Used To



Note: These are public higher-education revenues per student, in 2016 dollars.

Source: Based on SHEEO, 2017, Figure 4.



### 13-4a What Is Religion?

**Religion** is a social institution that involves shared beliefs, values, and practices related to the supernatural. It unites believers into a community, but customs and practices differ across cultures and groups. For example, being Catholic requires confessing one's sins to a priest, whereas silent confessions directly to God are more common among Protestants, Jews, Muslims, and other religious groups.

Émile Durkheim (1961) distinguished between the sacred and the profane. **Sacred** refers to anything that people see as awe-inspiring, supernatural, holy, and not part of the physical world. In contrast, **profane** refers to the ordinary and everyday elements of life that aren't related to religion. Sociologists differentiate religion from religiosity and spirituality.

### 13-4b Religion, Religiosity, and Spirituality

Religion is a belief system, but religious expression can vary. When sociologists examine **religiosity**, how people demonstrate their religious beliefs, they find that religion and religiosity differ. For example, 53 percent of Americans say that religion is "very important" in their lives, but only 36 percent attend worship services once a week or more (Newport, 2016).

**Spirituality** is a personal quest to feel connected to a reality greater than oneself. About 37 percent of Americans describe themselves as "spiritual but not religious." Within this group, however, 44 percent pray at least once a day, and 55 percent are "absolutely certain" that there's a God (Lugo et al., 2012). Thus, religious people are spiritual, but spiritual people aren't necessarily religious.

## 13-5 RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION AND MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

People manifest their religious beliefs most commonly through organized groups, including cults, sects, denominations, churches, and ecclesia. The major world religions differ in their membership and beliefs.

### 13-5a Cults (New Religious Movements)

A **cult** is a religious group devoted to beliefs and practices that are outside of those accepted in mainstream society. Many sociologists use **new religious movement (NRM)** rather than *cult* because the media have used the latter term in derogatory ways to describe any unfamiliar, new, or seemingly bizarre religious group (Roberts, 2004).

NRMs usually organize around a **charismatic leader** (like Jesus) whom followers see as having exceptional or superhuman powers and qualities (see Chapter 11). Some NRMs have become established religions. The early Christians were a renegade group that broke away from Judaism, and Islam, the world's second largest religion, began as a cult around Muhammad.

**religion** a social institution that involves shared beliefs, values, and practices related to the supernatural.

**sacred** anything that people see as awe-inspiring, supernatural, holy, and not part of the natural world.

**profane** the ordinary and everyday elements of life that aren't related to religion.

**religiosity** how people demonstrate their religious beliefs.

**cult** a religious group devoted to beliefs and practices that are outside of those accepted in mainstream society.

**new religious movement (NRM)** term used instead of *cult* by most sociologists.

**charismatic leader** someone that followers see as having exceptional or superhuman powers and qualities.





Hare Krishna is the popular name for the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), a new religious movement based in Hinduism. Established in the United States in 1965, its practices include an austere and simple life, vegetarianism, abstinence from drugs and alcohol, chanting, and evangelism.

Most contemporary cults are fragmentary, loosely organized, and temporary, but others (e.g., the Church of Scientology) have developed into lasting and highly bureaucratic international organizations.

### 13-5b Sects

A **sect** is a religious group that has broken away from an established religion. People who begin sects are usually dissatisfied members who believe that the parent religion has become too secular and has abandoned key original doctrines. Like cults, some sects are small and disappear after a time, whereas others become established and persist. Examples of sects that have persisted include

**sect** a religious group that has broken away from an established religion.

**denomination** a subgroup within a religion that shares its name and traditions and is generally on good terms with the main group.

**church** a large established religious group that has strong ties to mainstream society.

**ecclesia** (also called a *state religion*) an official religious organization that claims everyone in society as its members.

the Amish, the Jewish Hassidim, Jehovah's Witnesses, Quakers, and Seventh-Day Adventists (Bainbridge, 1997). Some sects develop into denominations.

### 13-5c Denominations

A **denomination** is a subgroup within a religion that shares its name and traditions and is generally on good terms with the main



group. Denominations can form slowly or develop rapidly, depending on factors like geography, immigration, and a country's birth rate. Some scholars describe a denomination as somewhere between a sect and a church. Like sects, denominations have a professional ministry. Unlike sects, denominations view other religious groups as valid and don't make claims that only they possess the truth (Hamilton, 2001).

Denominations typically accommodate themselves to the larger society instead of trying to dominate or change it. As a result, people may belong to the same denomination as did their grandparents or great-grandparents. Denominations exist in all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. In the United States, the many Protestant denominations include Episcopalians, Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, and Evangelicals.

### 13-5d Churches

A **church** is a large established religious group that has strong ties to mainstream society. Because leadership is attached to an office rather than a specific leader, new generations of believers replace previous ones, and members follow tradition or authority rather than a charismatic leader. As in a denomination, people are usually born into a church, but may later decide to leave it.

Churches (e.g., Roman Catholic Church, Greek Orthodox Church) are typically bureaucratically organized, have formal worship services and trained clergy, and often maintain some degree of control over political or educational institutions (see Chapter 11). Because churches are an integral part of the social order, they often become dependent on, rather than critical of, the ruling classes (Hamilton, 2001).

### 13-5e Ecclesiae

An **ecclesia** (also called a *state religion*) is an official religious organization that claims everyone in society as its members. Membership is automatic at birth, the religion is part of the country's cultural identity, and there's a close association between religious and state officials. Examples include the Anglican Church in England, the Lutheran Church in Norway and Sweden, and Islam in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other Middle East countries.

An ecclesia has some of the same characteristics as a church, such as a formal structure and professionally trained and designated clergy. A major difference is an ecclesia's power. In some societies, particularly in the Middle East, ecclesiae have immense authority because there's

little or no separation between church and state. In others (e.g., England, Sweden, Norway), ecclesiae have little or no influence on government laws and regulations or most cultural practices.

## 13-5f Some Major World Religions






Worldwide, the largest religious group is Christians, followed by Muslims. If the world's population is represented as an imaginary village of 100 people, it has about:

- ▶ 32 Christians
- ▶ 23 Muslims
- ▶ 16 Unaffiliated (people who may or may not believe in God but don't identify with any particular religious group)
- ▶ 15 Hindus
- ▶ 7 Buddhists
- ▶ 6 Folk religionists (includes followers of African traditional religions, Chinese folk traditions, Native American religions, and Australian aboriginal religions)
- ▶ 1 Other (includes Jews, Baha'is, Sikhs, Jains, Shintoists, and many others) (based on Pew Research Center, 2015)

Note that no religious group comes close to being a global majority, that the third largest group is religiously unaffiliated, and that non-Christians outnumber Christians 2 to 1. By 2050, however, Muslims are expected to surpass Christians as the world's largest religious group and will make up nearly one-third of the world's population. The main reasons for Islam's growth is that Muslims have more children than members of the other major religious groups. Also, because Muslims have the youngest median age (20 versus 30 for non-Muslims), a larger share will soon be having children, accelerating the growth of the Muslim population (Lipka, 2017).

Five religious groups in particular have had a worldwide impact on economic, political, and social issues. *Table 13.2* provides a brief overview of these groups.

**Table 13.2** Characteristics of Five Major World Religions

Religion	Date of Origin	Founder	Number of Followers
<b>Christianity</b>  <small>iStock.com/Onfokus</small>	0 C.E.	Jesus Christ	2.2 billion
<b>Islam</b>  <small>iStock.com/Kickstand</small>	600 C.E.	Muhammad	1.6 billion
<b>Hinduism</b>  <small>iStock.com/Ferenc Cegledi</small>	Between 4000 and 1500 B.C.E.	No specific founder	887 million
<b>Buddhism</b>  <small>iStock.com/Pablo Salgado Barrientos</small>	525 B.C.E.	Siddhartha Gautama	386 million
<b>Judaism</b>  <small>iStock.com/Howard Sandler</small>	2000 B.C.E.	Abraham	15 million

Note: C.E. (Common Era) is the nondenominational abbreviation for A.D. (Anno Domini, Latin for "In the year of our Lord") and B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) is the nondenominational abbreviation for B.C. (Before Christ).

Sources: Based on a number of sources including the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, 2007; "Religions of the World..." 2007; and "Global Christianity..." 2011.

## 13-6 RELIGION IN THE UNITED STATES

Among U.S. adults, 92 percent believe in God, 3 percent don't, and 5 percent don't know or don't care (Lipka, 2016). For sociologists, religiosity is a better measure of being religious than simply asking people whether they believe in God (or a universal spirit) and which religion they follow. Religiosity includes a number of variables, but the most common are religious belief, affiliation, and participation.

### 13-6a Religious Belief

Some 53 percent of Americans say that religion is very important in their lives, down from 70 percent in 1965 (Newport, 2016). Not surprisingly, religion isn't important for *agnostics* (people who say that it's impossible to know whether there's a God), *atheists* (those who believe that there's no God), or others who are skeptics. Nonetheless, about 25 percent of Americans, including some atheists and agnostics, embrace the tenets of some Eastern religions or elements of New Age spirituality that include reincarnation, meditation, astrology, and the evil eye (casting curses and evil spells) (Lugo et al., 2012).

### 13-6b Religious Affiliation

Americans' religious identity is shifting. Since 2007, the share of Christians has declined, while the number of adults who say they have no religious preference or affiliation has grown to 23 percent (Table 13.3). A vast majority (78 percent) of the unaffiliated, often called "nones," were raised in a specific religion but no longer believe the teachings, dislike formal religion, have lost respect for religious leaders who focus on power and money, see many religious people as hypocritical and judgmental, and are more willing to admit not being religious than in the past. "Nones" include a broad swath of people but tend to be millennials, males, political independents, Asians, college graduates, or in higher-income brackets (Taylor et al., 2014; Lipka, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2016).

Table 13.3 Religious Affiliation in the United States, 2014		
		Percentage Change Since 2007
<b>CHRISTIAN</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>−8%</b>
Protestant	47	−5
Catholic	21	−3
Mormon	2	—
<b>OTHER FAITH</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>+2</b>
<b>UNAFFILIATED</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>+7</b>
Atheist	3	+2
Agnostic	4	+2
Nothing in particular	16	+4

Source: Based on Pew Research Center, 2015, 40.

Another recent trend is the declining number of Americans who identify with a specific Protestant denomination (e.g., Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist); only 30 percent did so in 2016, compared with 50 percent in 2000. Some are "nones," but 42 percent of Americans—especially those who were raised as Catholics or Protestants—have switched religions because of moving to another location, intermarrying, divorcing, or feeling more welcome at a new place of worship (Pew Research Center, 2015, 2016; Newport, 2017).

### 13-6c Religious Participation

Turning to the third measure of religiosity, religious participation, among Americans who say that religion is important to them, 30 percent seldom or never attend religious services. Thus, many people are more likely to believe in a religion than to practice it by attending services regularly. Mormons (75 percent), Protestants (53 percent), Muslims (50 percent), and Catholics (45 percent) have higher attendance rates at religious services than do Jews or other non-Christians (19 percent) (Newport, 2014; Sandstrom and Alper, 2016).

### 13-6d Some Characteristics of Religious Participants

Americans differ in their beliefs and affiliations. Religious participation also varies by sex, age, race and ethnicity, and social class.

#### SEX

American women are generally more religious than men. They're more likely than men to say that religion is "very important" in their lives (60 percent vs. 47 percent), to pray every day (64 percent vs. 47 percent), and to attend religious services at least once a week (40 percent vs. 32 percent), and they are less likely to be "nones" (19 percent vs. 27 percent) ("The Gender Gap...", 2016).

The religious gender gap is due to a mix of factors. It may be that women are expected to be more pious and spiritual because, especially as nurturers, they transmit religious values to their children (see Chapter 9). Because of lower labor force participation rates, women have more time for religious activities, where they may forge friendships. Women give higher priority to religion because it offers a sense of self-identity and well-being, especially for women who experience poverty, poor health, or domestic violence ("The Gender Gap...", 2016). Also, women, on average, live longer than men, and religiosity increases with age.



## AGE

Generally, Americans age 65 and older are more likely than younger people to describe themselves as religious, to say that religion is very important in their lives, to pray, and to attend services at least weekly. These age-related differences may reflect several factors: Older Americans grew up decades ago when church attendance was higher, they seek spiritual comfort as elderly friends and relatives die, they want to lessen a sense of isolation or loneliness, and they're preparing for death (Taylor et al., 2009).

Among adults under age 33, 36 percent are “nones,” compared with just 11 percent who are 72 and older. Young adults are also much more likely to be unaffiliated than earlier generations were at a similar stage in their lives. Among other reasons, many baby boomers taught their children to be independent, think for themselves, and “find their own moral compass.” As a result, perhaps, millennials are less trusting of major institutions such as religion, the economy, and government (Masci, 2016).



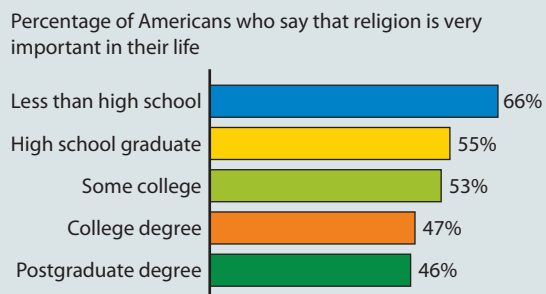
## RACE AND ETHNICITY

Blacks are more religious than any other U.S. racial or ethnic group. They're the most likely to report a religious affiliation, to belong to a church, to pray every day, and to attend religious services every week. The vast majority (71 percent) are Protestant, primarily Baptist and Evangelical; 5 percent are Catholic; and 18 percent are “nones” (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Latinos' religious landscape has been shifting. Of the largest affiliations, 48 percent are Catholic (down from 67 percent in 2010), 19 percent are evangelical Protestant, and 20 percent are “nones” (up from 10 percent in 2010). Some Catholic and evangelical Protestant churches have been especially successful in attracting recent Latino immigrants because the churches offer services in Spanish, the ceremonies are expressive rather than formal, and the clergy are more responsive to their members' social and economic needs (“Select-a-Faith,” 2014; Pew Research Center, 2017).

Asian Americans may be the most diverse religious group in America. Nationally, 17 percent are Catholic, 16 percent are Hindu, 16 percent are mainline or evangelical Protestant, 6 percent are Buddhist, and 6 percent are Muslim. A large share, 31 percent, are “nones” (Pew Research Center, 2015).

**Figure 13.6 Education and Religion**



Source: Based on Pew Research Center, 2017, 7.

## SOCIAL CLASS

As education increases, the importance of religion decreases (Figure 13.6). Generally, college graduates are less likely than people with less schooling to believe in God, to pray, and to attend religious services. They're also more likely (11 percent) than adults with a high school education (4 percent) to describe themselves as atheists or agnostics. Among the “nones,” 30 percent of atheists and agnostics have an annual family income of \$100,000 or more, compared with 17 percent of Christians (Pew Research Center, 2017).

### 13-6e Secularization: Is Religion Declining or Thriving?

Industrialized nations have been experiencing **secularization**, a process in which religion loses its social and cultural influence. Is secularization endangering religion? Or is religion flourishing?

#### IS SECULARIZATION INCREASING?

You've seen that the number of “nones” is growing, attendance at religious services has dropped, and that fewer Americans say that religion is “very important” in their lives. There's other evidence that secularization is rising in the United States and globally. For example:

- ▶ 41 percent of Americans have a “great deal” of confidence in the church and organized religion, down from 68 percent in 1975 (Newport, 2017).
- ▶ 70 percent of Americans attended religious services on Christmas Eve or Day when they were children; only 54 percent do so in adulthood (Cooperman et al., 2013).
- ▶ 68 percent of people worldwide describe themselves as religious,

**secularization** religion loses its social and cultural influence.

down from 77 percent in 2005 (WIN-Gallup International, 2013).

- ▶ The European Court of Justice, which passes laws for 28 European countries, recently ruled that private employers can ban Muslim female workers from wearing head scarves on the job (Bilefsky, 2017).

There's also evidence of greater "forced secularization" worldwide. About 77 percent of the world's population—up from 58 percent in 2007—lives in countries with high government restrictions on religion. Some of the laws and policies ban particular faiths, prohibit conversions, or limit preaching. Others allow religion-related conflict or terrorism, mob violence against religious minorities, and harassment over religious attire (Grim and Cooperman, 2014; Henne, 2015).

## IS RELIGION THRIVING?

Many sociologists contend that the prevalence of secularization has been greatly exaggerated. For example:

- ▶ 62 percent of Americans say that it's important for a U.S. president to have strong religious beliefs (Smith, 2017).
- ▶ 72 percent endorse Christmas displays on government property (Pew Research Center, 2014).
- ▶ Nearly all states allow exemptions if vaccinations conflict with parents' religious beliefs; so far, 34 states and the District of Columbia don't prosecute parents for child abuse or manslaughter even if denying medical treatment for religious reasons results

**fundamentalism** belief in the literal meaning of a sacred text.



Pascal Deloche/Corbis Documentary/Getty Images

in a child's death or lifelong disability (Sandstrom, 2015, 2016).

- ▶ The U.S. Constitution never mentions God or the divine. In contrast, all 50 state constitutions use "God," "Creator," "divine," "Lord," "Supreme Being," and similar religious references at least once (Sandstrom, 2017).

**Fundamentalism**, a belief in the literal meaning of a sacred text (e.g., Christian Bible, Muslim Qur'an, Jewish Torah), is widespread in practically all countries except Europe. About 25 percent of Americans believe that the Bible should be taken literally because it's the word of God (Saad, 2017).

The U.S. Constitution established a separation of church and state. Over the years, that separation has become fuzzier. Some southern states have passed laws that allow public schools and government buildings to



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Brendan Smialowski/Getty Images

In 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a 6-foot-high monument containing the Ten Commandments outside the Texas state capitol was constitutional, even though it's on government property. In 2014, the court ruled that prayer in civic life, including legislative bodies, is not only constitutional, but can use explicit Christian or other religious language. Do such decisions illustrate greater secularization or religiosity?

**"WE ESTABLISH NO RELIGION IN THIS COUNTRY. WE COMMAND NO WORSHIP. WE MANDATE NO BELIEF, NOR WILL WE EVER. CHURCH AND STATE ARE AND MUST REMAIN SEPARATE."  
RONALD REAGAN, REPUBLICAN, 40TH U.S. PRESIDENT (1911–2004).**

display traditional Christmas scenes and symbols; many public elementary and high schools allow prayer before class, permit students to leave classes for religious instruction, support religious student clubs that faculty sponsor, and offer after-school evangelical programs. A growing number of public colleges and universities have approved building privately funded "religious dorms" (Bruinius, 2013; Campo-Flores, 2013; Lawrence, 2013).

One of the most divisive issues has been over teaching evolution in public school science classes. For scientists, it's "a fact" that human beings (and other creatures) evolved from earlier animals through a process known as "natural selection" over several million years (National Science Board, 2014). In contrast, *creationism*, based on a fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible, argues that God created humans in their present form about 10,000 years ago. Forty-two percent of Americans espouse creationism, and another 31 percent believe in evolution, but under God's guidance. Only 19 percent believe God has nothing to do with evolution (Newport, 2014).

Despite the constitutional separation of church and state, since 2006 local governments have passed 67 anti-evolution education bills that teach creationism rather than evolution in science classes. In early 2017, eight states proposed laws to protect teachers who present creationism as a scientific theory (Matzke, 2016; Embury-Dennis, 2017).

The government has blurred the distinction between church and state in other ways. In 2014, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that for-profit companies don't

have to pay for their employees' contraceptives—as the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) mandated—if doing so conflicted with the owners' religious beliefs. Betsy DeVos, the U.S. Secretary of Education, is an ardent supporter of using taxpayer-funded vouchers for private religious schools and has a lifelong dedication to "building God's kingdom through education" (Rizga, 2017).

The Johnson Amendment, enacted in 1954, prohibits tax-exempt institutions like churches from endorsing or opposing political candidates. Even though 90 percent of the nation's Evangelical board members and nearly 100 religious organizations have urged Congress to maintain the Johnson Amendment, President Trump has pledged to "get rid of and totally destroy" the law (Beckwith, 2017; Goodstein and Shear, 2017).

Another indicator that religion is booming in the United States and elsewhere is the prevalence of **civil religion** (sometimes called *secular religion*), integrating religious beliefs into secular life. The Pledge of Allegiance was written in 1892; the phrase "under God" was added in 1954. Other examples of civil religion include the phrase "In God We Trust" on U.S. currency, prayer in public schools, a legally mandated National Day of Prayer held on the first Thursday of May, and many local jurisdictions' closing public schools, public libraries, and government offices on Good Friday, a Christian holy day.

## 13-7 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION

You've seen that religion plays an important role in many people's lives. Why? How does society affect religion? And how does religion affect society? *Table 13.4* summarizes the major sociological perspectives on religion.

### 13-7a Functionalism: Religion Benefits Society

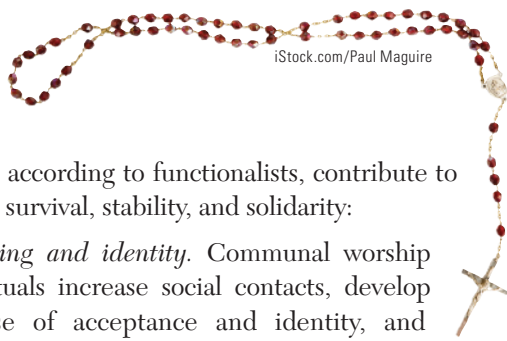
Durkheim (1961: 13, 43) described religion as a "permanent aspect of humanity" whose "essential task is to maintain, in a positive manner, the normal course of life." Religion can also be dysfunctional, but first let's consider its benefits.

### RELIGION IS A SOCIAL GLUE

Religion fulfills a number of important functions at individual, community, and societal levels. All of the

**civil religion** (sometimes called *secular religion*) integrating religious beliefs into secular life.





following, according to functionalists, contribute to a society's survival, stability, and solidarity:

- ▶ **Belonging and identity.** Communal worship and rituals increase social contacts, develop a sense of acceptance and identity, and reinforce people's feeling of belonging to a group. During Christmas, 86 percent of Americans, including "nones," attend holiday activities with family or friends (Cooperman et al., 2013).
- ▶ **Purpose and emotional comfort.** Religion provides meaning in life and offers hope for the future. Religiosity is highest among the world's poorest countries because religion helps people cope with daily struggles to survive (Crabtree, 2010; WIN-Gallup International, 2013).
- ▶ **Well-being.** Very religious Americans report being healthier and experiencing less depression and worry than those who aren't religious (Newport et al., 2012; Newport and Himelfarb, 2013).
- ▶ **Social service.** Religious groups raise millions of dollars for the victims of natural disasters, distribute food and clothing, find shelter for displaced families, and help the poor and sick.
- ▶ **Social control.** Because many religious people fear punishment in the afterlife, they try to follow societal rules. Doing so suppresses deviant and

antisocial behavior and promotes societal cohesion (Durkheim, 1961; Shariff and Aknin, 2014).

## RELIGION PROMOTES SOCIAL CHANGE

Religion can also spearhead social change. Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948), a spiritual leader in India, worked for his country's independence from Great Britain through nonviolence and peaceful negotiations. In the United States, religious leaders, especially the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., were at the forefront of the civil rights movement during the late 1960s.

In 2011, after decades of debate, the Presbyterian Church, one of the nation's largest Protestant denominations, approved ordaining people with same-sex partners as ministers, elders, and deacons. Numerous Lutheran churches have also welcomed gay pastors. In 2014, and despite many of its congregations' threats of leaving, the Presbyterian Church voted to allow same-sex marriages. Other religious groups (e.g., United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, Quakers, Reform and Conservative Judaism) have followed (Goodstein, 2014). Pope Francis created a tribunal to prosecute bishops who protect priests suspected of sexual child abuse. He has made it faster, easier, and cheaper for Roman Catholics to obtain marriage annulments and insists that priests welcome (rather than reject) divorced Catholics and their children.

Max Weber (1920/1958) asserted that religion sparks economic development. His study of Calvinism, a Christian sect that arose in Europe during the sixteenth century, led to his coining the term *Protestant ethic*, a belief

that hard work, diligence, self-denial, frugality, and economic success were signs of God's favor, and that prosperity indicated divine blessing. According to Weber, the harder the early Calvinists worked and saved, the more likely they were to accumulate money, to become successful, and to drive the growth of capitalism.

Was Weber right about the relationship between the Protestant ethic and the rise of capitalism? The data are mixed. Some studies show that people are diligent not because of religious beliefs but simply because amassing savings provides resources when disaster strikes (as when droughts wipe out crops). On the other hand, a study of 59 industrialized and developing countries found that religious beliefs that encourage hard work and thrift spur economic growth (Cohen, 2002; Barro and McCleary, 2003).

**Table 13.4 Sociological Explanations of Religion**

Theoretical Perspective	Level of Analysis	Key Points
<b>Functionalist</b>	Macro	Religion benefits society by providing a sense of belonging, identity, meaning, emotional comfort, and social control over deviant behavior.
<b>Conflict</b>	Macro	Religion promotes and legitimates social inequality, condones strife and violence between groups, and justifies oppression of poor people.
<b>Feminist</b>	Macro and micro	Religion subordinates women, excludes them from decision-making positions, and legitimizes patriarchal control of society.
<b>Symbolic Interactionist</b>	Micro	Religion provides meaning and sustenance in everyday life through symbols, rituals, and beliefs, and binds people together in a physical and spiritual community.



John Gress/REUTERS

Megachurches are Christian congregations that have a regular weekly attendance of more than 2,000 and tend to be evangelical. They represent only 0.5 percent of all U.S. churches, but their number has almost tripled (to more than 1,600) since 2000 (Bird and Thumma, 2011). From a functionalist perspective, why do you think megachurches are so popular?

## IS RELIGION DYSFUNCTIONAL?

Functionalists emphasize its benefits, but also recognize that religion can be dysfunctional when it harms individuals, communities, and societies. Religious intolerance can spark conflict between groups (e.g., vandalizing churches, mosques, and synagogues) and attacks on religious minorities. The United States has a long history, beginning with the Pilgrims in 1620, of people discriminating against other religious groups even though they themselves sought religious freedom (Davis, 2010).

The Roman Catholic Church and the Vatican protected predator priests for at least five decades (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2014). Overall, religion meets important psychological needs, but strong group identity may breed narrowmindedness, ethnocentrism, and bigotry toward nonmembers.

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

One weakness is that functionalists, by emphasizing religion's benefits, imply that religion is indispensable to leading a good life. People who aren't religious do many good things for society, and some religious people commit heinous acts. Primarily because of priests' sexual abuse of young children, Americans' rating of the clergy's honesty and ethics fell from 67 percent in the mid-1980s to 47 percent in 2013 (Swift, 2013).

A second limitation is functionalists' exagerrating religion's positive effect on physical and emotional

health. Jews, who are one of the least religious U.S. groups, and "nones," including atheists, report higher well-being rates than do religious groups (Newport et al., 2012; Leurient et al., 2014).

A third, and major, criticism is that functionalists gloss over numerous dysfunctional aspects of religion that generate wars, terrorism, and genocide. Conflict theory addresses these issues.

## 13-7b Conflict Theory: Religion Promotes Social Inequality

From a conflict perspective, religion promotes and reinforces social inequality. Throughout history and currently, religion has created discord and divisiveness within groups, between groups, and in the larger society.

## "THE OPIUM OF THE PEOPLE"

Much conflict theory reflects the work of Karl Marx (1845/1972), who described religion as "the sigh of the oppressed creature" and "the opium of the people" because it encouraged passivity and acceptance of social and economic inequality. Marx viewed religion as a form of **false consciousness**, an acceptance of a system of beliefs that prevents people from protesting oppression. Contemporary conflict theorists don't view religion as an opiate, but they agree with Marx that religion often justifies violence and promotes social inequality.

## RELIGION JUSTIFIES INTOLERANCE AND VIOLENCE

For thousands of years, many governments and religious leaders have condoned or perpetrated widespread violence in the name of religion. Religion promotes conflict when religious groups differentiate between "we" and "they" ("We're right and they're wrong," "Our God is 'the real God'"). Such self-righteousness condones aggression, oppression, and brutality within and across societies. For example:

- The "eternal war" between Sunnis and Shiites, two major Islamic sects, dates back more than 1,300 years,

**false consciousness** an acceptance of a system of beliefs that prevents people from protesting oppression.

and there are long-standing conflicts and wars between Muslims and Jews in Israel and Palestine (Crowley, 2014; “Religion: The New Strife,” 2016).

- ▶ In several of Asia’s Buddhist-majority nations, monks have incited bigotry and violence—mostly against Muslims (Beech, 2013).
- ▶ In 2014 alone, religion-related terrorism and wars displaced almost 34 million people from their homes (Henne and Kishi, 2016).
- ▶ Among 198 countries, 53 percent experienced widespread government harassment of religious groups in 2015, up from 43 percent in 2014 (“Global Restrictions...,” 2017).

## RELIGION PROMOTES SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Conflict theorists see religion as a tool dominant groups use to control society, protect their own interests, and derail social change. Roman Catholic bishops, for example, have opposed comprehensive health care because it might fund abortions, have publicly chastised pro-choice Catholic politicians, and have campaigned against same-sex marriage—all of which fuel social inequality and conflict (Doyle, 2011).

Private evangelical schools, colleges, and universities receive massive state and federal financial aid that diverts tax revenues from public schools and colleges. Many of the schools’ textbooks describe homosexuals and abortion rights supporters as “evil,” and are hostile toward other religions, including nonevangelical Protestants, Jews, and Catholics (Berkowitz, 2011; Tabachnick, 2011).

In some southern states, conservatives maintain that “religious freedom” should allow businesses to refuse services to gay and transgender people (Bruinius, 2016). Doing so denies people basic civil liberties, seals LGBTs off from society, and creates resentment.

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Functionalists may overemphasize consensus and harmony, but conflict theorists, according to some critics, often ignore religion’s role in challenging exclusionary policies. For example, more than 800 churches and synagogues, while also fighting deportation battles in courts, have mobilized to provide sanctuary for law-abiding undocumented immigrants and their U.S.-born children (Rodgers, 2017).

A second criticism is that conflict theorists attach too much credence to Marx’s concept of false consciousness.



David Sipress/The New Yorker Collection/The Cartoon Bank

Instead of passively submitting to religious oppression, many people revolt, complain, or resist. Many have sued employers, sometimes successfully, who denied requests to not work on holy days, and whose secular dress codes don’t allow head scarves, turbans, or long, shaggy beards (Trottman, 2013). Whether religious discrimination is real or imagined, many Americans protest, demonstrate, and seek legal remedies.

## 13-7c Feminist Theories: Religion Subordinates and Excludes Women

Feminist scholars agree with conflict theorists that religion can foster violence and inequality. They go further, however, by criticizing organized religions as sexist, patriarchal, and shutting women out of leadership positions.

## SEXISM, PATRIARCHY, AND SUBORDINATION

“Religion is probably the most important force in continuing the oppression of women worldwide,” a feminist blogger writes, and “religiosity and sexism go hand in hand” (Marcotte, 2014). From a feminist perspective, most religions are patriarchal: They emphasize men’s experiences and a male point of view and see women as subordinate to men. According to the apostle Paul, “Wives should submit to their husbands in everything” (*Ephesians* 5: 24). The idea that Eve was created out of Adam’s rib is often used to justify men’s domination of women. Many religious teachings and institutions continue to propagate such beliefs (see Paludi and Ellens, 2016).

In Orthodox Judaism, a man’s daily prayers include this line: “Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, King of



the Universe, that I was not born a woman.” The Qur’an tells Muslims that men are in charge of women and that women should obey men. Almost all contemporary religions worship a male deity, and none of the major world religions treat women and men equally (Gross, 1996; Jeffreys, 2011).

Feminist scholars offer alternatives to patriarchal interpretations of Scripture. Some contend that Jesus was a feminist. For example, he defended women against men, encouraged women’s intellectual pursuits when it wasn’t the norm, and there are numerous passages in the Bible about women spreading Jesus’ teachings (Gross, 1996; Ferguson, 2014).

Muslim feminists, similarly, note that men have interpreted sacred Islamic texts to ensure male dominance and control. Women were among some of Muhammad’s earliest converts, and the Qur’an has numerous passages that establish women’s equal rights in inheritance and family roles (Menissi, 1991, 1996). Thus, women’s subordination in many Islamic societies isn’t due to religious tenets but to men’s interpretations of Scripture to maintain their power and privilege (Smith, 1994).

In the Middle East and North Africa, 35 percent of the countries have religious police who, among other things, enforce strict segregation of the sexes and punish women who are perceived as behaving or dressing improperly (Theodorou and Henne, 2014). Thus, it’s women’s fault if men have lustful thoughts or assault women.

## EXCLUSION OF WOMEN FROM LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

In 2014, women earned 33 percent of theology degrees, a dramatic increase from only 2 percent in 1970. Still, women make up only 21 percent of the nation’s clergy, lead only 11 percent of congregations, and earn 27 percent less than their male counterparts (Chaves and Eagle, 2015; Emmert, 2015; Snyder et al., 2016).

Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Judaism, and the Mormon Church don’t allow women to be ordained because “women should serve and not lead.” U.S. Catholic women contribute \$6 billion a year during Sunday Masses, but “the presence of women anywhere within the institutional power structure is virtually nil” (Miller, 2010: 39; Gibson, 2012). Mormon women can be missionaries and provide “welfare and compassionate service,” but are excluded from the priesthood and the all-male central leadership that governs the church (Kantor and Goodstein, 2014).

Some Protestant denominations justify women’s exclusion from leadership positions based on biblical passages such as “I permit no woman to teach or have authority over men; she is to keep silent” (1 Timothy 2: 11–12). Many Protestant groups—including Southern Baptists and evangelical born-again Christians—interpret this and similar passages to mean that women should never, under any circumstances, instruct men, within or outside of religious institutions. Even in liberal Protestant congregations, female clergy tend to be



Jim Urquhart/REUTERS



Emmanuel Dunand/Getty Images

In 2014, the Mormon Church excommunicated Kate Kelly (left), leader of the Ordain Women group. According to some U.S. Catholic bishops, the ideas of Sister Simone Campbell (right), and other nuns who advocate ordaining women, border on heresy. Both women are human rights lawyers.

relegated to specialized ministries with responsibilities for music, youth, or Bible studies (Banerjee, 2006; Richie, 2013).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Feminist perspectives on religion are limited in several ways. First, some feminist Muslim scholars have criticized Western feminists for misreading Islamic and other sacred scriptures, and reducing practically all discussions of gender to the *hijab* (a veil or scarf that Muslim women wear) instead of focusing on justice for both women and men in marriage, employment, and other areas (Fakhraie, 2009; Daneshpour, 2015).

Second, religious women aren't as oppressed as many feminist scholars claim. For instance, an increasing number of Muslim women exercise authority within Islamic institutions as preachers and interpreters of religious text. Even in the most conservative religions, women don't blindly submit to religious dogma. Instead, they challenge existing doctrines, stop volunteering at church, don't attend weekly services, and establish their own parishes (Padgett, 2010; Miller, 2012).

### 13-7d Symbolic Interaction: Religion Is Socially Constructed

For symbolic interactionists, religion isn't innate but socially constructed. As a result, people can learn and interpret the same religion differently across cultures and over time. Symbols, rituals, and beliefs are three of the most common means of learning and internalizing religion.

## SYMBOLS

A *symbol* is anything that stands for or represents something else to which people attach meaning (see Chapter 3). Many religious symbols are objects (a cross, a steeple, a Bible), but also include behaviors (kneeling or bowing one's head), words ("Holy Father," "Allah," "the Prophet"), and physical appearance (e.g., wearing head scarves, skull caps, turbans, clerical collars).

Religious symbols, like all symbols, are shorthand communication tools. Some interactionists define a religion as "a system of symbols" because it's a community that's unified by its symbols (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Geertz, 1966). Religious symbols can also be divisive (e.g., a Ten Commandments monument on government property that alienates non-Christians and nonbelievers).



Marcel Mettelsteden/dpa/picture-alliance/Newscom

## RITUALS

A *ritual* (sometimes called a *rite*) is a formal and repeated behavior that unites people (see Chapter 3). Religious rituals, like secular ones, strengthen a participant's self-identity (Reiss, 2004). Religious rites of passage—*bat mitzvah* for girls and *bar mitzvah* for boys in the Jewish community, and first communion and confirmation for Catholic children—reinforce the individual's sense of belonging to a particular religious group. A group's rituals symbolize its spiritual beliefs and include a wide range of practices—praying, chanting, fasting, singing, dancing, and offering sacrifices.

All religions have rituals that mark significant life events like birth and marriage (see Chapters 3, 5, and 12). Death rituals are probably the most elaborate and sacred worldwide. They vary across religious groups and societies, but all of them comfort the living and show respect for the dead.

## BELIEFS

Rituals and symbols come from *beliefs*, convictions about what people think is true. Religious beliefs can be passive (believing in God but never attending services) or active (participating in rituals and ceremonies). Beliefs bind people together into a spiritual community.

One of the strongest beliefs worldwide is that prayer is important. Islam requires prayer five times a day. In the United States, 55 percent of U.S. adults say that they pray every day, and for a variety of reasons, including feeling close to God, as well as requesting better health, more money, and cures for sick pets. Even 20 percent of the "nones" pray every day (Wicker, 2009; Lipka, 2016). Prayer offers psychological and spiritual benefits

such as comfort and a sense of unity among those who pray together, but depending on God can also diminish people's motivation to actively shape their own lives (Schieman, 2010).

### CRITICAL EVALUATION

A common criticism is that interactionists' focus on micro-level behavior ignores the ways that religion promotes social inequality at the macro level. Conflict theorists and feminist scholars, especially, maintain that

people often use religion to justify violence and women's subordination.

Some critics also wonder if interactionists paint too rosy a picture of religion even on a micro level because people's beliefs can wreak considerable havoc. The Islamic zealots who targeted the World Trade Center on 9/11 didn't see themselves as "crazed terrorists" but as "true believers": They were carrying out "God's will" by imposing their religious beliefs on others or destroying their "religious enemies" (Juergensmeyer, 2003).

## STUDY TOOLS 13

### READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you've read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.





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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 14-1 Describe social epidemiology and explain why there are global health gaps.
- 14-2 Explain how and why environmental, demographic, and lifestyle factors affect U.S. health and illness. Illustrate your explanation with specific examples.
- 14-3 Compare U.S. with other countries' health care systems in terms of access, costs, and outcomes.
- 14-4 Compare and evaluate the theoretical explanations of health and medicine.

After finishing  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 301** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**

Most of us would probably agree with American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, who wrote, in 1860, “Health is the first wealth.” **Health** is the state of physical, mental, and social well-being. We can usually determine physical health by using objective measures like weight and blood pressure. Mental and social well-being are more difficult to gauge because they rely on subjective definitions that change over time.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The government should be responsible for making sure that all Americans have health care.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree						strongly disagree

## 14-1 GLOBAL HEALTH AND ILLNESS

How does health differ around the world? And why? Social epidemiology addresses both questions.

### 14-1a Social Epidemiology

All people experience *disease*, a disorder that impairs a person’s normal physical and/or mental condition. **Social epidemiology** examines how societal factors affect the distribution of disease within a population. Why, for example, do people live much longer in some countries than in others?

In answering this and other questions, epidemiologists look at two factors. One is *incidence*, the number of new cases of a health problem that occur in a given population during a given time period (e.g., in 2015, there were 1.5 million new diabetes cases among Americans aged 18 and older). The other measure is *prevalence*, the total number of cases (extent) of an illness or health problem within a population or at a particular point in time (e.g., in 2015, 10 percent of the U.S. population had diabetes) (*National Diabetes Statistics Report*, 2017). Epidemiological studies show large health differences across countries.

### 14-1b Global Health Disparities

The World Bank classifies countries into four broad groups based on gross national income (GNI) per capita. *Figure 14.1* shows the number and location of these

countries and compares them on life expectancy, infant mortality, and per capita health expenditures. These three variables are among the most frequently used to measure health status. They indicate a population’s living standards, people’s average socioeconomic status, and the quality and financial resources that a country devotes to **health care**, the prevention, treatment, and management of illness.

The 80 high-income countries make up only 13 percent of the world’s population, but have the greatest access to clean water, sanitation, food, and health services. In contrast, more than a third of the world’s population lacks basic sanitation, almost half are at risk of dying of malaria, and 44 percent of people in low- and lower-middle-income countries can’t afford medicine to treat infections and diseases (World Health Organization, 2015).

High income populations live longer, have low infant mortality rates, and spend more on health (*Figure 14.1*), but experience “diseases of wealth” (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, various cancers). Compared with 16 other high-income countries, the United States has a large and growing “health disadvantage” and ranks last or near-last in nine key health areas including drug-related deaths, chronic lung and heart disease, obesity, and the prevalence of HIV and AIDS (Woolf and Aron, 2013).

## 14-2 HEALTH AND ILLNESS IN THE UNITED STATES

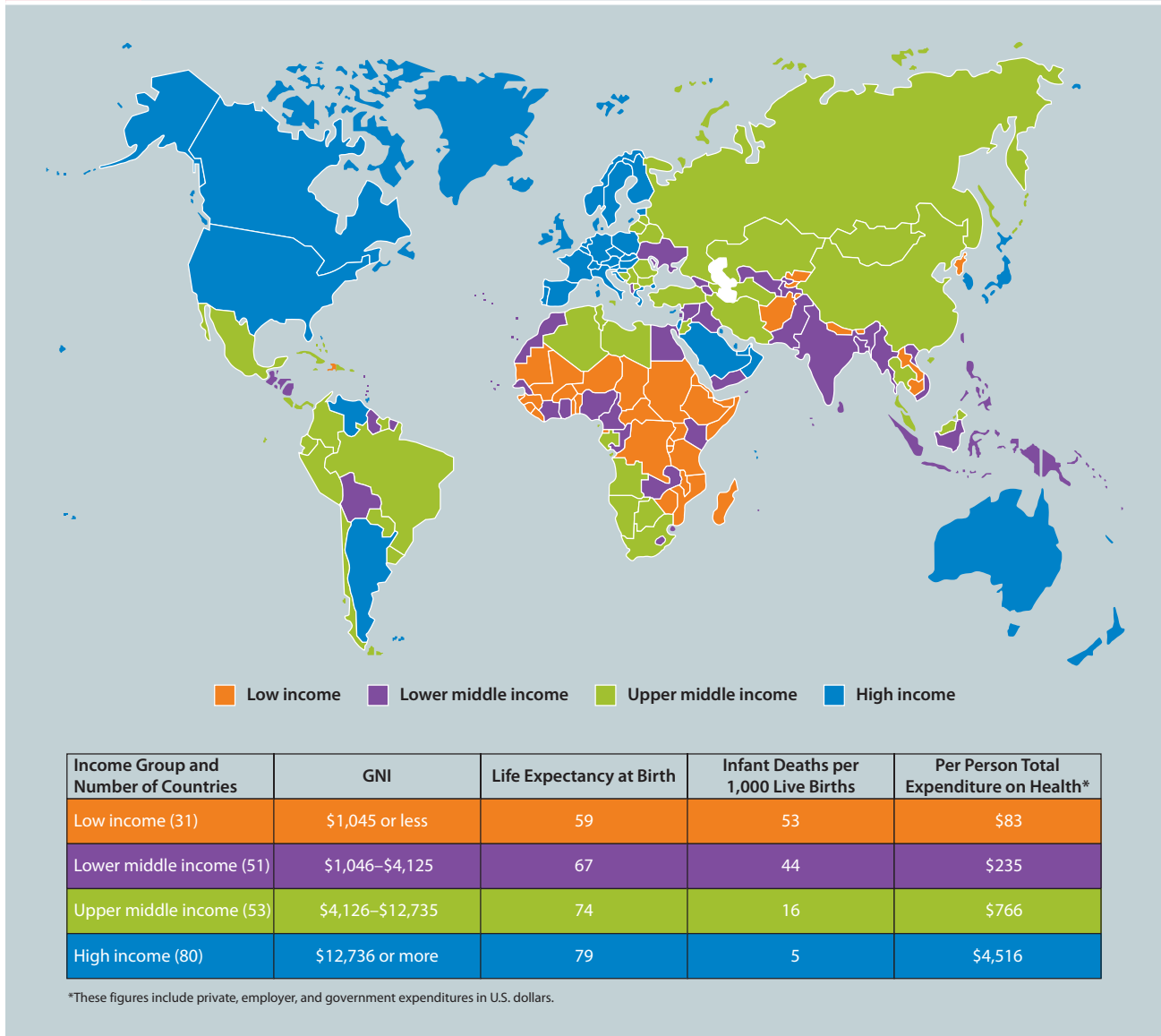
Why do Americans have a health disadvantage, including high disability rates? Compared with other high-income nations, non-medical social determinants contribute to large health disparities in the United States.

**health** the state of physical, mental, and social well-being.

**social epidemiology** examines how societal factors affect the distribution of disease within a population.

**health care** the prevention, management, and treatment of illness.

**Figure 14.1** Worldwide Health Gaps



Sources: Based on World Bank, 2015; World Health Organization, 2015, Tables 1 and 7.

## 14-2a Understanding Disability

A **disability** is any physical or mental impairment, temporary or permanent, that limits a person's ability to perform a basic life activity. These activities include walking; doing errands alone; bathing, dressing, or feeding oneself; and working.

Almost a third of Americans aged 18 and over have a disability. Age is a major predictor of disability, affecting 58 percent of adults age 65 and older compared with 25 percent of those ages 18 to 64. Disability also increases

**disability** any physical or mental impairment that limits a person's ability to perform a basic life activity.

with age—from 26 percent for people aged 65 to 74 to 73 percent for those age 85 and older. Besides age, disability rates are higher for women (36 percent) than men (27 percent), for people living in poverty (41 percent versus 23 percent who aren't poor), and are highest among American Indians (41 percent) (National Center for Health Statistics, 2017).

The number of Americans experiencing one or more disabilities rose from 61 million in 1997 to almost 77 million in 2015 (National Center for Health Statistics, 2017). Why the increase? First, as you'll see shortly, behavior previously considered normal has been medicalized. Second, medical advances help many people survive diseases, car accidents, and wars, but they may





Advances in battlefield medicine and body armor mean that many soldiers are surviving injuries, but they have shattered bones, brain damage, and amputated limbs, and may suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other mental health problems. Among post-9/11 veterans, 34 percent have a service-connected disability (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017).

have lifelong health problems. Third, as the proportion of the population age 65 and older increases, so does the proportion living with disabilities.

### 14-2b Social Determinants of Health and Illness

No single variable explains well-being. About 65 percent of cancers are the result of “bad luck” because stem cells make mistakes copying healthy DNA. This means that 35 percent of cancers are preventable (Tomasetti and Vogelstein, 2015). Whether it’s cancer or other diseases, environmental, demographic, and lifestyle factors—all of which are interrelated—have a significant impact on health and illness.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Many environmental hazards affect our bodies. For example:

- ▶ There’s a strong association between early-life exposure to air pollution and autism, schizophrenia, and learning disabilities (Roberts et al., 2013; Allen et al., 2014).
- ▶ Thousands of children in Flint, Michigan—a predominantly poor, black city—are expected to suffer irreversible developmental problems because of lead contamination in the water supply (Milman and Glenza, 2016).
- ▶ Many toxic chemicals in food and everyday products (e.g., detergents, shampoos, shaving products, and makeup) have been linked to asthma, some types of cancer, birth defects, and children’s impaired brain development (Blake, 2014; Grandjean and Landrigan, 2014; Attina et al., 2016).
- ▶ Norovirus—a very contagious virus—is the leading cause of disease outbreaks from contaminated food. About 21 million Americans get sick from norovirus each year, 71,000 are hospitalized, and about 800 die. Outbreaks on cruise ships account for only

1 percent of all norovirus; 70 percent of cases are due to food workers who are infected, don’t wash their hands, or go to work when sick (Hall et al., 2014).

Access to health care can prolong life, but an estimated 250,000 Americans die each year because of preventable medical errors (e.g., doctors operating on the wrong patient or body part, patient infections). Medication errors—misdiagnosing an illness, prescribing the wrong drugs, or giving patients drugs that interact dangerously—injure about 1.3 million Americans and kill about 7,000 every year. Moreover, thousands of patients a year leave operating rooms with surgical sponges in their bodies that cause infections, lifetime digestive problems, removal of intestines, and even death (Eisler, 2013; Laliberte, 2016; Makary and Daniel, 2016).

A growing problem is antibiotic resistance, which kills an estimated 23,000 Americans each year. Bacteria have become more resistant because of the overuse of antibiotics: People take them for illnesses for which antibiotics aren’t effective, and farmers feed them to animals to promote growth. No new antibiotics have been discovered since 1987, largely because pharmaceutical companies reap much higher profits by developing very expensive and specialized medicines for small populations with chronic conditions, including multiple sclerosis, cancer, HIV, and hepatitis C (“The Drugs Don’t Work,” 2014: 54; Tozzi, 2014).

#### DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Religion, family size, marital status, urban-rural residence, and other variables affect health. Four of the most important demographic factors are age, gender, social class, and race and ethnicity.

**Age.** Not surprisingly, age is the single best predictor of illness and death. Death rates drop sharply shortly after birth, begin to rise at about age 45, and escalate, particularly after age 78.

From birth through elementary school, children have health problems over which they have no control.

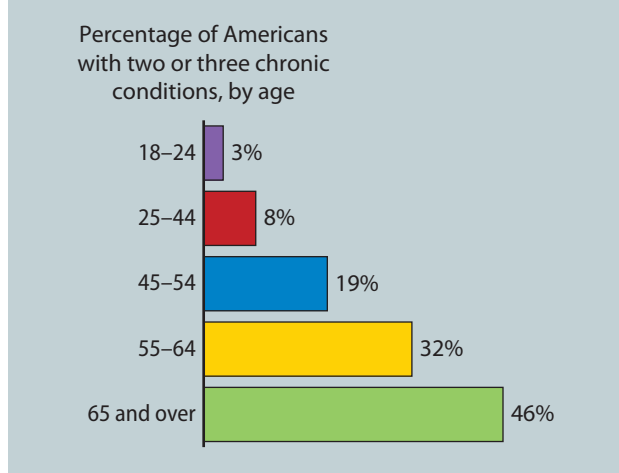
Nearly 1 in 100 U.S. babies are born with *fetal alcohol spectrum disorders*, a range of permanent birth defects caused by a mother drinking alcohol during pregnancy. The disorders include intellectual infirmities, speech and language delays, poor social skills, mental retardation, and physical abnormalities like congenital heart defects (National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, 2012; Weinhold, 2012).

Many adolescents have health problems because of their own choices, like smoking, abusing alcohol and other substances, and texting while driving. Such risky behavior may be due to peer pressure, to the ongoing development of some parts of the teen brain, and to increasing independence as adolescents break away from parental supervision (see Chapter 4).

Health problems emerge and increase during one's late thirties because of genes, lifestyle choices (which we'll address shortly), and because physical decline is normal and inevitable as we age. No matter how well tuned we keep our bodies, the parts start wearing down: Reflexes slow, hearing and eyesight dim, and stamina and muscle strength decrease.

After age 65, chronic rather than acute diseases comprise the majority of health problems, including disability. **Chronic diseases** (e.g., asthma and high blood pressure) are long-term or lifelong illnesses that develop gradually or are present from birth. In contrast, **acute diseases** (e.g., chicken pox) are illnesses that strike suddenly and often disappear rapidly but can cause incapacitation and sometimes death. Chronic diseases increase as people age (Figure 14.2). *Dementia*, a loss of mental abilities, most commonly occurs during one's 70s. The most debilitating form of dementia is **Alzheimer's disease**, a progressive, degenerative disorder that attacks the brain and impairs memory, thinking, and behavior.

**Figure 14.2** Chronic Illness Increases with Age



Source: Based on National Center for Health Statistics, 2017, Table 9.

**Gender.** The gender gap in life expectancy has decreased since 1975, but women, on average, still live longer than men (see Chapter 12). Men of all racial-ethnic groups are two to three times more likely than women to die in motor vehicle crashes, to be victims of homicide, to smoke and drink alcohol, to abuse drugs, and to work in dangerous occupations (e.g., construction, law enforcement). Women are also more likely than men to have a regular physician, to see a doctor when something's wrong, and to keep medical appointments (Levine, 2014; National Center for Health Statistics, 2017).

Depression is the single most common mental health problem among adolescents, begins at about

**chronic diseases** long-term or lifelong illnesses that develop gradually or are present from birth.

**acute diseases** illnesses that strike suddenly and often disappear rapidly.

**Alzheimer's disease** a progressive, degenerative disorder that attacks the brain and impairs memory, thinking, and behavior.



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Three reasons why women live longer than men.

age 12, and affects 30 percent of U.S. high school students. Girls (20 percent) are more likely than boys (9 percent) to experience depression, but the reasons are similar: substance abuse, bullying (either as a victim or perpetrator), sexual or physical abuse, parental divorce, and a family history of mental disorders. In adulthood, and across all ages, women are more likely than men to be taking antidepressant medications (Murphey et al., 2013; Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2017).

Depression may lead to suicide. Among high school students, females are twice as likely as males to attempt suicide. Across all ages, however, males are four times more likely than females to actually kill themselves, and the highest rates are among white men aged 75 and older (Curtin et al., 2016).

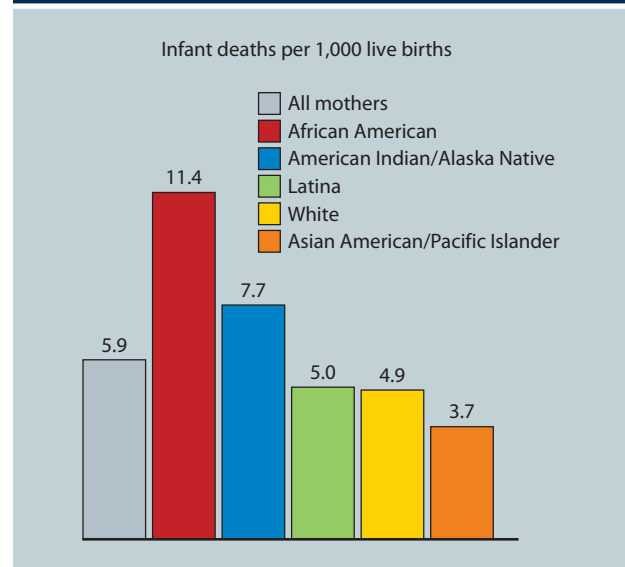
**Social Class.** Social class has a strong effect on health. The wealthiest Americans live 10 to 15 years longer than the poorest. As early as age 45, the lower the family income, the greater the likelihood that adults will experience two or more chronic diseases. Living in poor neighborhoods increases the likelihood of stress (which affects diet, smoking, and alcohol/drug usage), a sedentary lifestyle because of limited recreational facilities, and less access to health care (Beckles and Truman, 2013; Hummer and Hernandez, 2013; Dickman and Woolhandler, 2017).

Policymakers have tried to eliminate *food deserts*, geographic areas where access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food is limited or nonexistent because grocery stores are too far away. Social class disparities persist even when consumers have access to the same food, however. Supermarkets, compared with convenience stores, offer more healthy foods. Because low-income workers might make long commutes or have several jobs to support their families, they are more likely to choose convenience than to cook healthy meals from scratch (“Dietary Inequality,” 2016; Zagorsky and Smith, 2017).

People in lower social classes are also more likely to have dangerous jobs. In 2015, construction and electrical workers, truck drivers, and miners accounted for more than half of the nearly 5,000 job-related deaths. Almost 3 million experienced workplace injuries or illnesses caused, among other things, by falls, overexertion, and accidents using equipment (BLS News Release, 2016; “Employer-Reported...,” 2016).

**Race and Ethnicity.** A good measure of a population’s health is its *infant mortality rate*, the number of babies under age 1 who die per 1,000 live births in a given year. Infants born to black women are more than

**Figure 14.3** U.S. Infant Mortality Rates by Mother’s Race and Ethnicity, 2015



Source: Based on National Center for Health Statistics, 2017, Table 11 and Figure 7.

twice as likely to die before age 1 as those born to white, Asian, and Hispanic women (Figure 14.3). The higher black infant mortality rate may be due to a combination of factors: More babies born before 24 weeks who don’t survive, less access to quality health care, and black mothers’ greater likelihood of having some conditions (high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity) that are associated with negative birth outcomes (Chen et al., 2014; MacDorman et al., 2014).

Even when infants survive and thrive, race and ethnicity affect lifespan. You saw in Chapter 12 that blacks have lower life expectancy rates than Asians, Latinos, and whites. The death rate for blacks has declined about 25 percent since 1999. Compared with whites, however, African Americans ages 18 to 49 are twice as likely to die from heart disease and, between ages 35 to 64, are 50 percent more likely to have high blood pressure and diabetes (“African American Health,” 2017).

Blacks are twice as likely as whites to experience the death of two or more family members by age 30, and 90 percent more likely to experience four or more deaths by age 65 (Umberson et al., 2017). Poverty, unemployment, and family members’ deaths contribute to poor health and lower life expectancy.

Despite generally low education and income levels, Latinos have higher life expectancy rates than blacks or whites. One reason may be that only the healthiest individuals migrate to the United States. Another may be that, compared with other racial and ethnic groups,



Latinos are the least likely to engage in harmful behavior or to die from drug abuse. The longer Latinos live in the United States, however, the higher their rates of heart disease, high blood pressure, some types of cancer, and diabetes. Acculturation may result in improved access to health care, but also to adopting harmful behaviors (e.g., smoking, excessive alcohol consumption), less physical activity, and unhealthy diets (Dominguez et al., 2015; Riosmena et al., 2015).

## LIFESTYLE FACTORS

Lifestyle choices can improve or impair our health. The top three preventable lifestyle health hazards, in order of priority, are smoking, obesity, and substance abuse. Sexually transmitted diseases also cause infections and illness.

**Smoking.** Worldwide and in the United States, tobacco use, primarily cigarette smoking, is the leading cause of preventable disease, disability, and death. U.S. smoking has declined, is higher among men than women, and decreases as education levels increase (*Figure 14.4*). Smoking rates among people living below the poverty line are nearly twice as high as among those above the poverty line (Jamal et al., 2016).

There are now more former than current smokers, but tobacco use is responsible for about 1 in 5 deaths annually, and, on average, smokers die about 10 years earlier than nonsmokers. Because tobacco harms nearly every human organ, smoking is linked to cancer, heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, macular degeneration, erectile dysfunction, lung diseases (including emphysema and bronchitis), and birth defects (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014).



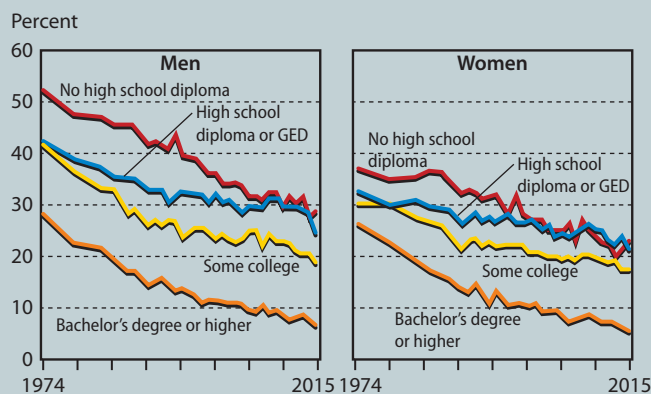
Diego Cervo/Shutterstock.com

From 2013 to 2016, the number of middle and high school students using electronic cigarettes almost tripled, rising from 780,000 to 2.2 million students (Jamal et al., 2017). To attract adolescents, the e-cigarette industry uses celebrities, cartoon characters, and “kid-friendly” flavors like chocolate, gummy bears, and mint candy (Zimmerman, 2014).

Prevention is difficult because the tobacco industry spends almost \$10 billion a year to market its products; the number of smoking scenes among the top-grossing children’s movies rose from 564 in 2010 to 809 in 2016, a 43 percent increase; and 69 percent of middle and high school students are exposed to electronic cigarette ads in retail stores, on the Internet, in magazines or newspapers, on TV, or in the movies (Singh et al., 2016; Tynan et al., 2017). During 2016, states collected almost \$26 billion from tobacco taxes and legal settlements, but spent less than 2 percent of the money on tobacco control programs (Jamal et al., 2016).

Public health experts are debating whether electronic cigarettes, or e-cigarettes, are safer than tobacco cigarettes. E-cigarettes deliver nicotine in a liquid smoke-free vapor (often called “vaping”), but don’t contain the same carcinogens and other toxic chemicals as regular cigarettes. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, because e-cigarettes contain nicotine, they can harm the developing adolescent brain and lead to addiction. Among adolescents who have never smoked, for example, those who try e-cigarettes are likely to start smoking conventional cigarettes within a year. Some researchers maintain, however, that it’s too soon to know if vaping leads to smoking traditional cigarettes, because both usages have been declining among middle and high school students (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016; Hines et al., 2017; Kozlowski and Warner, 2017).

**Figure 14.4** Cigarette Smoking Has Decreased, but Varies by Gender and Education Level



Note: The data are based on adults aged 25 years and over.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2017, Figure 10.

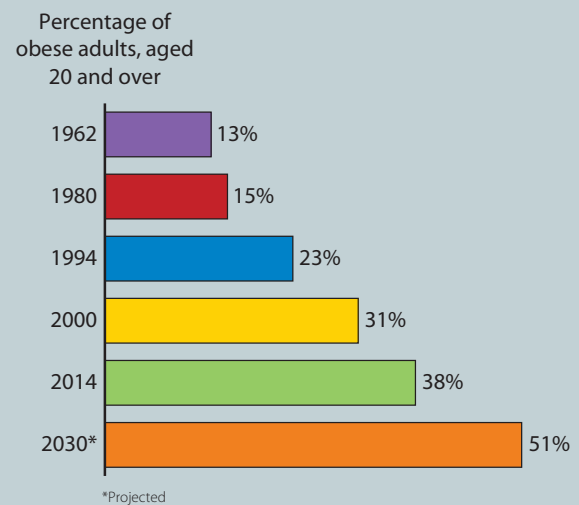
**Obesity.** Obesity is the second leading and preventable cause of disease, disability, and death. As you saw in Chapter 6, childhood and adult obesity has increased since the early 1970s. Preschoolers who are overweight or obese are 5 times more likely than normal-weight children to be overweight or obese as adults, increasing their risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, strokes, diabetes, osteoporosis, and several types of cancer. Nonetheless, almost 79 percent of parents of obese preschoolers describe their children as “about the right weight” (Cunningham et al., 2014; Duncan et al., 2015).

In 1990, not a single state had an obesity rate above 15 percent. Now *all* states have obesity rates above 20 percent and 22 states have obesity rates equal to or greater than 30 percent (“Obesity Prevalence Maps,” 2015). Some researchers predict that, at the current rate, 51 percent of American adults will be obese in 2030 (Figure 14.5), and 9 percent of that group will be severely obese (Finkelstein et al., 2012).

Our choices affect weight. Unhealthy eating habits start before age one, when parents introduce babies to French fries, soft drinks, potato chips, cookies, processed juice, and other “junk food.” By 23 months, toddlers may be consuming *the equivalent of 9.2 teaspoons of sugar a day* (Cha, 2016).

Adults are getting fatter because of poor eating habits, large food portions, being sedentary, and eating frequently at fast-food restaurants, but structural factors also affect obesity rates. Healthy food is less expensive

**Figure 14.5** U.S. Adults Keep Getting Fatter



Source: Based on Finkelstein et al., 2012, and National Center for Health Statistics, 2015, Table 64.

than during the 1950s, more widely available than ever before, and easy to prepare. However, a smaller share of income now buys many more calories, including sugar-sweetened beverages and prepared food, that are high in unhealthy carbohydrates or fat. Thus, since 1970, the average American’s consumption of calories has risen by about 20 percent, fueling an “obesity epidemic” (Sturm and An, 2014).

## How Much Sugar Are You Really Eating?

The American Heart Association recommends limiting our daily dose of added sugar to 24 grams (about 6 teaspoons) for women and 36 grams (about 9 teaspoons) for men.



Low-fat diets rarely reduce weight because nearly 60 percent of Americans' calories come from "ultra-processed" foods (e.g., soft drinks, pizza, frozen meals) that are high in added sugar (Steele et al., 2016). Products with added sugar include those with packaging statements like "made with whole grain," "excellent source of calcium," "fat-free," "good source of Vitamin D," or "100% juice." A small container of Greek yogurt can have three or more teaspoons of added sugar.

**Substance Abuse.** The nation's third leading lifestyle-related and preventable cause of death is **substance abuse**, a harmful overindulgence in or dependence on a drug or other chemical. Nearly 85,000 Americans die each year because of excessive drinking, and more than 4 million visit emergency rooms for alcohol-related problems ("Alcohol and Public Health," 2014).

Excessive alcohol use includes *binge drinking*, having 4 or more drinks on a single occasion for women or 5 or more drinks on a single occasion for men, generally within about 2 hours. *Heavy drinking* involves consuming 15 or more drinks per week for men, and 8 or more drinks for women. Some 25 percent of Americans are binge drinkers and 7 percent are heavy alcohol users (National Center for Health Statistics, 2017).

Excessive alcohol use results in myriad short- and long-term health risks that include injuries, violence, risky sexual behaviors, miscarriage and stillbirth, physical and mental birth defects, alcohol poisoning, unemployment, psychiatric problems, heart disease, several types of cancer, and liver disease. *Table 14.1* summarizes some of the consequences of excessive college drinking for students, their families, and the larger community.

*Illicit* (illegal) *drugs* include marijuana/hashish, cocaine and crack, heroin, hallucinogens (e.g., LSD, PCP), inhalants, and any prescription-type psychotherapeutic drug, including stimulants and sedatives, used nonmedically. More than 10 percent of Americans (about 34 million people) age 12 and older use illegal drugs (*Figure 14.6*). Illicit drug use is more common among men than women and among people aged 16 to 25, and least common among Asian Americans (National Center for Health Statistics, 2017).

Some states have legalized marijuana, but it's the most commonly used illicit drug (*Figure 14.6*). In the late 1990s, doctors started prescribing more and stronger opioids to treat arthritis, back problems, diabetes, and other chronic pain.

*Opioids* include illegal drugs (e.g.,

**Table 14.1** Some Consequences of Abusive College Drinking

Researchers estimate that, each year, among college students aged 18 to 24...

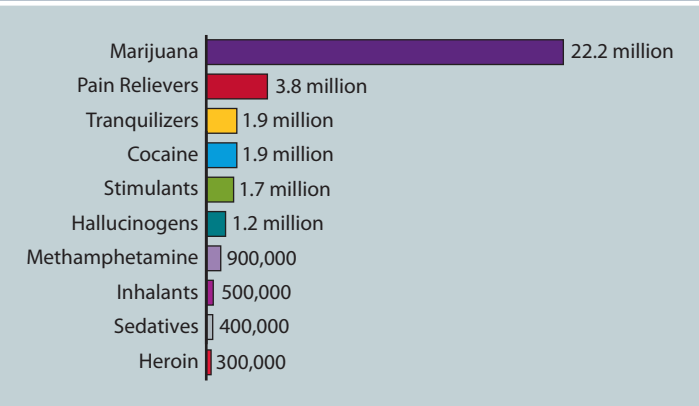
1,825	Die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor vehicle crashes
599,000	Are unintentionally injured while drunk
696,000	Are assaulted by another student who's been drinking
97,000	Are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape
400,000	Have unprotected sex while intoxicated, and more than 100,000 were too drunk to remember if they consented to having sex
3.4 million	Drive while drunk
25%	Have academic problems because of their drinking, including missing classes, doing poorly on exams or papers, earning lower grades overall, and flunking out of college

Sources: Based on National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2013, 2014.

heroin), synthetic drugs (e.g., fentanyl), and legally prescribed pain relievers (e.g., oxycodone, morphine). As opioid-driven drug overdose deaths surged (*Figure 14.7*), health practitioners blamed opioids for "our nation's deadliest drug epidemic ever." According to a national drug commission, the death toll for drug overdoses is "equal to Sept. 11 every three weeks" (Goodnough, 2017: A14).

A third of Americans who have taken prescription opioids admit being addicted, but defend the drug for dramatically relieving pain and allowing them to walk, work, and pursue other activities. Some manufacturers, however, can't find enough workers—even for jobs that pay \$25 an

**Figure 14.6** Illicit Drug Use Among Americans Aged 12 and Older, 2015

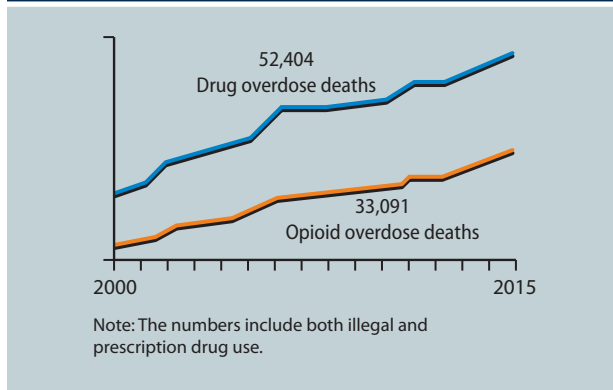


Source: Based on Center for Behavioral Statistics and Quality, 2016, Figure 1.

**substance abuse** a harmful overindulgence in or dependence on a drug or other chemical.



**Figure 14.7 The Number of U.S. Drug Overdoses Has Quadrupled Since 2000**



Source: Based on material from National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2017.

hour and offer full benefits—because 25 to 50 percent of the applicants fail drug tests (Clement and Bernstein, 2016; Schwartz, 2017).

**Sexually Transmitted Diseases.** There are nearly 20 million new sexually transmitted disease (STD) cases in the United States every year. People infected with STDs are two to five times more likely than uninfected individuals to contract HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. About 1.1 million Americans are living with HIV, including 15 percent who aren't aware of their infection. Men who have sex with men (MSM)—whether straight, gay, or bisexual—represent only 2 percent of the population but 67 percent of all new HIV infections. Of those diagnosed with HIV, 9 percent are drug injectors, 26 percent are age 55 and older, 45 percent are black, and 25 percent are women. Overall, 86 percent of women contract HIV through heterosexual sex. Most of the women aren't aware that their partners are MSM, inject drugs, or have recently tested positive for HIV (Spiller et al., 2015; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016; “HIV in the United States . . .,” 2017).

We've looked at some of the reasons why some people are healthier than others. Who gets health care? And who pays for it?

## 14-3 HEALTH CARE: UNITED STATES AND GLOBAL

Health care encompasses a number of components. One of the most important is **medicine**, a social institution that deals with illness, injury, and other health problems (see also Chapter 6 on institutions).

### 14-3a U.S. Health Care Coverage

In 2010, Congress passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, also called the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or “Obamacare.” The ACA's goal was to give more Americans under age 65 affordable, quality health insurance, and to reduce the growth in health care spending.

Has the ACA worked? The uninsured decreased from 18 percent (42 million people) in 2013, before the ACA took effect, to 10 percent (28 million) in 2017. The ACA generated the greatest gains for people living below or just above the poverty level, Latinos, and foreign-born non-citizens—the groups least likely to have health insurance (Barnett and Vornovitsky, 2016; “Health Insurance Coverage,” 2017; National Center for Health Statistics, 2017).

Who are the 28 million uninsured? People who live in states where Medicaid doesn't cover the “nearly poor,” are undocumented immigrants, haven't enrolled in Medicaid, or have incomes above the federal poverty level but can't afford the programs offered by employers or private insurers. The largest group of the uninsured—about 46 percent—doesn't have coverage for a variety of reasons: Paying out-of-pocket as needed is less expensive than health insurance, they rely on free or low-cost clinics, go without care or medicine, and/or use emergency rooms (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2015; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2016).

How do politics affect health policies? Repealing Obamacare has been the rallying cry of the Republican Party ever since the law passed. During the 2016 presidential election, Donald Trump described Obamacare as “disastrous” and vowed—repeatedly and to thunderous applause—to “immediately repeal and replace Obamacare.”

Nationally, however, 35 percent of Americans, many of whom voted for Trump and were recipients of the ACA, didn't know that the ACA and Obamacare are the same (Dropp and Nyhan, 2017). Congress hasn't repealed or replaced Obamacare as this book goes to press. *Table 14.2* presents some of the pros and cons of the ACA.

### 14-3b Who Pays for Health Care?

About 67 percent of Americans have private health insurance, through an employer or union, that they buy directly from an insurance company or through someone outside the household. Of the insured, employer-based insurance covers 56 percent of the population; public health insurance funded by taxpayers (Medicare, Medicaid, military) covers another 37 percent (Barnett

**medicine** a social institution that deals with illness, injury, and other health problems.

**Table 14.2** Some Obamacare Pros and Cons

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Millions of uninsured Americans now have health insurance. Young adults can stay under their parents' health plans until age 26.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People who don't have health insurance (through an employer, Medicare, Medicaid, the military, or a private company) risk paying a penalty.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Covers pre-existing conditions (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, cancer, HIV/AIDS), and there are no time limits on care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healthy people pay for patients with pre-existing conditions. The costliest five percent of these patients account for nearly half of all health care spending.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lowers overall health care costs in the long run, because preventive services (e.g., screening for cancer or other diseases) have no out-of-pocket payments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tens of millions of low- and middle-income people with private insurers earn too much to qualify for Obamacare or Medicaid, but struggle to pay medical bills.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offers access to and comparisons of health insurance options through exchanges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some major insurers have dropped out of exchanges, especially in rural counties, leaving consumers with few choices and rising premium costs.</li> </ul>

Sources: Kim and Roland, 2015; Cox and Levitt, 2017; Infinit Healthcare, 2017; Tozzi, 2017; Tracer and Recht, 2017.

and Vornovitsky, 2016; see also Chapter 12 on Medicare and Medicaid).

Since 1999, workers at both large and small firms have been paying higher premiums, deductibles, copayments, and other out-of-pocket costs, whereas wages, including those of middle-class families, have stagnated.

Most people pay a variety of state and federal taxes to support programs like Medicare and Medicaid. Medicare pays almost 60 percent of all health care costs for people age 65 and over, regardless of income (Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, 2016). Thus, even billionaires are eligible for Medicare. Medicaid, another government insurance program, provides medical care, regardless of age, for people living below the poverty level (see Chapter 12).

### 14-3c Why Is U.S. Health Care So Expensive?

The United States spends more on health care than any other nation in the world—per person, nationally, and as a percentage of the gross domestic product. We spend more on health care than 34 other high-income

countries, but rank last among the top 11 in quality of care, access to care, efficiency, and health outcomes (Davis et al., 2014; OECD, 2014).

By 2022, health care expenses will consume \$1 of every \$5 in the economy (*Table 14.3*). Why, then, are many Americans worse off than their counterparts in other high-income countries? One reason is that from a third to almost half of U.S. health care spending is wasteful or fraudulent (Couffinhal and Socha-Dietrich, 2017; U.S. Department of Justice, 2017).

In Canada, Germany, Great Britain, France, Japan, Sweden, and other high-income countries, the government picks up most of the health care bill. Patients and health care workers don't have to submit bills to several insurance providers, resulting in considerable administrative savings. The government, nonprofit organizations, or large groups (cities and industries) have considerable power in keeping down drug costs and setting prices for health care providers and services. There are also private hospitals, but most are nonprofit (OECD, 2014).

In the United States, "hospitals are the most expensive part of the world's most expensive health system." Even nonprofit hospitals are businesses: Up to 26 percent

**Table 14.3** The Increasing Cost of U.S. Health Care, 1980–2022

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2022
Average cost per person	\$1,100	\$2,864	\$4,878	\$8,402	\$14,664
National health expenditure	\$256 billion	\$724 billion	\$1.4 trillion	\$2.6 trillion	\$5 trillion
Percent of gross domestic product (GDP)	9%	13%	14%	18%	20%

Notes: The "average cost per person" includes medical care, supplies, drugs, and health insurance. All numbers are in current dollars; those for 2022 are projected.

Sources: Based on Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2010, Table 1, and 2014, Table 1.

of their revenues are profits, executives can earn almost \$6 million a year, and they sell as many services as possible at the highest price (Brill, 2013; “Prescription for Change,” 2013).

Unlike other countries where the government sets a national price for each drug, the United States lets pharmaceutical companies charge whatever they want. Congressional lawmakers—heavily lobbied by the pharmaceutical industry, the American Hospital Association, and other groups—have forbidden Medicare, the nation’s largest medical insurer and the world’s largest buyer of prescription drugs, to negotiate drug prices or the cost of health products. Thus, for example, the price of EpiPen, a lifesaving injection for severe allergic reactions, jumped more than 400 percent—from \$94 to \$609—after a pharmaceutical company acquired the product. A drug that cures Hepatitis C, a liver disease, costs just \$4 a pill in India, compared with \$1,000 in the United States (Agorist, 2016; Atwater, 2016).

Medical technology also increases health care costs. U.S. doctors perform 71 percent more CT scans than do doctors in Germany. Technology can save lives, but U.S. doctors, compared with those in many other countries, are more likely to adopt new and expensive machines that are highly profitable for both physicians and hospitals. Technology helps us live longer, but also increases a patient’s, insurer’s, and nation’s medical costs (Brill, 2015; Frakt, 2017). *Figure 14.8* provides more examples of why U.S. health care costs are so high. Because of the

high costs, each year up to 750,000 Americans engage in *medical tourism*, traveling to another country for medical care (“Medical Tourism,” 2015).

## 14-4 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON HEALTH AND MEDICINE

Sociologists focus on different aspects of health, health care, and medicine. *Table 14.4* summarizes these perspectives.

### 14-4a **Functionalism: Good Health and Medicine Benefit Society**

For functionalists, good health and medicine are critical for a society’s survival and stability. Thus, countries try to develop a medical care system that, ideally, benefits the entire population regardless of age, sex, race, ethnicity, social class, or other characteristics.

### HEALTH CARE AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

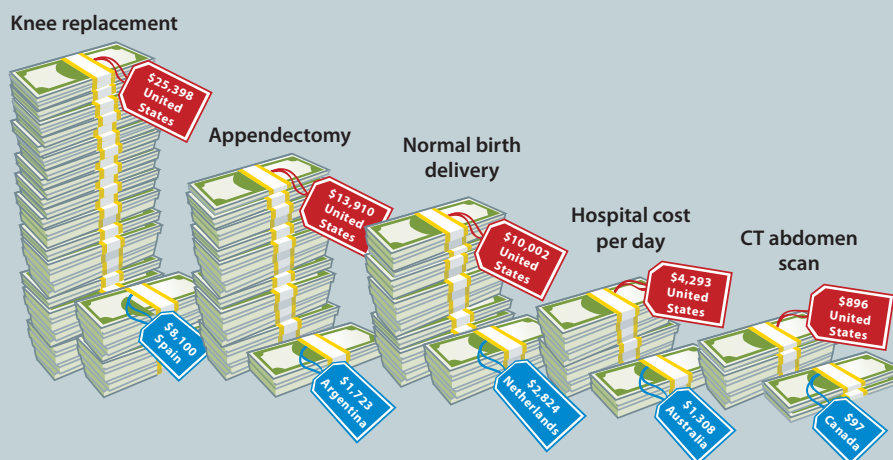
Health care systems are connected to many institutions. Despite ongoing debates about the ACA and the government’s requiring people to buy health insurance, millions of individuals and families are now eligible for government assistance to pay for coverage, and can get free preventive health services (e.g., diabetes tests, colonoscopies, routine vaccinations).

The government is deeply involved in health care in other ways. It funds much of the scientific research at universities as well as federal agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health, both of which deal with prevention, treatment, and health care policy. At the national and state levels, numerous government agencies are responsible for passing and enforcing regulations regarding new drugs, medical procedures, and access to medical care.

Health care affects the economy because it’s the nation’s largest employer. “Demand for health services

**Figure 14.8** Should You Travel Abroad for Medical Care?

Would you be better off living outside the United States when it comes to health care costs? Except for Argentina, all of these countries have higher life expectancy rates than the United States.



Source: Based on International Federation of Health Plans, 2014. See also Howard, 2014, for a comparison of surgery costs in the United States and other countries.



**Table 14.4 Sociological Perspectives on Health and Medicine**

Perspective	Level of Analysis	Key Points
<b>Functionalism</b>	Macro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health and medicine are critical in ensuring a society's survival and are closely linked to other institutions.</li> <li>Illness is dysfunctional because it prevents people from performing expected roles.</li> <li>Sick people are expected to seek professional help and get well.</li> </ul>
<b>Conflict</b>	Macro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are gross inequities in the health care system.</li> <li>The medical establishment is a powerful social control agent.</li> <li>A drive for profit ignores people's health needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Feminist</b>	Macro and micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women are less likely than men to receive high-quality health care.</li> <li>Gender stratification in medicine and the health care industry reduces women's earnings.</li> <li>Men control women's health.</li> </ul>
<b>Symbolic Interaction</b>	Micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Illness and disease are socially constructed.</li> <li>Labeling people as ill increases their likelihood of being stigmatized.</li> <li>Medicalization has increased the power of medical associations, parents, and mental health advocates and the profits of pharmaceutical companies.</li> </ul>

will rise as Obamacare expands insurance and Americans grow older, fatter, and sicker” (“The Health Paradox,” 2013: 27). Our huge health care spending threatens funding for other public programs, including education and transportation. Functionalists would point out, however, that the trillions spent on health care have generated millions of jobs at hospitals, drug companies, insurance companies, nursing homes, and technology firms (see Chapter 11).

Besides generating jobs, health care systems shape corporate policies which, in turn, benefit families. Recently, for instance, the pharmacy chain CVS banned sales of all tobacco products, Target is promoting employees' wellness and adding more organic and natural food to grocery aisles, and some restaurants (e.g., McDonald's, Wendy's, Red Lobster) have taken sodas off their children's menus and reduced sodium and fat in kids' meals (D'Innocenzio, 2015; Martin, 2015).

### THE SICK ROLE

Talcott Parsons (1951), an influential sociologist, introduced the concept of the **sick role**, a social role that excuses people from normal obligations because of illness. In Parsons' model, sick people aren't responsible for their condition and, therefore, have legitimate reasons for not performing their usual social roles (“I missed the exam because I had the flu”).

Parsons emphasized that the sick role is temporary, and that individuals

must seek medical help to hasten their recovery. Otherwise, people will view them as hypochondriacs, slouchers, and malingerers who aren't living up to their responsibilities. Thus, from a functionalist perspective, the sick role is legitimate if it's short-lived, but dysfunctional if people feign illness to shirk their duties long term in the family, the workplace, or other groups.



Lakov Filimonov/Shutterstock.com

How sick is too sick to miss work or class? Are menstrual cramps enough? What about a severe cold? A hangover? And when does being sick become dysfunctional—after a day, a week, a month?

**sick role** a social role that excuses people from normal obligations because of illness.

## THE PHYSICIAN AS GATEKEEPER

From a functionalist perspective, physicians play a key gatekeeping role in limiting the sick role. They verify a person's condition as sick and provide an excuse for temporarily not performing necessary roles. They also designate a patient as "recovered" and ready to meet societal role expectations again. Doctors' specialized knowledge gives them considerable authority in defining health and illness that's unmatched by other health care providers, such as nurses and pharmacists.

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Functionalist theories are limited for several reasons. First, health care policies can be divisive. For example, 52 percent of Americans say that the government should pay for health care, but 45 percent disagree (McCarthy, 2016). Moreover, most of the job growth in the health care sector has been in low-paying occupations (hospital orderlies, nursing home assistants, lab technicians) (Ross et al., 2014). Thus, many people aren't benefiting from the booming health care industry.

Second, and despite Obamacare, 25 percent of Americans say that either they or members of their family don't receive needed medical care because they can't afford the out-of-pocket costs. About 80 percent of low-wage workers don't receive any paid sick leave. When workers have paid sick days, 69 percent don't take them, even when they're ill, because they worry about falling behind or having coworkers take on extra work (Henderson, 2016; Frankel, 2017). Thus, many people don't or can't assume even a short-lived sick role.

Third, because physicians are powerful gatekeepers, many prosper by prolonging sick roles. The more times that doctors see patients or visit them at the hospital, and the more tests that doctors order, the higher their salaries. Conflict theorists, especially, maintain that much of the health care industry is dysfunctional because access to health care varies considerably, and only the wealthy don't have to worry about receiving and paying for the best available medical care.

### 14-4b **Conflict Theory: Health Care and Medicine Don't Benefit Everyone**

For conflict theorists, medicine and the health care industry benefit some groups much more than others. In contrast to functionalists, conflict theorists argue that the medical system reinforces social inequality, exerts social control to maintain the status quo, and is often driven by a profit motive rather than a concern for people's well-being.

## SOCIAL CONTROL OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH CARE

From a conflict perspective, those at the top of the medical hierarchy have considerable control. Physicians, for instance, have almost absolute power in diagnosing an illness, providing treatment, and deciding on medical procedures.

The health care industry can maintain the status quo because of the **medical-industrial complex**, a network of business enterprises that influences medicine and health care. The medical-industrial complex includes many groups—doctors, nurses, hospitals, lawyers, nursing homes and hospices, insurance companies, drug manufacturers, accountants, banks, and real estate and construction businesses.

Who benefits from the medical-industrial complex? All of those involved, especially pharma (also called Big Pharma), the pharmaceutical drug industry, and hospitals. The annual profit margins of some prominent drug manufacturers, like Amgen, are 43 percent, compared with 3 to 6 percent for Ford and General Motors (Love, 2017).

Big hospitals have been buying up previously independent cancer clinics and doctors' offices. Doing so gives them the power to raise prices for private insurers and government programs, particularly Medicare. As a result, they can charge higher rates, sometimes three times as much, for cancer drugs and outpatient visits and services (Bach, 2015; Bai and Anderson, 2015).

The percentage of Americans taking three or more prescription drugs increased from 11 percent in 1998 to 23 percent in 2014. The prices for dozens of drugs that treat everything from blood pressure to multiple sclerosis have doubled since 2007, and the prices of some generic drugs have soared by 1,000 percent or more. Drug prices keep rising, despite widespread complaints, because Big Pharma can charge whatever it wants (Jaret, 2015; Love, 2017; National Center for Health Statistics, 2017).

The United States and New Zealand are the only developed countries that allow direct-to-consumer prescription drug marketing ("Ask your doctor about..."). The ads, which began in the 1980s, increase a drug's sales. People who see drug advertising are more likely to ask their doctors for a particular brand-name medication. Doctors may feel pressure to accommodate their patients' requests, which, in turn, increases a drug's price and sales (Timmermans and Oh, 2010; Niederdeppe et al., 2013).

**medical-industrial complex** a network of business enterprises that influences medicine and health care.



End-of-life care is a billion dollar industry. Compared with their nonprofit counterparts, for-profit hospices spend less on nursing per patient, provide fewer services, and push out patients whose care becomes expensive. Medicare provides about 90 percent of funding for hospices and nursing homes, but rarely punishes either for violating health and safety rules (Hallman and Shifflett, 2014; Whoriskey and Keating, 2014).

## HEALTH, PROFIT, AND WASTE

From a conflict perspective, health care is big business. The median household income in 2015 was \$56,515—what the average health care CEO made in less than a day. Much of a CEO's earnings (nearly \$19 million in 2015) are based on increasing stock prices rather than improving patient care. That means selling more drugs, raising prices above inflation, performing more tests and procedures, and getting more people into the hospital (Herman, 2017).

Large hospitals are crowded with “senior VPs, VPs of this, that, and the other” whose salaries are two to three times higher than those of surgeons. A Wisconsin surgeon discovered that a brief outpatient appendectomy he had performed for a fee of \$1,700 generated over \$12,000 in hospital bills. Thus, “the biggest bucks are earned not through the delivery of care, but from overseeing the business of medicine” (Healthcare-NOW! 2014; Rosenthal, 2014: SR4).

The medical-industrial complex profits in other ways. Some popular diet and other supplements contain dangerous chemicals that pose health risks. A number of the FDA's top officials are former lobbyists or industry leaders. In other cases, sugar and food industries fund doctors who publish articles in prominent

medical journals that play down the link between sugar and heart disease (O'Connor, 2015; Kearns et al., 2016).

At least 30 percent of federally funded health care is wasteful. “Improper” payments (e.g., to ineligible beneficiaries, to dead people, and for unallowable services) totaled \$144 billion in 2016, a 250 percent increase since 2003. Between 10 and 20 percent of all surgeries are unnecessary. Doctors often use aggressive and expensive treatment in the last month of life for three-quarters of patients younger than 65 with terminal cancer. Patients and families may insist on such treatment, not realizing that it'll bring “nothing but emotional and physical misery,” because physicians, nurses, and other professionals aren't trained in end-of-life conversations (Chen et al., 2016; “Uncle Sam Overpays,” 2017).

Other wasteful spending includes the expensive services that have the same health outcomes as lower-priced alternatives, preventable hospital injuries and readmissions, unnecessary tests and treatments to guard against liability in malpractice lawsuits, high prices for drugs, and prescriptions for drugs that work no better than a placebo. Huge agencies like Medicare and Medicaid are particularly vulnerable to waste. The private contractors employed to pay the government's millions of health care bills are under pressure to process claims as quickly and inexpensively as possible. “The cheapest way to process a claim is to pay it without question” (Rosenberg, 2016; Office of Inspector General, 2017; “Uncle Sam Overpays,” 2017).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

The most common criticism is that conflict theorists often overlook the contributions of health care systems. Without them, people would suffer more, die at a younger age, and have a lower quality of life.

Second, doctors, medical scientists, and some medical associations (e.g., American Academy of Family Physicians) have been among the most vocal critics of unneeded surgery, tests, and procedures. Examples include cardiac stress tests and recommending vitamins and other supplements that don't benefit health. Others have urged ending expensive end-of-life care that simply prolongs the dying process. Most recently, nearly 120 of the nation's leading oncologists have publicly protested drug companies' “out of control greed” which is bankrupting cancer patients (Guallar et al., 2013; Agnvall, 2014; Tefferi et al., 2015).

Finally, most people aren't simply victims of a malicious medical-industrial complex. Many make unhealthy lifestyle choices (unprotected sex, drug abuse), and complain rather than change their behavior when employers impose health insurance penalties for smoking



## Is Being Fashionable Hazardous to Women's Health?

Squeezing into skinny jeans and tight pants can cause nerve compression, numbness, and digestive problems. Narrow-toed shoes and stilettos wreak havoc: blisters, bunions, corns, calluses, hammertoes, nerve damage, back and neck pain, painful inflammation, stress fractures, and ankle sprains. Still, according to a podiatrist, “Women will wear their high-heeled shoes until their feet are bloody stumps” (Ianzito, 2013: 3; Gleiber, 2014).

Many cosmetics contain chemicals that can trigger skin problems (e.g., itching, rashes, acne). Others—contaminated with bacteria, yeasts, or molds—can lead to a range of problems from simple rashes to serious infections that can cause swelling and breathing difficulties. A recent study that tested 32 commonly sold



Maron/Age Fotostock

lipsticks and lip glosses found that they contained lead, cadmium, chromium, aluminum, and five other metals—some at potentially toxic levels that are linked to stomach

tumors. Some hair products contain hazardous ingredients like formaldehyde and mercury that can result in losing large clumps of hair (Liu et al., 2013; Lipton and Abrams, 2016).

Except for some hair color additives, the FDA doesn't require companies to test products for safety or list toxic ingredients. Japan, Canada, and the European Union have banned more than 500 cosmetic products containing toxic ingredients that are still sold in the United States (Rano and Houlihan, 2012). Skin Deep ([ewg.org/skindeep](http://ewg.org/skindeep)) ranks the safety of a range of cosmetic products.

and obesity. Others join forces with drug companies to lobby the FDA to decrease current restrictions on potent opioids (Meier and Lipton, 2013; Brody, 2015).

### 14-4c **Feminist Theories: Health Care and Medicine Benefit Men More Than Women**

Both feminist and conflict theorists emphasize the connection between health and inequality. Feminist scholars go further by addressing the health costs of being a woman, gender stratification in medicine and health care, and men's control over women's choices.

#### **THE HEALTH COSTS OF BEING A WOMAN**

Women and men face different health care issues. For example, women are more likely than men to

- ▶ get inaccurate results from treadmill stress tests to detect heart problems, because the scoring system is based on “only middle-aged men” (Cremer et al., 2017);
- ▶ have chronic pain, be prescribed pain relievers, receive higher doses, use opioids for longer periods,

become addicted, and, early in a pregnancy, risk birth defects and preterm births (Ailes et al., 2015; American Society of Addiction Medicine, 2016);

- ▶ be unpaid family caregivers, even if they're ill, disabled, or old (Hooyman, 2016); and
- ▶ suffer a fatal heart attack, because they often receive less aggressive treatment than men (Sagon, 2017).

For decades, heart disease “has been studied in men, for men, and by men.” Even though heart disease is the leading cause of women's death, and kills more women than men, only 35 percent of participants in heart-related studies are women. Such research gaps “leave women's health to chance” (Johnson et al., 2014; Merz, 2015: A16).

During their reproductive years, 33 percent of U.S. women have a cesarean section (C-section), up from only 5 percent in 1970. The main reason for the increase is hospital administrators' and maternity clinicians' fear of lawsuits if a vaginal birth has a negative outcome (Morris, 2014). Because C-sections are major surgical procedures, the risks include infection, blood clots, and injury to other organs, particularly the bladder.

**Table 14.5 Women Earn Less Than Men in Health Care Occupations, 2016**

	Men	Women	Percentage of Women in This Occupation
<b>All health care practitioners</b>	<b>\$69,264</b>	<b>\$53,872</b>	<b>75</b>
Pharmacists	\$108,992	\$95,628	60
Physicians and surgeons	\$121,836	\$76,752	38
Physical therapists	\$70,096	\$67,912	65
Registered nurses	\$65,572	\$59,436	89
Clinical laboratory technologists and technicians	\$55,692	\$43,368	67
Emergency medical technicians and paramedics	\$42,692	\$33,800	34

Note: The data are median annual earnings of full-time workers.

Source: Based on Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017, Table 39.

U.S. maternal mortality rates have increased. American women are now three to four times as likely to die from pregnancy-related complications as their counterparts in Britain, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Finland, Italy, or Japan, and black women's maternal mortality rates are more than three times higher than those of white women. The upturn is probably due to increasingly common health conditions (e.g., obesity, hypertension, diabetes) that make delivery more dangerous ("Maternal Mortality," 2015; "Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System," 2017).

## GENDER STRATIFICATION IN HEALTH CARE OCCUPATIONS

In health care jobs, men consistently earn more than women (Table 14.5). Among physical therapists, for example, males earn almost \$71,000 a year compared with \$68,000 for females even when both have the same level of education, years of experience, and work responsibilities (see also Chapters 8 and 11).

Feminist scholars attribute much of the gender wage gap to male doctors' gatekeeping. Because many registered nurses, pharmacists, and physical therapists (occupations that have more women than men) now receive doctoral degrees, they want to use the honorific title of "doctor." Doing so would win more respect from patients, help women land top administrative jobs that pay more, provide more autonomy in treating patients, and bring higher fees from health insurers. Physicians oppose the idea for several reasons: They want to maintain their prestige in the health care industry; they treat patients first, whereas nurses and others play only

secondary roles; and they have considerably more education and training to diagnose and treat illness and disease (Harris, 2011).

## MEN'S CONTROL OF WOMEN'S HEALTH

Feminist scholars maintain that men control many aspects of women's health. Catholic bishops, all of whom are men, condemn contraceptives as sinful, even though 98 percent of U.S. Catholic women have used birth control (Jones and Dreweke, 2011).

In 2014, the Supreme Court ruled, 5-4 (*Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores*), that privately held for-profit corporations don't have to pay for

their employees' contraceptive coverage, as the ACA requires, if doing so conflicts with the owners' religious beliefs. In effect, a religious objection can trump a federal law, and businesses can shift insurance costs to taxpayers or private insurers. According to some Johns Hopkins doctors, "The Supreme Court decision has started us down a dangerous path on which the religious beliefs of a third party enter the examination room and interfere with the doctor-patient relationship" (Singal et al., 2014: 17; see also Rosenfeld, 2014). All of the justices who ruled against women's contraceptive coverage were males.

In many states, conservative lawmakers have passed laws to restrict or block women's ability to get abortions (see Chapter 9). They aren't passing similar laws to limit the availability of Viagra and other erectile dysfunction medications for men because "Viagra is a wonderful drug" (Beadle, 2012). The Hobby Lobby chain doesn't have to pay for IUDs and emergency contraceptive pills, but covers Viagra and other erectile dysfunction drugs. The White House recently announced that it's cutting a \$214 million teen pregnancy prevention program that the Obama administration funded. President Trump's chief of staff, who oversees adolescent health, maintains that abstinence is the most effective approach in preventing unwanted teen pregnancy (Belluck, 2017).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Feminist theories are limited in several ways. First, they sometimes gloss over the fact that social class, rather than gender, has a big effect on people's health and receiving health care services (Montez and Zajacova, 2013).



Marilyn Angel Wynn/Getty Images

Nurse practitioners (NPs), 92 percent of whom are women, complete a master's or doctoral program that includes diagnosing and treating patients, managing acute and chronic illnesses, and prescribing medications. Because of a projected shortage of doctors, NPs are pressing 34 states to relax laws requiring doctors to oversee their work. Many doctors' groups, led by the AMA, are fighting the NPs, arguing that less supervision would jeopardize patient safety. Several national studies have found no evidence that NPs provide lower-quality care than physicians (Beck, 2013; Pettypiece, 2013). How might you explain the AMA's resistance from a feminist perspective?

Second, men also experience gender bias in health care. They suffer one-third of all hip fractures but, because osteoporosis is considered a "woman's disease," there's little research on men, and guidelines about testing older men's bone density are vague (Sagon, 2017).

Third, and like conflict theorists, feminist scholars rarely address lifestyle choices that affect people's health. Among adult women, for example, 14 percent smoke, 67 percent are overweight or obese, and at least 8 percent

use illicit drugs (National Center for Health Statistics, 2017). Finally, women aren't always passive but stand up to men's domination of health laws. Recently, for example, a Republican-controlled Senate failed to repeal Obamacare because two Republican women voted "no," and despite "intense pressure" from Republican male leaders (Leonhardt, 2017: A23).

## 14-4d **Symbolic Interaction: The Social Construction of Health and Illness**

Symbolic interactionists focus on how we define and construct views about health, illness, and medicine, and then implement these definitions in everyday life. Social constructions include labeling, stigmatizing behavior, and medicalizing attitudes and behaviors as normal or sick.

### **THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF ILLNESS**

Medical models assume that illness is anything that deviates from normal biological functioning, and that an illness has specific features that a doctor can recognize. In contrast, interactionists view illness and medicine as social constructions that can change over time. In 1956, the AMA declared that alcoholism is a treatable disease that's due to a genetic predisposition rather than a person's lacking moral character or self-discipline. And, in 2013, the AMA officially designated obesity as a disease—rather than a lifestyle habit—that requires research funding and medical intervention, including surgery and drugs (Newberry, 2013; Pollack, 2013).

With or without medical intervention, individuals construct and manage their illnesses differently. Some people's social worlds shrink when they become immersed in the day-to-day aspects of managing a chronic illness like rheumatoid arthritis: They become increasingly cut off from everyday routines if they're unable to work, spend less time with family and friends, or can't move about freely. Others create new self-identities by describing themselves as survivors (of breast cancer, for instance), exchange information about treatment options, and participate in local or national fundraising events (Conrad and Barker, 2010).

Social class also affects social constructions of illness. As educational level rises, people report poorer health, presumably because they're more aware of medical knowledge and evaluate their own physical well-being more critically (Schnittker, 2009).

### **THE MEDICALIZATION OF HEALTH**

In 1952, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) published the first edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), which



has become the global “bible of mental illness.” The DSM relies on subjective definitions and criteria, but is influential in labeling (or unlabeled) mental illness. The number of disorders increased from 106 in 1952 to nearly 400 in 2013. Some of the new mental illnesses include “binge eating” (frequent overeating), “bereavement” (mourning the loss of a loved one), “caffeine intoxication” (drinking too much coffee), “disruptive mood dysregulation disorder” (children’s temper tantrums), and “hoarding” (accumulating too much stuff) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The DSM’s ever-changing diagnoses and labels are an example of **medicalization**, a process that defines a nonmedical condition or behavior as an illness, disorder, or disease that requires medical treatment. The APA once classified homosexuality as a psychological disorder, but dropped sexual orientation from its roster of mental illnesses in 1973. The DSM affects patients, doctors, insurers, pharmaceutical companies, and taxpayers because psychiatrists and other physicians use it to bill insurance companies. DSM-based diagnoses also determine whether people get special services at school, qualify for disability benefits, are stigmatized, and even whether they can adopt children.

Medicalization is a lucrative business. Pharmaceutical corporations have reaped enormous profits because everyday normal anxieties, discomforts, and stresses (frustration with traffic, boredom with routine housekeeping chores, feeling sad or personally insecure) can be “fixed” by popping a Prozac or other pill (Herzberg, 2009). The more behaviors that the DSM defines as mental illness, the more likely psychiatrists are to increase their number of patients. Mental rights advocates and parents also benefit from medicalization, as when children who are diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) get insurance coverage or special treatment, including more attention from teachers and health specialists (Conrad and Barker, 2010; Rochman, 2012).

According to critics, the DSM encourages misdiagnosis, overdiagnosis, the medicalization of normal behavior, and the prescription of a large number of unnecessary drugs, especially in the case of ADHD. In 2014, more than 10,000 2- to 3-year-olds (that’s right, 2- to 3-year-olds!), particularly those on Medicaid, were being medicated for ADHD. Between ages 2 and 5, 44 percent of



children diagnosed with ADHD take medications (Schwarz, 2014; Danielson et al., 2017).

Attitudes vary by country, but many European parents, teachers, and doctors are reluctant to use ADHD medication for what they consider routine childhood behavioral problems.

Even though some Europeans believe that ADHD is a disease, “parents are loath to get their child labeled” (Kelly, 2013: 26). Thus, America’s high ADHD rates and drug sales illustrate cultural differences in the medicalization of health and illness.

## LABELING AND STIGMA

From an interactionist perspective, conditions and behaviors that are diagnosed and labeled as illness or disease change over time, differ among groups, and vary across countries. Medicalization and labeling stigmatize some illnesses and diseases more than others. Male impotence, which commonly increases as men age and was stigmatized, is now called “erectile dysfunction,” and treated with drugs, regardless of age, to enhance a man’s sexual experience. Ads and commercials (“Cialis is ready when you are”) have flooded magazines, newspapers, and online sites.

Women’s sexuality is also being medicalized. The FDA recently approved the sale of flibanserin to increase postmenopausal women’s sex drive. In clinical trials, only 10 percent of women said that the pill increased their sexual desire. Flibanserin has dangerous side effects, like fainting, because it interacts with other medications and alcohol. Women’s sex drives fluctuate throughout life, diminish due to bad relationships or stress, and there’s nothing wrong with low sexual desire (Nagoski, 2015; Weisman, 2015; see also Chapter 9). Pharmaceutical companies, however, can reap huge profits by convincing women that their sexuality is abnormal.

Labeling and stigma can also prevent seeking medical help. Because of fatigue, feeling overwhelmed, and sleep deprivation, almost 30 percent of resident physicians (doctors still being trained) have either severe symptoms or a diagnosis of depression. Few seek medical help, however, because admitting such problems carries a stigma that might affect obtaining a medical license (Mata et al., 2015; Hill, 2017).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Symbolic interaction theories are limited for several reasons. The most common criticism is that they don’t address structural factors such as government policies and

**medicalization** a process that defines a nonmedical condition or behavior as an illness, disorder, or disease that requires medical treatment.

practices that can ensure better health for everyone. For example, blacks experience much poorer health than whites because of racial differences in access to health care, neighborhood poverty, and other macro-level factors. Public policies could reduce such disparities, but haven't done so (Johnson, 2017).

Second, millions of people successfully resist medicalization. Many deaf people have ignored recommendations to get cochlear implants (devices that can increase hearing). They don't see deafness as a medical disability but as a social reality that helps them form a community and identify with other deaf people (Conrad and Barker, 2010). A "fat pride" movement argues that obesity's health risks are exaggerated and focuses, instead, on changing discrimination against overweight people (see Chapter 16).

Third, interactionists emphasize that health and illness are social constructions, but there are many serious health problems whether or not they're medicalized. People die from unknown diseases, for example. Others suffer from "contested" illnesses, including chronic fatigue syndrome, that many physicians question because the symptoms are difficult to diagnose and treat (Institute of Medicine, 2015).



Tom Williams/Getty Images

How do authority figures affect people's health perceptions and behavior? Dr. Mehmet Oz is a highly respected and published cardiothoracic surgeon, and host of the popular *The Dr. Oz Show*. Products he endorses on his show "are almost guaranteed to fly off the shelves" (Weathers, 2014). A study of 40 randomly selected episodes of *The Dr. Oz Show* found that scientific data supported only 46 percent of Dr. Oz's recommendations. The researchers cautioned consumers to be skeptical about any information on television medical talk shows because only "up to one half of recommendations are based on believable or somewhat believable evidence" (Korownyk et al., 2014: 4).

## STUDY TOOLS 14

### READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you've read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.



# Population, Urbanization, and the Environment



US Army Photo/Alamy Stock Photo

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 15-1 Explain how and why populations change, and evaluate the population growth theories.
- 15-2 Describe how and explain why global and U.S. cities are changing, describe the consequences of urbanization, and compare and evaluate the theoretical explanations of urbanization.
- 15-3 Describe and illustrate the major environmental issues, and discuss whether sustainable development is achievable.

After finishing  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 325** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**



In mid-2017, the world hit a population milestone of nearly 7.6 billion people, and is projected to increase to 9.8 billion by 2050. Our planet has a record number of inhabitants, and many are living longer than ever before. This chapter examines how such changes affect the world's population, urbanization, and environment. Let's begin with population.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

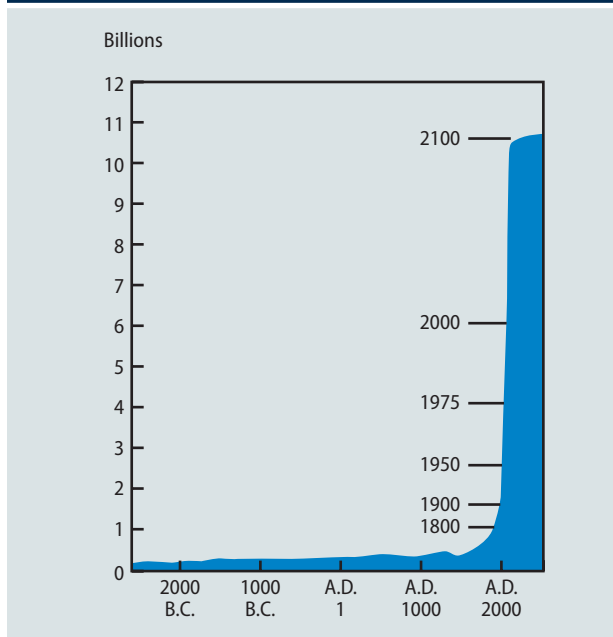
Individuals can do little to prevent global warming.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree						strongly disagree

## 15-1 POPULATION CHANGES

Global population has grown rapidly since 1800, and more than tripled since 1900 (*Figure 15.1*). By 2100, the world population will climb to 11.2 billion, and nearly all of the growth will occur in six developing African countries (United Nations Population Division, 2017).

**Figure 15.1** World Population Growth Through History



Source: Adapted from Population Reference Bureau, 2008, "World Population Projections to 2100," accessed at [www.prb.org](http://www.prb.org).

The world adds about 400,000 people each day, but population changes vary across countries. By 2050, India, with nearly 1.7 billion people, will surpass China as the world's largest country, Nigeria will replace the United States as the third largest country, and three African nations will be among the most populous (*Table 15.1*).

Information about these and other changes comes from **demography**, the scientific study of human populations. A **population** is a group of people who share a geographic territory. A territory can be as small as a town or as vast as the planet, depending on a researcher's focus. Demographers analyze populations in terms of size, composition, distribution, and change. They also study personally relevant topics, including your probability of getting married or divorced, the kind of job you'll probably have, how many times you'll move, and how long you'll probably live (McFalls, 2007).

### 15-1a Why Populations Change

Populations are never static. Their growth or decline involves three key factors: fertility (how many people are born), mortality (how many die), and migration (how many move from one area to another).

#### FERTILITY: ADDING NEW PEOPLE

The study of population changes begins with **fertility**, the number of babies born during a specified period in a particular society. Demographers use several fertility measures depending on the level of specificity needed. One of the most commonly used measures is the **crude birth rate** (also called the *birth rate*), the number of live births for every 1,000 people in a population in a given year. "Crude" implies that the rate is a general measure of a society's childbearing. It's based on the total

**demography** the scientific study of human populations.

**population** people who share a geographic territory.

**fertility** the number of babies born during a specified period in a particular society.

**crude birth rate** (also called the *birth rate*) the number of live births per 1,000 people in a population in a given year.

**Table 15.1** World's Ten Most Populous Countries, 2017 and 2050

2017		2050	
Country	Population (In Millions)	Country	Population (In Millions)
1 China	1,410	1 India	1,659
2 India	1,339	2 China	1,364
3 United States	324	3 Nigeria	411
4 Indonesia	264	4 United States	390
5 Brazil	209	5 Indonesia	322
6 Pakistan	197	6 Pakistan	307
7 Nigeria	191	7 Brazil	233
8 Bangladesh	165	8 Bangladesh	202
9 Russia	144	9 Democratic Republic of Congo	197
10 Mexico	129	10 Ethiopia	191

Source: Based on United Nations Population Division, 2017, Table S.3.

population rather than more specific measures (e.g., a woman's age or marital status). In 2016, the crude birth rate was 20 worldwide, 36 for Africa, 12 for the United States, and 11 for Europe (Kaneda and Bietsch, 2016).

Another standard measure, the **total fertility rate (TFR)**, is the average number of children born to a woman during her lifetime. In the early 1900s, U.S. women had an average TFR of 3.5 compared with 2.5 in 2016. Worldwide, TFRs are much higher in the least developed nations (4.3) than in developed nations (1.7), ranging from a low of under 1.2 in some Asian and European countries to 6.0 and higher in 9 African nations (Kaneda and Bietsch, 2016). The U.S. population has increased primarily because of high TFRs among foreign-born women. In 2014, there were 58.3 births per 1,000 U.S.-born women ages 15 to 44, compared with 84.2 births for foreign-born mothers (Bialik, 2017).

**total fertility rate (TFR)** the average number of children born to a woman during her lifetime.

**mortality** the number of deaths in a population during a specified period.

**crude death rate** (also called the *death rate*) the number of deaths per 1,000 people in a population in a given year.

To maintain a stable population, a woman must have an average of two children, the *replacement rate* for herself and her partner. TFRs above 2.1 indicate that a country's population is increasing and getting younger. Rates below 2.1 mean that a country's population is decreasing and

getting older. The older a country's population, the more difficult it is to support people who are living into their eighties and longer and to provide resources for the young (United Nations Population Division, 2017; see also Chapter 12 on the old-age dependency ratio).

In nearly all countries, fertility tends to fall as people grow richer and women are better educated. Some nations, particularly those in East Asia, worry that their "ultra low" TFRs of 1.3 or less aren't at replacement levels. In Tokyo, Seoul, Bangkok, and other Asian cities, female college graduates outnumber males and female labor force participation is high. According to cultural norms, however, women should give up work after the birth of a child. And, employed or not, women do at least three more hours of housework a day than men. Consequently, many

women aren't marrying or are postponing marriage, reducing their likelihood of ever having children. Because nonmarital births are taboo and rare in Asia, TFRs have plummeted ("Asia's New Family Values," 2015).

Italy and Japan have among the lowest fertility rates in the world (1.4 and 1.5, respectively). Italy's government has promoted a "Fertility Day" campaign to encourage couples to have more babies. Many working women would like to have more children, but don't do so because the government offers limited child care services. Because of low birth rates and restrictive immigration policies, Japan has one of the most rapidly aging societies worldwide. One of the results is hundreds of "ghost houses" in the suburbs. The vacant houses have been inherited by people who don't want or need them, but they can't sell the abandoned properties because of a shortage of buyers (Soble, 2015; Pianigiani, 2016).

## MORTALITY: SUBTRACTING PEOPLE

The second factor in population change is **mortality**, the number of deaths in a population during a specified period. Demographers typically measure mortality using the **crude death rate** (also called the *death rate*), the number of deaths per 1,000 people in a population in a given year. In 2016, the death rate was 6 for South America, 7 for Asia, 8 worldwide and for the United States, 11 for Europe, but 14 or higher for 8 African nations (Kaneda and Bietsch, 2016).



AP Images/John Heilprin



Agencia Fotograficzna Caro/Alamy Stock Photo

Africa's Niger and South Sudan have the world's highest TFRs, 7.6 and 6.7, respectively. The reasons for the high fertility include poverty and women's limited access to education and birth control. In contrast, some European towns are facing "slow death" due to low fertility and immigration rates. Germany is trying to boost its shrinking TFR (1.5 compared with 2.5 in the 1960s) by offering families tax breaks and free day care for all children age 1 and older (Rossi and Jucca, 2014; Kaneda and Bietsch, 2016).

Developed countries, compared with most developing countries, have lower death rates, but also large proportions of people age 65 and older who are no longer employed but require costly medical services. Thus, a better measure of a population's health is the *infant mortality rate*, the number of deaths of infants younger than 1 year per 1,000 live births. Generally, as the standard of living improves—access to clean water, adequate sanitation, and medical care—the infant mortality rate decreases. In 2016, the infant mortality rate was 5 in developed countries, 59 in the least developed countries, and 85 or higher in six African nations (Kaneda and Bietsch, 2016).

*Life expectancy* is the average number of years that people who were born at about the same time can expect to live. Globally, life expectancy is 70 for males and 74 for females. Again, however, there are considerable variations across countries—from a high of 84 in Hong Kong and Japan to a low of 44 in several African nations. The United States, with a life expectancy of 79, ranks below at least 25 other industrialized countries and only slightly higher than less developed countries such as Cuba and Uruguay (Kaneda and Bietsch, 2016). In almost every society, people with a higher socioeconomic status live longer and healthier lives because their occupations are physically safe, and their resources include clean drinking water, sanitation, and medical services.

## MIGRATION: ADDING AND SUBTRACTING PEOPLE

The third demographic factor in population change is **migration**, the movement of people into or out of a specific geographic area. There are two types of migration:

international and internal. *International migration*, movement to another country, includes *emigrants* (people who move out of a country) and *immigrants* (people who move into a country).

*Migrants* are people who choose to leave their country to seek a better life elsewhere. *Refugees* (sometimes called *displaced persons*) are people who are forced to flee their country—often with no warning—to escape war, persecution, torture, or death. An international migrant can have several of these characteristics. For example, my family members and I were refugees who fled Lithuania (by horse and wagon) from Communism during World War II, emigrated to displaced persons camps in Germany, and then immigrated to the United States.

**International Migration.** The number of international migrants grew from about 79 million in 1960 to nearly 250 million in 2015 (a 200 percent increase), and they make up more than 3 percent of the world's population today. The largest flows have moved from one developing country to another (as from Indonesia to Saudi Arabia) or from a developing to an industrialized country (as from Mexico to the United States). Also, most emigrants move to a neighboring country (from Mexico to the United States, for example, rather than from Mexico to Canada). The United States has 20 percent of the world's migrants (nearly 47 million), more than any other country in the world. Proportionately, however, only 14 percent of the U.S. population is foreign born, compared with 75 percent in several Persian Gulf countries

**migration** the movement of people into or out of a specific geographic area.



(e.g., United Arab Emirates, Kuwait), 28 percent in Australia, and 22 percent in Canada (Connor, 2016).

There are currently more refugees worldwide than at any time in recorded history. At the end of 2016, nearly 66 million people had been forcibly displaced from their homes because of conflict, violence, or human rights violations. More than half of all current global refugees come from just three countries—Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017). The most common reason for other international migration is economic, but also includes fleeing bad schools, high crime rates, and natural disasters. Thus, the reasons for international migration today are similar to those of European immigrants who came to the United States during the twentieth century.

**Internal Migration.** International migration has increased, but 92 percent of adults worldwide who change residences do so because of *internal migration*, movement within a country. Over a five-year period, 24 percent of U.S. adults move within the country, similar to rates reported in other advanced economies, including New Zealand, Finland, and Norway (Esipova et al., 2013). In parts of rural Spain, people have migrated to cities for jobs, education, and access to public transit and health care. As a result, abandoned villages are for sale. One village, where the asking price is about \$230,000, includes 100 acres with half a dozen houses and two sprawling farms with room for 70 cattle. The biggest houses “have hardwood floors and five bedrooms overlooking an orchard with peaches, figs, walnuts, apples, and pears . . . and a little river full of trout” (Frayer, 2015).

Between 2015 and 2016, 11 percent of Americans moved to a different residence. Why do people move? The most common reasons (42 percent) are housing-related (e.g., “Wanted new or better home/apartment,” eviction), 28 percent are family-related (e.g., change in marital status), and 20 percent are job-related (e.g., new job, job transfer, to look for work) (“Americans Moving . . .,” 2016).

Social class and natural disasters also affect migration. By 2015, there were more Puerto Ricans living stateside than on the island, primarily because many low-income residents sought better jobs and schools in the United States. After Hurricane Maria devastated much of the island in 2017, between 10 and 14 percent of Puerto Rico’s 3.4 million people, including many young professionals, moved to the mainland or planned to do so (Dorell, 2017; Luscombe, 2017).

**sex ratio** the proportion of men to women in a population.



So far, more than 12 million Syrians (more than half of the population) have fled the civil war that began in 2011 or have been internally displaced from their homes (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017). “Many have been on the run for a year or more . . . moving from village to village, up to as many as 20 times, before they finally made it across an international border” (Bengali, 2014: 10). The death of Syrian refugee Aylan Kurdi, 3, sparked an outburst of compassion worldwide.

## 15-1b Population Composition and Structure

Demographers study age and gender to understand a population’s composition and structure. Two of the most common measures are *sex ratios* and *population pyramids*.

### SEX RATIOS

A **sex ratio** is the proportion of men to women in a population. A sex ratio of 100 means that there are equal numbers of men and women; a ratio of 95 means that there are 95 men for every 100 women (fewer males than females). Worldwide, without human intervention, 103 to 107 boys are born for every 100 girls. In the United States, the sex ratio is 105 at birth, but skewed in many countries: 115 in China, 112 in Armenia and India, and 111 in Vietnam (*World Factbook*, 2017; *World Population Review*, 2017).

These sex ratio imbalances are attributed primarily to *female infanticide* (sometimes called *gendercide*)—the intentional killing of baby girls. In many Asian countries, including China and India, there’s a preference for boys because males are expected to carry on the family name, care for elderly parents, inherit property, and play a central role in family rituals. Consequently, and particularly in rural areas, hundreds of thousands of female infants die every year because of neglect, abandonment, and starvation. Others are aborted after ultrasound scanners reveal the child’s sex (“Sex Selection,” 2017).

China is a good example of some of the unintended negative consequences of lopsided sex ratios. In 1979, China passed a one-child policy to combat poverty and overpopulation. The policy succeeded in limiting population growth because of at least 600 million abortions and sterilizations. The country's TFR fell from 6 in the late 1960s to 1.5 by 2010, but well below the 2.1 replacement rate to maintain a constant population (Eberstadt, 2013; "Family Planning . . .," 2014).

Because of the unbalanced sex ratio for the last 30 years, by 2020 China will have about 35 million more young men than women. That means a large number of men won't be able to find wives—a problem that has already increased the illegal trafficking of women from poorer neighboring countries, including Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam—and there'll be millions of aging bachelors (Tsai, 2012; "The Marriage Squeeze . . .," 2015).

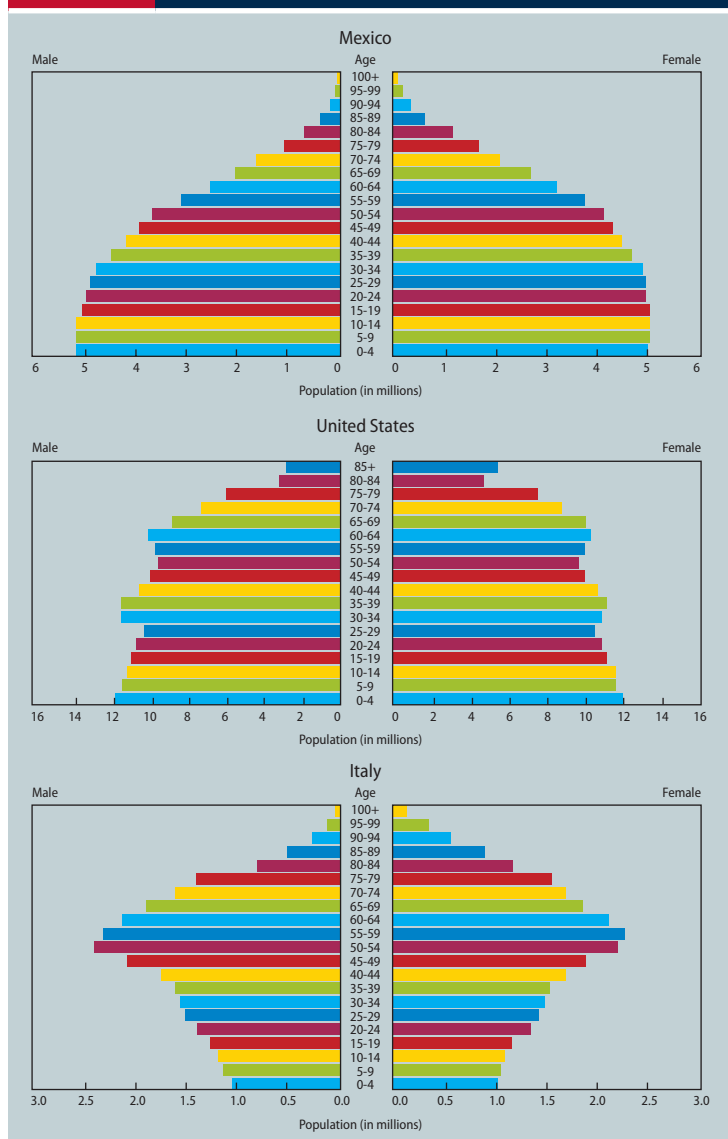
To reduce the burden of elder care, the government eased the policy in 2013 and in 2015 by allowing married couples to have two children. The urban, educated middle class—the group that China's leaders want to see increase its family size—hasn't shown much interest in doing so because of high costs of living and expenses in raising a second child. China's working-age population started declining in 2015, resulting in fewer workers to support a growing older population (Buckley, 2015; Walsh, 2015).

## POPULATION PYRAMIDS

A **population pyramid** is a graphic depiction of a population's age and sex distribution at a given point in time. As *Figure 15.2* shows, Mexico is a young country: Much of its population is under age 45 (which also means that many women are in their childbearing years), and there are relatively few people 65 years and older. In contrast, Italy is an old country, and the United States is somewhere in the middle.

The shape of the pyramid (a triangle for Mexico, a rectangle for the United States, and a diamond for Italy) has future implications for young and old countries. Italy has a relatively small number of women ages 15 to 44 (in their reproductive years) and a bulge of people ages 45 to 79. This suggests that there'll be a scarcity of workers to support an aging population and a greater need for social services for older people than for children and adolescents (Kochhar and Oates, 2014; see also Chapter 12). Thus, population pyramids give us a snapshot of a country's demographic profile and indicate some of the problems that countries are likely to face in the future.

**Figure 15.2** Population Pyramid Projections, 2025



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, International Database, [www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/pyramids.html](http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/pyramids.html). Accessed January 20, 2007.

### 15-1c Population Growth: A Ticking Bomb?

Some of the world's largest countries, many of them in the developing world, will grow even more by 2050 (*Table 15.1* on page 304). So, has population growth gotten out of hand? There are many views on this question, but two of the most influential have been Malthusian theory (which argues that the world can't sustain its unprecedented population surge), and demographic transition theory (which maintains that population growth is slowing).

**population pyramid** a graphic depiction of a population's age and sex distribution at a given point in time.

## MALTHUSIAN THEORY

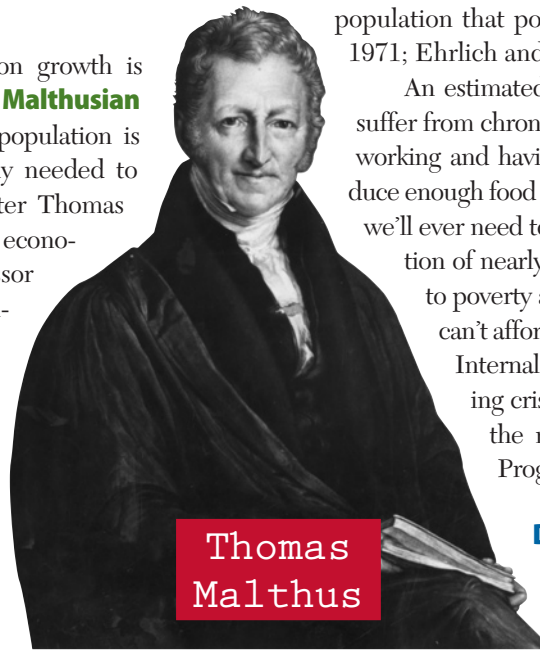
For many demographers, population growth is a ticking bomb. They subscribe to **Malthusian theory**, which maintains that the population is growing faster than the food supply needed to sustain it. This theory is named after Thomas Malthus (1766–1834), an English economist, clergyman, and college professor who argued that humans are multiplying faster than the earth's ability to produce sufficient food.

According to Malthus (1798/1965), population grows at a *geometric rate* (2, 4, 8, and so on), whereas the food supply grows at an *arithmetic rate* (1, 2, 3, 4, and so on). That is, two parents can have 4 children and 16 grandchildren within 50 years. The available number of acres of land, farm animals, and other sources of food can increase in that time period, but certainly not quadruple. In effect, then, the food supply will not keep up with population growth. Because there are millions of parents, the results could be catastrophic, with masses of people living in poverty or dying of starvation.

Malthus posited that two types of checks affect population size. *Positive checks* (famine, disease, war) limit reproduction, raise the death rate, and lower the overall population. *Preventive checks* (contraception, postponing marriage, abortion, and extramarital sex) also limit reproduction by reducing birth rates and, consequently, ensure a higher standard of living for all (Malthus, 1872/1991).

Malthusian theory has had a lasting influence. *Neo-Malthusians* (or New Malthusians) agree that the population is exploding beyond food supplies. The world's population reached its first billion in 1800. In the 200 years that followed, the world added another 5 billion people (Figure 15.1 on page 303). As a result

of this growth, according to some influential neo-Malthusians, the earth has become a “dying planet”—a world with insufficient food and a rapidly expanding



Thomas Malthus

Hulton Archive/Stringer/Getty images

population that pollutes the environment (Ehrlich, 1971; Ehrlich and Ehrlich, 2008).

An estimated one in nine people in the world suffer from chronic hunger that prevents them from working and having a normal life. We already produce enough food for 14 billion people, far more than we'll ever need to feed the projected world population of nearly 10 billion in 2050. Hunger is due to poverty and inequality, not scarcity: People can't afford to buy food or the land to grow it.

Internal wars also restrict distribution, fueling crises in the countries that need food the most (Druker, 2015; World Food Programme, 2017).

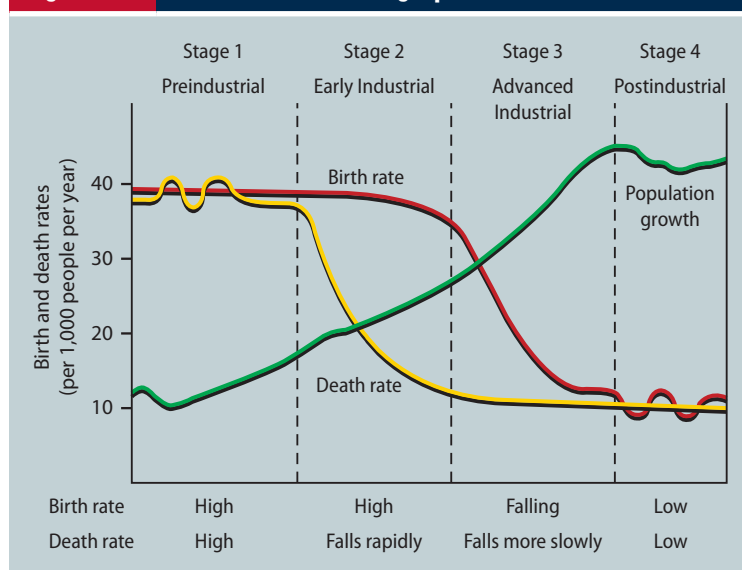
## DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION THEORY

Some demographers are more optimistic than neo-Malthusians.

### Demographic transition

**theory** maintains that population growth is kept in check and stabilizes as countries experience economic and technological development, which, in turn, affects birth and death rates. According to this theory, population growth changes as societies undergo industrialization, modernization, technological progress, and urbanization. During these processes, a nation goes through four stages (Figure 15.3), from high birth and death rates to low birth

**Figure 15.3** The Classical Demographic Transition Model



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, International Database, [www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/pyramids.html](http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/pyramids.html) (accessed January 20, 2007); Max Roser, [ourworldindata.org](http://ourworldindata.org) (accessed August 19, 2017).

**Malthusian theory** the population is growing faster than the food supply needed to sustain it.

**demographic transition theory** population growth is kept in check and stabilizes as countries experience economic and technological development.





Sean Gallup/Getty Images

A number of countries, particularly in Europe and parts of Asia, have below-replacement fertility rates. For some policy analysts, the recent influx of refugees and migrants is an opportunity to shore up labor forces with young workers whose taxes will support graying and dwindling native-born populations (OECD/European Union, 2015; Portes, 2015).

and death rates. Put simply, the greater the human development, the lower the fertility and death rates.

- ▶ **Stage 1: Preindustrial society.** In this initial stage, there's little population growth. The birth rate is high because people rarely use birth control: They want as many children as possible to provide unpaid agricultural labor and support parents in old age, but a high death rate offsets the high birth rate. No country exists in this current stage of the demographic transition.
- ▶ **Stage 2: Early industrial society.** There's significant population growth because the birth rate is higher than the death rate. The birth rate may even increase over what it was in Stage 1 because mothers and their children enjoy improved health care. Couples may still have large numbers of children because they fear that many of them will die, but the death rate declines because of better sanitation, better nutrition, and medical advances (e.g., immunizations and antibiotics). Most of the world's poorest countries—including sub-Saharan Africa, Afghanistan, and Yemen—are currently in Stage 2.
- ▶ **Stage 3: Advanced industrial society.** As the infant mortality rate declines, parents have fewer children. Effective birth control reduces family size. The decrease in child care responsibilities, in turn, enables women to work outside the home. Brazil, Mexico, and some Asian countries are currently in Stage 3.
- ▶ **Stage 4: Postindustrial society.** In this stage, the demographic transition is complete, and the society

has low birth and death rates. Women tend to be well educated and to have full-time jobs or careers. If there's little immigration, the population may even decrease because the birth rate is low. This is the case today in Canada, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Europe.

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

The dire predictions of Malthus and his successors that global population growth would lead to worldwide famine, disease, and poverty haven't come true. Still, 1.2 billion people (22 percent of the world's population) live in abject poverty, subsisting on less than \$1.25 a day (see Chapter 8).

Despite neo-Malthusians' fears, global fertility is half of what it was in 1972. The population of some industrialized countries is declining because people aren't having enough babies to replace themselves. These countries are experiencing **zero population growth (ZPG)**, a stable population level that occurs when each woman has no more than two children.

Fearing that there won't be enough young workers to pay for social security and the rising cost of health care for aging populations, some low-birth nations with fertility rates below ZPG are paying women to have more children. Russia gives mothers with one child \$12,500 for each additional baby; Japan has expanded its day care facilities and offers families a monthly allowance of \$145 per child younger than 15; Germany and France have liberal parental leave; South Korea turns off its office lights once a month so people have more time to go home and multiply and offers other incentives, including cash gifts, for staff who produce more than two babies; China is encouraging married couples to have two children; and Singapore, besides giving couples almost \$5,000 for having a child, lets families with babies go to the front of the queue for high quality, affordable public housing (Hales, 2014; Nechepurenko, 2014; "Pro-natalism," 2015).

Some neo-Malthusians maintain, however, that it's irresponsible for *any* country to encourage higher fertility rates. They worry about the consequences of adding 3 billion more inhabitants to the planet in less than 50 years, especially for many developing countries "with desperate economic outlooks" (Sachs, 2005; Shorto, 2008).

One result of population growth is urban growth. Cities attract people because of jobs and cultural activities, but urbanization has also created numerous problems.

**zero population growth (ZPG)** a stable population level when each woman has no more than two children.



During the Industrial Revolution, many cities, like this one in Hamburg, Germany, constructed canals that provided an inexpensive means of transportation and distributing goods.

## 15-2 URBANIZATION

If you've flown over the United States, you've probably noticed that people tend to cluster in and around cities. After sunset, some areas glow with lights, whereas others are engulfed in darkness. The average person, in the United States and worldwide, is more likely to live in a city than a rural area, and this trend is rising.

A *city* is a geographic area where a large number of people live relatively permanently and make a living primarily through nonagricultural activities. **Urbanization**, which increases the size of cities, is the movement of people from rural to urban areas. Most of this discussion focuses on U.S. cities, but let's begin with a brief look at global urbanization.

### 15-2a Urbanization: A Global View

In 2008, for the first time in history, a majority of the world's population lived in urban areas. By 2050, 66 percent of the world's population is projected to be urban (United Nations, 2014).

### ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF CITIES

Cities are one of the most striking features of modern life, but they've existed for centuries. About 7,000 years ago, for example, people built small cities in the Middle East and Latin America to protect

themselves from attackers and to increase trade. By 1800, 56 cities in Western Europe had a population of 40,000 or more (Chandler and Fox, 1974; De Long and Shleifer, 1992).

Before the Industrial Revolution, which began in the late eighteenth century, urban settlements in Europe, India, and China developed largely because people figured out how to use natural resources (e.g., mining coal and transporting water for irrigation and consumption). The Industrial Revolution spurred ever-increasing numbers of people to move to cities in search of jobs, schooling, and improved living conditions. As a result, the urban population surged—from 3 percent of the world's population in 1800 to 14 percent in 1900 (Sjoberg, 1960; Mumford, 1961). As industrialization advanced, urbanization increased.

### WORLD URBANIZATION TRENDS

Between 1920 and 2014, the world's urban population increased from 270 million to 3.9 billion, and is expected to rise to 6.3 billion by 2050. Africa and Asia are home to nearly 90 percent of the world's rural population, but both are urbanizing faster than other regions (*Table 15.2*). Between 2014 and 2050, just three countries—India, China, and Nigeria—are expected to account for 37 percent of the world's urban population growth (United Nations, 2014).

Many of the world's largest cities are **megacities**, metropolitan areas with at least 10 million inhabitants. In 1950, the world had only two megacities: Tokyo (11.3 million) and New York-Newark (12.3 million). By 2030, there'll be 41 megacities. Only two of them will be in the United States—New York-Newark

**Table 15.2** Urbanization Around the World

	Percentage of People Living in Urban Areas		
	1950	2014	2050 (Projected)
<b>World</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>66</b>
Africa	14	40	56
Asia	18	48	64
Latin America and the Caribbean	41	80	86
North America	64	81	87
Europe	51	73	82
Oceania	62	71	74

Source: Based on United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2012, Table 2, and United Nations, 2014, Table 1.

**urbanization** people's movement from rural to urban areas.

**megacities** metropolitan areas with at least 10 million inhabitants.



China's Beijing, with nearly 21 million people, is the world's 11th largest megacity. Rentable bikes are popular, but bike lanes are often blocked by parked cars, can end without warning, and have a "menagerie of moving objects," including "delivery guys on motorcycles, tourists meandering in rickshaws, and construction crews hauling bricks in rusted carts" (Demographia, 2017; Larson, 2017: 50).

(19.9 million), and Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana (13.3 million)—and both will be much smaller than Tokyo (37.2 million), Delhi (36.1 million), Shanghai (30.8 million), and other Asian cities. Thus, the number of megacities is growing, and they're much bigger than in the past (United Nations, 2014).

Should the explosive growth of cities and megacities concern us? Generally, cities provide jobs, offer better health services, and have more educational opportunities, but not everyone benefits from such advantages. The urban poor are often crowded into slums where children are less likely to be enrolled in school, sanitation is inadequate, and the economic gap between the haves and have-nots is widening (Laneri, 2011).

## 15-2b Urbanization in the United States

Like many other countries, the United States is becoming more urban. How, specifically, has the urban landscape changed? And what are some of the consequences?

### HOW URBAN AMERICA IS CHANGING

During the Industrial Revolution, millions of Americans in agricultural areas migrated to cities to find jobs. As a result, between 1900 and 2000, the urban population surged from 39 to 79 percent. Rural areas cover 97 percent of the nation's land, but contain only 19 percent of the population (about 60 million people), down from 55 percent in 1910 (Riche, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

**Suburbanization.** As cities grew more crowded, dirtier, and noisier, urban growth sparked *suburbanization*, people's moving to communities just outside a city. In 1920, about 15 percent of Americans lived in the suburbs compared with more than half today (Palen, 2014).

During the 1950s, two-thirds of urban dwellers moved to suburbs. The federal government, fearing a return to the economic depression of the 1930s, underwrote the construction of much new housing in the

suburbs. The general public obtained low-interest mortgages, veterans were offered the added incentive of being able to purchase a home with a \$1 down payment, and massive highway construction programs enabled commuting by car. As a result, suburbs mushroomed (Rothman, 1978).

Suburban life is appealing. Some of the benefits include more privacy and space, one's own yard and garages, better schools, safer streets, and, if there are jobs nearby, shorter commutes. Suburban elites have sprawling "McMansions," considerable acreage, and gated communities.

Especially since 1980, however, much of the social and physical separation between cities and suburbs has blurred. More Latinos, Asians, and blacks now live in the suburbs than in the city, representing up to 35 percent of the suburban population in more than a third of the nation's largest metropolitan areas. One in three poor Americans now live in suburbs and crime rates, although lower than in cities, have increased (Kneebone and Berube, 2013; Frey, 2014).

**Edge Cities and Exurbs.** Originally, most suburbs were bedroom communities for commuters with jobs in the city. Over the last few decades, suburbanization has generated **edge cities**, business centers that are within or close to suburban residential areas and include offices, schools, shopping, entertainment, malls, hotels, and medical facilities.

People have also created **exurbs**, small, usually prosperous communities beyond a city's suburbs. About 18 percent of Americans live in exurbs, and counties containing far-flung exurbs are growing faster than many urban counties. The average exurbanite is white, middle or upper-middle class, married with children, and a "super commuter" (who travels two or more hours a day for work) (Berube et al., 2006; Badger, 2015; Frey, 2015).

**edge cities** business centers that are within or close to suburban residential areas.

**exurbs** small, usually prosperous communities beyond a city's suburbs.





Patrick Liem/AGE Fotostock

**Is this your dream house?** Compared with the average American home of around 2,500 square feet, the typical “tiny house” is between 100 and 400 square feet. Living smaller is becoming popular because of environmental concerns and much lower financial costs. Prices range from \$4,000 to \$200,000 depending, like a traditional house, on location, cost of the land, building materials, and so on. Some residents and local governments refuse to allow tiny houses, fearing they’ll drive down property values (Willett, 2015; Beitsch, 2016; Sullivan, 2017).

**Metropolitan Statistical Areas.** Together, suburbs, edge cities, and exurbs form **metropolitan statistical areas** (MSAs), also called *metro areas*, that consist of a central city of at least 50,000 people and the urban areas linked to it. The vast majority of Americans (84 percent) live in 366 MSAs. Since 2015, 10 of the 15 fastest-growing metro areas have been in the South, with four of the top five in Texas (e.g., Frisco and McKinney in the Dallas–Fort Worth–Arlington MSA) (U.S. Census Bureau Newsroom, 2017).

Since 2011, and for the first time in nearly a hundred years, metro areas—particularly those with more than 1 million people—have grown faster than suburbs (Frey, 2014). Two groups—young professionals and baby boomers—have driven the trend in metro living. Because many young professionals are postponing marriage and parenthood (see Chapter 12), they don’t have

to worry about the quality of schools. Moreover, many work in cities, want to reduce commute times, and can’t afford the down payment for a house in the suburbs. A number of baby boomers, particularly those who are retiring, are moving to metro areas

**metropolitan statistical area** (MSA, also called *metro area*) a central city of at least 50,000 people and urban areas linked to it.

**urban sprawl** rapid, unplanned, and uncontrolled spread of development into regions adjacent to cities.

for a variety of reasons (e.g., better public transportation, greater access to cultural events, social services for older people, no longer being healthy enough to maintain a suburban house) (Kneebone and Berube, 2013; Westcott, 2014).

## SOME CONSEQUENCES OF URBANIZATION

Cities offer many benefits, including a vast array of culturally diverse restaurants, shops, and activities, but urbanization also creates problems. Some of the drawbacks include urban sprawl, increased traffic congestion, a scarcity of affordable housing, and residential segregation.

**Urban Sprawl.** **Urban sprawl**—the rapid, unplanned, and uncontrolled spread of development into regions adjacent to cities—is widespread. According to some estimates, urbanization in the Southeast will increase by up to 190 percent by 2060. Development on that scale will result in losing 15 percent of agricultural land, 12 percent of grasslands, and 10 percent of forests (Terando et al., 2014).

Urban sprawl has created rapid *job sprawl*, which occurs when companies move jobs from metropolitan areas to suburbs. The more distant the suburb, the less likely low-income people are to hear about employment opportunities through informal networks, to afford houses in these areas, and to have transportation to the jobs (Raphael and Stoll, 2010).

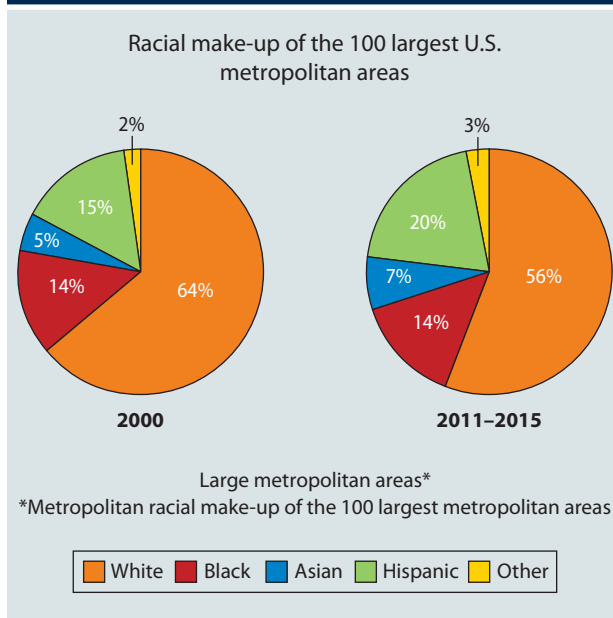
Some large metro areas (e.g., Washington, D.C., New York, Boston, Atlanta, Miami, and Denver) are implementing “walkable urbanism” to curb urban sprawl. That is, the developments are neighborhoods where everyday destinations (e.g., work, school, restaurants) are concentrated and within walking distances. For the most part, however, most urban development is built around driving rather than walking (Leinberger and Lynch, 2014).

**Traffic Congestion.** Generally, the only way to get around in urban sprawl areas is by automobile. This means that most suburban households face the costs of buying, fueling, insuring, and maintaining multiple cars. The U.S. population has increased by 23 percent over the last 25 years, but total highway miles have increased by only 5 percent, resulting in greater traffic congestion within and outside cities. More than 10 million Americans (8 percent of all people who don’t work at home) now travel 60 minutes or longer one way, a proportion that has increased by 95 percent since 1990. Traffic snarls and long commutes increase air pollution and stress, waste fuel and time, and decrease the time that people have for family and leisure activities (McKenzie, 2013; Jones, 2017).

**Lack of Affordable Housing.** In some cases, the poor are pushed out by **gentrification**, a process in which upper-middle-class and affluent people buy and renovate houses and stores in downtown urban neighborhoods. Governments in many older cities encourage gentrification to increase dwindling populations, to revitalize urban areas, and to augment tax revenues. Gentrification can benefit an entire community because it breaks up concentrated poverty pockets, the new residents may demand improvements in schools and crime control, and an influx of retail stores can generate new jobs. Rent increases, however, have displaced many low-income residents and small businesses. Also, some longtime black residents have complained that aggressive policing tactics, like stopping and frisking people on the street, increase when wealthier people move into a neighborhood (Buntin, 2015; Mendoza, 2016).

**Residential Segregation.** Since 1970, racial residential segregation has decreased. Metropolitan areas, especially, are becoming racially more diverse (Figure 15.4). Among metropolitan areas with a population of 500,000 or more, the least segregated are in the South and West, and the most segregated are mainly in the Northeast and Midwest. There may be a “continued easing of the color line” because racial segregation has waned even in long-standing

**Figure 15.4 U.S. Metropolitan Areas Are Getting Racially More Diverse**



Source: Based on Frey, 2016, Figure 1.



Jeff Greenberg/AGE Fotostock

Gentrification improves old city neighborhoods and increases property values, but also displaces low-income residents.

“hypersegregated” cities like Chicago and New York. The nation’s 20 most multiethnic metropolitan regions are now “global neighborhoods” that have substantial numbers of whites, blacks, Latinos, and Asians (Ice-land et al., 2013: 119; Frey, 2015).

Whereas racial residential segregation has decreased, social class residential segregation is more pronounced than in the past, and the most residentially segregated are low-income blacks and Latinos. Since 2000, for example, the number of blacks and Latinos living in high-poverty ghettos and slums has nearly doubled, rising from 7 to almost 14 million people (Bischoff and Reardon, 2013; Jargowsky, 2015).

Residential segregation along income lines has increased primarily because of the long-term rise in economic inequality (see Chapters 8 and 11). Some wealthy neighborhoods have even fought off state laws that mandate constructing affordable housing for low- and middle-income families. According to the high-income homeowners, building less expensive houses would raise crime rates, lower property values, and “There’s plenty of affordable housing in *neighboring communities*” (McCabe, 2014: 39, emphasis added).

## 15-2c Sociological Explanations of Urbanization

How and why do cities change? In answering this and other questions, functionalists underscore urban development, conflict

**gentrification** upper-middle-class and affluent people buy and renovate houses and stores in downtown urban neighborhoods.

**Table 15.3 Sociological Explanations of Urbanization**

Perspective	Level of Analysis	Key Points
<b>Functionalist</b>	Macro	Cities serve many important social and economic functions, but urbanization can also be dysfunctional.
<b>Conflict</b>	Macro	Driven by greed and profit, large corporations, banks, developers, and other capitalist groups shape cities' growth or decline.
<b>Feminist</b>	Macro and micro	Whether they live in cities or suburbs, women generally experience fewer choices and more constraints than men.
<b>Symbolic Interactionist</b>	Micro	City residents differ in their types of interaction, lifestyles, and perceptions of urban life.

theorists emphasize the impact of capitalism and big business, feminist scholars focus on women's safety and space, and symbolic interactionists examine the quality of city life (Table 15.3 summarizes these perspectives).

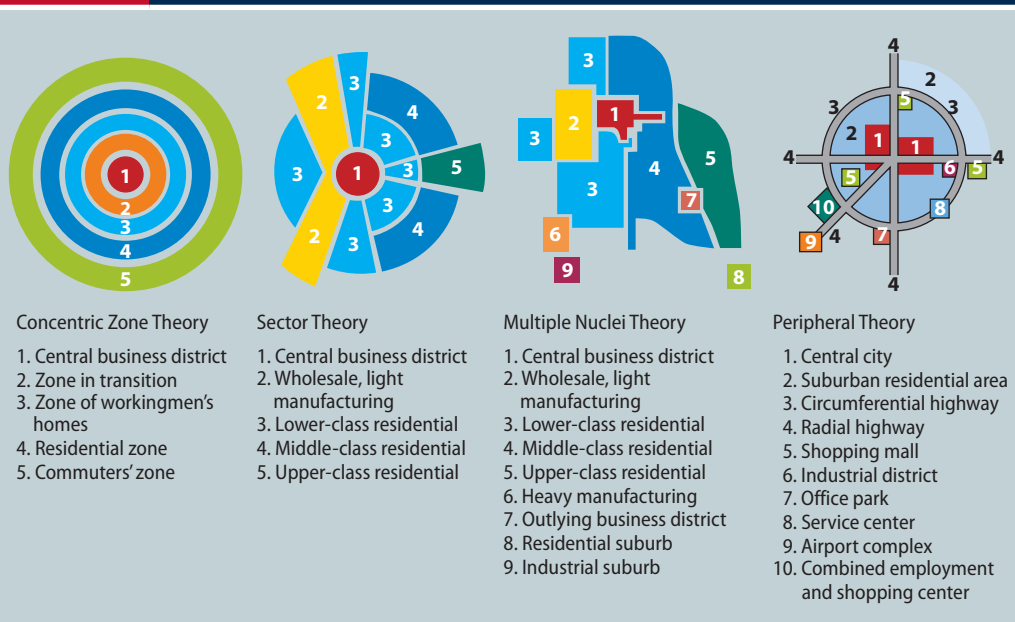
### FUNCTIONALISM: HOW AND WHY CITIES CHANGE

**Urban ecology** studies the relationships between people and urban environments. Over the years, social scientists have revised urban ecology theories (Figure 15.5).

Sociologists Robert Park and Ernest Burgess (1921) proposed *concentric zone theory* to explain the distribution of social groups within urban areas. According to this model, a city grows outward from a central point in a series of rings. The innermost ring, the central business district, is surrounded by a zone of transition, which contains industry and poor-quality housing. The third and fourth rings have housing for the working and middle classes. The outermost ring is occupied by people who live in the suburbs and commute daily to work in the central business district.

**urban ecology** studies the relationships between people and urban environments.

Economist Homer Hoyt's (1939) *sector theory* refined concentric zone

**Figure 15.5 Four Models of City Growth and Change**

Source: Based on Park and Burgess, 1921; Hoyt, 1939; Harris and Ullman, 1945; and Harris, 1997.

theory. He proposed that cities develop in sectors (instead of rings) that radiate from the central business district depending on various economic and social activities. Some sectors are predominantly industrial, some contain stores and offices, and others, generally farther away from the central business district, are middle- and upper-class residential areas.

Geographers Chauncey Harris and Edward Ullman (1945) developed another influential model, *multiple nuclei theory*, which proposed that a city contains more than one center around which activities revolve. For example, a "minicenter" often includes an outlying business district with stores and offices that are accessible to middle- and upper-class residential neighborhoods, whereas airports typically attract hotels and warehouses.



As cities grew after World War II, these models no longer described urban spaces. Thus, Harris (1997) proposed a *peripheral* theory of urban growth, which emphasized the development of suburbs around a city but away from its center. As suburbs and edge cities burgeon, highways that link the city's central business district to outlying areas and beltways that loop around the city provide relatively easy access to airports, the downtown, and surrounding areas.

Functionalists also examine urban dysfunctions, including overcrowding, poverty, deviant behavior, and environmental destruction. From 2000 to 2010, for instance, the number of vacant housing units—many of them in older industrial cities like Baltimore and Detroit—increased by 4.5 million, or 44 percent. Abandoned buildings can increase crime rates and a neighborhood's social disorganization (Williams, 2013).

### CONFLICT THEORY: THE IMPACT OF CAPITALISM AND BIG BUSINESS

For functionalists, people's choices shape urban changes. In contrast, **new urban sociology**, a perspective heavily influenced by conflict theory, views urban changes as largely the result of decisions made by powerful capitalists and high-income groups. That is, economic and political factors favorable to the rich, not ordinary citizens, determine urban growth or decline. When a local government wants to rejuvenate parts of the inner city, it typically offers tax breaks, changes zoning laws, and allows real estate, construction, and banking industries to seek profits with little regard for the needs of low-income households or the homeless (Macionis and Parrillo, 2007).

Baltimore, like many other cities, subsidizes private development. Taxpayers have financed billions of dollars in city projects for multinational real estate and banking corporations. The profits are channeled to CEOs and stockholders, while city residents continue paying for (inadequate) schools, parks, libraries, and other public buildings and spaces (Kreitner, 2016).

For conflict theorists, urban space is a commodity that's bought and sold for profit. It's not the average American, they argue, but bankers, developers, politicians, and influential businesspeople who determine how to use urban space. Because increasing a property's value is a higher priority than community needs, poor and low-income people are crowded into dilapidated neighborhoods (Logan and Molotch, 1987; Gottdiener and Hutchison, 2000).

Some analysts are especially critical of the tech sector for being "bad urbanists." To illustrate, in 2011 Twitter received generous tax incentives to move its



Slums are one of the most dysfunctional by-products of urbanization. Megacities—particularly those in India, Egypt, Pakistan, Kenya, and Mexico—have the world's largest slums.

new headquarters into one of San Francisco's poorest neighborhoods. City officials expected that the company's presence would revitalize the community. Instead, Twitter employees ate all their meals in the dining area, rarely leaving the building to shop because small businesses couldn't afford the area's skyrocketing rents. The neighborhood's evictions increased 38 percent by 2013 because longtime residents couldn't pay the soaring rent increases (Arieff, 2013; Butler, 2014; Steinmetz, 2014).

### FEMINIST THEORIES: GENDER, POVERTY, AND SAFETY

Feminist theories emphasize gender-related urban constraints. Women's exclusion from urban planning results in "a male perspective and is in men's interest" (WUNRN, 2017). For example, many women fear the city, especially urban public spaces like streets, parks, and public transportation (Domosh and Seager, 2001; Norman, 2015). They see these places as risky for their physical safety, despite the fact that most violence against women occurs at home. A few cities provide public transportation (e.g., minivans that operate seven nights a week) to prevent crimes against women, usually minority women, who must travel to work after 8:00 p.m. and return home before dawn. For the most part, however, such services are rare (Hayden, 2002).

People living below the poverty level are predominantly female, black, single parents, and urban

**new urban sociology** views urban changes as largely the result of decisions made by powerful capitalists and high-income groups.

(Proctor et al., 2016). Because of a lack of affordable housing, many women and their children may be forced to live under the same roof with an aggressor. If public transportation isn't available or adequate, low-income women are cut off from job opportunities. Low-income mothers are expected to work. However, low-wage jobs, coupled with a lack of affordable child care, create role conflicts, undermine mental health, and increase the likelihood of intimate partner violence (Jacobs et al., 2016; WUNRN, 2017).

## SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY: HOW PEOPLE EXPERIENCE CITY LIFE

Symbolic interactionists are most interested in the impact of urban life on city residents. In a classic essay, sociologist Louis Wirth (1938: 14) described the city as a place where “our physical contacts are close, but our social contacts are distant.”

Wirth defined the city as a large, dense, and socially and culturally diverse area. These characteristics produce *urbanism*, a way of life that differs from that of rural dwellers. Wirth saw urbanites as more tolerant than residents of small towns or rural areas of a variety of lifestyles, religious practices, and attitudes.

He also believed that urbanism has negative consequences, including alienation, friction because of physical congestion, impersonal relationships, and a disintegration of kinship and friendship ties. Some studies have supported Wirth's theory of urbanism (see Guterman, 1969), but others have challenged his views. In a recent national study, people living in large metropolitan areas scored higher than those living in small towns and rural areas on physical and emotional health, access to basic necessities, and being satisfied with life (Witters, 2010).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Functionalists tend to overlook urbanization's negative political and economic impact, especially when profit and greed guide urban planning. Conflict theory seems to assume that residents are helpless victims as developers and corporations raze low-income houses. In fact, environmental groups have had considerable success in pushing through legislation to maintain and even increase open public spaces and build energy-saving homes in low-income neighborhoods (Moore, 2008).

Feminist sociologists have made important contributions through studies of the everyday lives of low-income women, especially in central cities (see Chapter 11), but urbanization has received much less attention.

**ecosystem** a community of living and non-living organisms that share a physical environment.

Urbanites are more diverse than some symbolic interactionists claim. People living in cities aren't necessarily more self-centered or isolated than those in small towns or rural areas. Instead, many have close family bonds, friends, and satisfying relationships with coworkers (Wilson, 1993; Kotkin, 2016). Also, symbolic interaction doesn't show how political, educational, religious, and economic factors shape people's experiences of city life (Hutter, 2007).

You've seen that the world's population is growing rapidly and becoming more urbanized. Both population growth and urbanization are taxing the planet's limited resources.

### 15-3

## THE ENVIRONMENT

Consider the following:

- ▶ Each year, Americans throw away 31 to 40 percent of their food—50 percent more than in the 1970s—that ends up in landfills (Gunders, 2012; Neff et al., 2015).
- ▶ The average American throws away 5 pounds of solid waste every day. As waste decomposes in landfills, it gives off many gases, including methane, which contributes to global warming (Powell et al., 2015).
- ▶ Up to 3.5 million Americans get sick every year from polluted beach water that causes a wide range of diseases, including ear-nose-eye infections, hepatitis, skin rashes, and respiratory illnesses (Dorfman and Haren, 2014).
- ▶ The United States uses 1.2 billion pounds of pesticides a year, but only 0.01 percent reaches the intended target. The other 99.99 percent contaminates the food, air, and water (Hsu et al., 2014).

Such environmental problems threaten our **ecosystem**, a community of living and non-living organisms that share a physical environment. Plants, animals, and humans depend on each other for survival. Because the ecosystem is interconnected worldwide, what happens in one country affects others. Water, air pollution, and climate change are three interrelated factors that are endangering the global ecosystem.

### 15-3a Water

An expanding world population, extreme weather patterns, and industrial pollution are jeopardizing already limited water supplies. More than 768 million people worldwide don't have clean water, and 1.8 billion drink contaminated water. Contaminated water, inadequate



Danshutter/Shutterstock.com

Among developing countries, 25 percent of girls aren't in school compared with 17 percent of boys. One reason for this difference is that girls are more likely than boys to be responsible for collecting the family's water, making it difficult for them to attend school ("Global WASH Fast Facts," 2017).

availability of water, and lack of access to sanitation together contribute to 88 percent of deaths from diarrheal diseases. In some developing countries, families spend up to 25 percent of their income to purchase water, and many women and children spend up to 6 hours a day carrying it home (World Health Organization and UNICEF, 2014; WWAP, 2014).

## AVAILABILITY AND CONSUMPTION

Worldwide, water scarcity is our biggest problem. Just 3 percent of the earth's water is fresh, and two-thirds of it is locked up in the ground, glaciers, and ice caps. That leaves about 1 percent of the earth's water for the world's more than 7 billion people. The world's demand for water has tripled over the last half century. Water scarcity, which affects at least 40 percent of people around the world, is projected to increase. More than half of Earth's 37 largest aquifers (underground layers of rock that store water) are being depleted "at alarming rates" to keep pace with demands from agriculture, growing populations, and industries like mining (WWAP, 2014; Richey et al., 2015; United Nations, 2015).

Some refer to water as "blue gold" because it's becoming one of the earth's most precious and scarce commodities. Water shortages—rather than oil or

## How Much Water It Takes to Make...

In 1950, Americans used 150 billion gallons of water every day compared with 400 billion gallons today. It takes water to make everything. For example, it takes:



Jacob Kearns/Shutterstock.com

2,600 gallons to make a pair of blue jeans



Christopher Elwell/Shutterstock.com

634 gallons to make an average hamburger



magicoven/Shutterstock.com

53 gallons to produce a cup of to-go latte coffee



Stocksnapper/Shutterstock.com

713 gallons to make a cotton shirt



Evgeny Karandaev/Shutterstock.com

1.5 gallons to produce an average 18 ounces of bottled water

Sources: Based on Connell, 2011; Postel, 2012.



diamonds—are behind conflicts and even wars in a number of countries. According to a past Secretary-General of the United Nations, “Too often, where we need water, we find guns...” (World Water Assessment Program, 2009: 20; Reynolds, 2012).

Industrialized nations not only have greater access to clean water than the developing world, they use more and pay less for it. The average person in the United States uses about 163 gallons of water per day compared with 40 gallons in Germany, 30 in Denmark, 23 in China, and less than 3 in Mozambique. On average, Americans pay only \$.48 per gallon compared with \$1.65 a gallon in Denmark. In the developing world, people typically pay five times as much as Europeans (Maxwell, 2012). Thus, in many countries, clean water is a luxury rather than a basic human right.

## THREATS TO WATER SUPPLIES

Precipitation (in the form of rain, snow, sleet, or hail) is the ecosystem’s main source of water. Clean water has been depleted for many reasons, including pollution, privatization, and waste.

**Pollution.** Every year, more than 860 billion gallons of sewage, pesticides, fertilizers, automotive chemicals, and trash spoil the country’s freshwater. Industrial sites and farm fertilizers are two of the major pollution sources. As a result, 20 percent of the nation’s lakes and 55 percent of its rivers and streams can’t provide drinking water or support healthy aquatic life (EPA, 2013, 2014).

For almost two years, the residents of Flint, Michigan—a predominantly low-income, black city—complained of burning skin, hair loss, seizures, strange red splotches on their hands and faces, and anemic children. The mayor and city officials repeatedly told residents the water was fine, until an environmental engineering professor confirmed that Flint’s water supply was contaminated with lead. In mid-2016, an independent panel concluded that “the Flint water crisis is a clear case of environmental injustice” (Flint Water Advisory Task Force, 2016: 55).

**Environmental racism**, also called *environmental injustice*, refers to the exposure of poor people, especially minorities, to environmental hazards. Because of environmental policies and practices, poor neighborhoods are routinely the site of toxic waste, sewerage treatment plants, landfills, illegal dumps, incinerators, polluting power plants,

and air and water pollution. These and other hazards increase the likelihood of illnesses and diseases, including cancer, asthma, and children’s stunted brain development (Krajicek, 2016).

Few corporate polluters are fined, and many are exempt from major environmental laws, including the 1974 Safe Water Drinking Act. Consider hydraulic fracturing, or *fracking*, a process that injects water, sand, and chemicals at high pressure to extract gas and oil from rock that lies deep underground. Many U.S. lawmakers—some of them with deep ties to industry that finances political campaigns—endorse fracking to increase energy supplies (Blake, 2014).

Fracking has risks because gases can escape into drinking water. Some of the 750 chemicals injected into the ground contaminate water, increasing the risks of cancer, infertility, and other health problems (Kassotis et al., 2014; EPA, 2015).

Fracking has also increased the number and magnitude of earth tremors and earthquakes from Colorado to the Atlantic coast. In Oklahoma, the number of earthquakes measuring 3 or higher on the Richter scale jumped from 1 in 2007 to 907 in 2015. No place in the world has ever experienced earthquakes at such a rate in such a short time. Cities and counties nationwide have passed 430 measures to control or ban fracking, but companies typically prevail despite opposition (Shauk and Olson, 2014; Skoumal et al., 2015; Philips, 2016).

**Privatization.** Water is a big business because of *privatization*, transferring some or all of the assets or operations of public systems into private hands. Perrier, Evian, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo—and particularly the French giants Vivendi and Suez—have been buying the rights to extract water in the United States and other countries



Oklahoma’s state officials have only recently acknowledged the connection between fracking and earthquakes (Sanburn, 2016).

### environmental racism

(also called *environmental injustice*) exposure of poor people, especially minorities, to environmental hazards.

at will from aquifers, then bottling and selling it around the world.

In 2014, bottled water companies spent more than \$84 million on advertising to compete with each other and to convince consumers that bottled water is healthier and safer than soda and tap water. In fact, tap water is safer. FDA regulations allow bottles to be contaminated with small amounts of bacteria, including *E. coli*. And, unlike tap water, which is always moving, bacteria increase after bottling because microbes “can attach to the plastic, munch on organic material in the water, and multiply” (Lohan, 2015; Matanoski, 2017: 21).

Bottling water is lucrative for corporations, but there are many environmental drawbacks. It depletes local water supplies, whether the water comes from municipal sources (40 percent) or local springs (60 percent). Moreover, about 86 percent of the empty plastic bottles in the United States clog landfills instead of being recycled (Food and Water Watch, 2013).

For-profit companies own approximately 10 percent of U.S. community water systems. Proponents maintain that, compared with government, private businesses improve water infrastructure, decrease local mismanagement (as in Flint), operate more efficiently, and spend billions of dollars fixing problems. Opponents contend that, on average, privatized water is 58 percent more expensive than the average public water utility charges, and that a business is more likely than the government to place a lien on consumers’ property if they fall behind in paying water and sewer bills (Food & Water Watch, 2016; Ivory et al., 2016; Millsap, 2016).

**Waste.** Most water problems are due to human mismanagement and waste, not nature. Of all available water worldwide, agriculture consumes about 70 percent, industry uses 20 percent, and 10 percent is residential (WWAP, 2014). In agriculture, many irrigation systems are inefficient, farmers and agribusiness (large agriculture companies) often grow water-hungry crops like cotton and sugarcane in arid areas, and pesticide and chemical fertilizer runoff from fields pollutes streams, rivers, and lakes.

A significant water pipe bursts, on average, every 2 minutes somewhere in the country, losing 7 billion gallons of water a day. Most of the nation’s pipes, especially in cities along the eastern seaboard, are nearly 200 years old, and some are made of wood. A water pipe that leaks or bursts wastes huge amounts of drinking

water, damages streets and homes, and seeps dangerous pollutants into drinking water. Despite such hazards, replacing a city’s substandard pipes has decreased. From 1890 to 1920, for instance, Chicago replaced aging water and sewage pipes at a rate of about 75 miles a year. That number has declined steadily over the years, dropping to 30 miles a year in 2003 (Duhigg, 2010; Pearlstine, 2013).

## 15-3b Air Pollution, Global Warming, and Climate Change

Global warming is a serious environmental problem. Let’s begin with air pollution, the major cause of climate change and global warming.

### AIR POLLUTION: SOME SOURCES AND CAUSES

Worldwide, 92 percent of people breathe unhealthy outdoor air. About three million die each year from cardiovascular and respiratory diseases linked to outdoor air pollution (WHO, 2016).

There are many reasons for air pollution, but four are the most common. First, a major source of air pollution is the burning of *fossil fuels*, substances obtained from the earth, including coal, petroleum, and natural gas. The exhaust gases of cars, trucks, and buses contain poisons—sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), and carbon monoxide. Power plants that produce electricity by burning coal or oil account for nearly 40 percent of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions.

Second, manufacturing plants that produce consumer goods pour pollutants into the air. Formaldehyde-based vapors that can lead to cancer and respiratory problems are emitted by many household and personal care products: pressed wood (often used in furniture), plastic grocery bags, waxed paper, latex paints, detergents, nail polish, cosmetics, and shampoos (“Formaldehyde,” 2012; see also Chapter 14).

Third, winds blow contaminants in the air across borders and oceans. Air pollution originating in Europe has been tracked to Asia, the Arctic, and even rural areas in the western United States where there’s little industry or automobile traffic (Cooper et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2017).

A fourth reason for air pollution is that government policies and enforcement vary from one administration to another. The Bush administration blocked the efforts of 18 states to cut emissions from cars and trucks because



Raj K Raj/Hindustan Times/Getty Images

Delhi, India, is the world's most polluted city, but air quality in Pakistan's urban areas is, on average, worse (Smith, 2017).

it believed that tougher regulations would hurt the U.S. economy ("No Action on Greenhouse Gases," 2008).

President Obama promised to decrease air pollution, but environmental groups accused his administration of being too soft on the fossil-fuel industry by not limiting their carbon dioxide emissions. The rules also excluded Indian reservations—which have some of the most polluting coal-fired power plants in the country—from meeting state goals to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 (Eilperin and Bernstein, 2014; Magill, 2014).

U.S. presidents of both political parties have attended U.N.-sponsored global climate change conventions since 1995, supporting programs to reduce global pollution. In 2017, however, President Trump pulled out of the Paris talks to reduce planet-warming emissions. He has also removed dozens of Obama-era environmental rules that would have closed hundreds of coal-fired power plants and replaced them with wind and solar farms, and would have limited oil and gas drilling in America's Arctic and Atlantic waters (Davenport and Rubin, 2017; Rushe et al., 2017).

**global warming** increase in the average temperature of earth's atmosphere.

**greenhouse effect** heating of earth's atmosphere because of the presence of certain atmospheric gases.

**climate change** a change in overall temperatures and weather conditions over time.

## GLOBAL WARMING AND THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT

**Global warming** is an increase in the average temperature of earth's atmosphere. The warming is due to several factors. Some are natural, such as changes in solar radiation,

the earth's orbit, and the frequency or intensity of volcanic activity. At least 95 percent of global warming is due to human activities, however, and not natural climate swings (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014).

Global warming begins with the **greenhouse effect**, the heating of earth's atmosphere because of the presence of certain atmospheric gases. When the sun's heat enters the atmosphere, some of it is absorbed by earth's surface, and some of it is reflected back to space. Greenhouse gases in the atmosphere trap some of this heat. Heat is necessary to support life, but when greenhouse gases increase, earth becomes warmer than it would be otherwise, endangering public health and the welfare of current and future generations (EPA, 2009).

Air pollutants, primarily CO<sub>2</sub>, ignite the greenhouse effect. Between 2000 and 2010, greenhouse-gas emissions grew at 2.2 percent a year—almost twice as fast as in the previous 30 years. The 20 largest global economies (e.g., China, United States, European Union, India) account for 82 percent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that come from burning fossil fuels, primarily from coal-fired power plants. Some of the countries are shifting to natural gas and other energy sources, but coal-fired plants produce 46 percent of their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014; Olivier et al., 2016).

China emits almost twice as much CO<sub>2</sub> as the next-biggest polluter, the United States. Since 2014, however, China's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have dropped by nearly 6 percent, meeting its Paris climate agreement to get 15 percent of its energy from clean sources. The United States, although one of the world's biggest polluters, is going in the opposite direction as President Trump pursues policies to bring back coal and to cut government spending on clean energy development (McKenna, 2017).

## SOME EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

**Climate change** is a change in overall temperatures and weather conditions over time. Global warming probably began thousands of years ago when humans started changing the planet by cutting down and burning forests to grow food (Fischman, 2009). Such *deforestation*, clearing massive amounts of trees, affects global climate changes because forests recycle carbon dioxide into oxygen.

Regardless of when it began, climate change is "unequivocal," has "moved firmly into the present," and is having a profound impact on every ecosystem worldwide. Since record-keeping began in 1880, 2014 was the hottest year on earth, and 9 of the 10 warmest years have





occurred since 2000. Between 1750 and 2005, seven countries produced 63 percent of all global warming. The United States, accounting for 20 percent of all climate-changing pollution, was the leading offender, followed by China and Russia (8 percent each). Scientists predict that extreme weather, especially heat waves, will produce heavier rainfall in some regions; more floods, landslides, and uncontained wildfires; stronger hurricanes and tornadoes; and more intense droughts around the world (Matthews et al., 2014; NOAA National Centers . . . , 2015).

Many changes have already occurred because of climate change. For example:

- ▶ Higher CO<sub>2</sub> levels are turning oceans more acidic, resulting in some shellfish (e.g., clams and crabs) dying or not developing (Spotts, 2009).
- ▶ Global weather- and climate-related disasters rose from 743 between 1971 and 1980 to 3,496 between 2001 and 2010. Climate change will lead to an increase in big storms (like Hurricanes Harvey and Irma) that cause floods, landslides, and other natural disasters (World Meteorological Organization, 2014; Prein et al., 2017).
- ▶ In 2016, earth reached its highest temperature on record. Excessive heat in the United States claims more lives each year than floods, lightning, tornadoes, and hurricanes combined (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2014; Blunden and Arndt, 2017).
- ▶ The world's largest ice sheets in Antarctica and western Greenland are melting by an average of 3 feet a year. The Arctic Ocean could be largely free of sea ice by the late 2030s, only two decades from now. The melting glaciers could contribute to sea levels rising 3 to 6 feet by 2100, flooding up to 70 percent of the populations in Florida, Georgia,

South Carolina, and Louisiana (Hauer et al., 2016; AMAP, 2017; Blunden and Arndt, 2017).

- ▶ Some Alaskan native villages are facing disaster. Climate change has thinned the Arctic ice so much that it's become too dangerous to hunt whales, a traditional means of sustenance, or even to live in the state's coastal communities. As the ice melts, the towns are in "imminent danger" from erosion and being washed to sea during storms (Mooney, 2015).

Such data show that our planet is ailing. Can people slow some of earth's devastation through better environmental policies and practices, particularly by endorsing sustainable development?

### 15-3c Is Sustainable Development Possible?

**Sustainable development** refers to economic activities that don't threaten the environment. There are reasons to be both pessimistic and optimistic about achieving sustainable development.

#### REASONS TO BE PESSIMISTIC

Which country is the greenest? Not the United States. For example:

- ▶ A study of environmental performance ranked 180 countries on factors like water quality, air pollution, and protecting the ecosystem. Iceland and the Scandinavian countries were the top four. The United States ranked 26th, and below some developing countries like Slovakia and Croatia (Hsu et al., 2016).
- ▶ In a study of 128 nations, the United States ranked only 18th in environmental quality (Porter et al., 2017).

**sustainable development** economic activities that don't threaten the environment.



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Fluffy and ultra-plush toilet paper is made by chopping down and grinding up the pulp of trees that are decades or even a century old. U.S. corporations have introduced “earth-friendly” toilet paper, but “customers are unwavering in their desire for the softest paper possible” (Fahrenthold, 2009: A1).

- ▶ Among the world’s 23 top energy-consuming countries, the United States ranks only 8th in energy-efficiency policies and programs, and below developing countries like China (Kallakuri et al., 2016).

Why does the United States rank so low in environmental performance? There are many reasons, but three important and interrelated factors are profit, politics, and personal choices.

**Profit.** Does profit—capitalism’s basic drive—override environment hazards? Exxon (now ExxonMobil), the world’s largest oil company, started conducting cutting-edge climate research in the mid-1950s. When the internal studies showed that rising CO<sub>2</sub> levels were likely to cause global warming, the top executives cut much of the climate research budget, began to organize against air pollution regulations, and funded climate denial research and activities (Banerjee et al., 2015).

Even well-intentioned businesses dismantle eco-friendly ventures if they don’t bring quick profits. For

example, both Chevron Corporation and BP (British Petroleum) pulled back from clean energy projects because the profits from non-renewable oil and gas sales were much higher (Upton, 2014).

Some environmentalists are especially dismayed by *greenwashers*, companies and other organizations that pollute the planet while presenting an environmentally responsible public image. In 2000, for instance, BP re-branded itself “Beyond Petroleum” and changed its logo to a green-and-yellow sunburst, but the majority of its business produces fossil fuels (Elgin, 2014).

**Politics.** You saw earlier that environmental policies reflect a president’s views. So far, the current administration has halted a study of the public risks of coal mining by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; closed an Energy Department office that works with other countries to develop clean energy technology; and eliminated a rule to prevent coal mining companies from dumping toxic debris into nearly streams. President Trump has also appointed a chief of the EPA who contends that nature, not human activities (e.g., burning fossil fuels), causes global warming, and who dismissed at least five academic scientists from the EPA that will be replaced by chemical and fossil fuel company applicants. Despite such changes, some of President Trump’s supporters have criticized him for not going far enough in rolling back environment regulations (Biesecker, 2017; Davenport, 2017; Freking and Daly, 2017; Friedman and Plumer, 2017; Goodell, 2017; Plumer, 2017).

These and other political pressures, policies, and practices help explain America’s low environmental rankings globally. The United States is “one of the very few large energy-consuming economies that doesn’t have national energy reduction targets,” across all sectors, to lower greenhouse gas emissions (Kallakuri et al., 2016).

A recent national survey of 1,500 middle and high school science teachers found that 30 percent—because of personal beliefs or pressure from parents or school administrators—taught that global warming is due to natural, not human, causes. Also, 62 percent didn’t know that more than 95 percent of climate scientists attribute recent global warming to human activities. A conservative think tank known for attacking climate science has sent 200,000 copies of a glossy book to public school teachers (and some college professors) that describes global warming as “another fake crisis” created by Democrats (Plutzer et al., 2016; Stager, 2017). Thus, politics also fuels ignorance of and misinformation about environment issues.

**Personal Choices.** About 75 percent of Americans say that “the country should do whatever it takes to protect the environment.” However, we recycle or





Fotos593/Shutterstock.com

Almost 15 million tons of plastics enter oceans each year (Geyer et al., 2017). Because plastic trash doesn't degrade, it kills oceanic marine life and endangers ecosystems.

compost only 35 percent of municipal waste, even though 73 percent of the population has curbside recycling. Also, people want cleaner energy and endorse wind farms, but “not in my backyard” (NIMBY) (EPA, 2016; Sustainable Packaging Coalition, 2016; Anderson, 2017; Hemphill and Perry, 2017). Thus, are Americans eco-friendly only when it's convenient?

## ARE AMERICANS ECO-FRIENDLY ONLY WHEN IT'S CONVENIENT?



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Many individuals and businesses are contributing to sustainable development. Hawaii has some of the nation's greenest cities, admired for their excellent air quality and extensive use of rooftop solar panels. KFC, a restaurant chain, is introducing edible cups at Seattle's Best Coffee, part of Starbucks, to decrease the environmental impact of packaging (Strom, 2015).

## REASONS TO BE OPTIMISTIC

There's been considerable progress since 1970, when the United States celebrated its first Earth Day. Let's look briefly at government, business, and individual contributions to the environment.

**Government.** Primarily because of federal rules and regulations, the United States ranks second among 23 of the world's top energy-consuming countries in how efficiently buildings use energy. It has the most mandatory appliances and equipment standards, and stringent energy codes for new residential and commercial buildings (Kallakuri et al., 2016).

Most cars no longer burn leaded gasoline, ozone-destroying chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) have been generally phased out, and total emissions of the six major air pollutants declined by 54 percent during the same period as the U.S. population increased by 47 percent. The U.S. recycling rate increased from less than 10 percent in 1980 to over 35 percent in 2014. As a result, landfill trash decreased from 89 to 53 percent during this interval (Sperry, 2008; EPA, 2016).

Current efficiency standards for appliances, lighting, and other equipment that were implemented during the early 1980s will save the United States the equivalent of two years of energy use (\$1.1 trillion by 2035) and slash greenhouse gas emissions. Also, because of serious droughts, local governments in California and some Texas cities are recycling wastewater, including “toilet-to-tap” drinking water (Lowenberger et al., 2012; Erbentraut, 2016).

Whereas the Trump administration is pushing for more exploitation of oil, gas, and coal, business and



AP Images/Brandon Tabiolo



political leaders in seven Republican-dominated states have embraced clean energy sources. In fact, 69 percent of the nation's wind power comes from states that elected Trump. Tapping the wind and sun is an economic strategy that "creates manufacturing jobs, puts steady money in the hands of farmers who host wind turbines, and lures big employers who want renewable power" (Gillis and Popovich, 2017: A22).

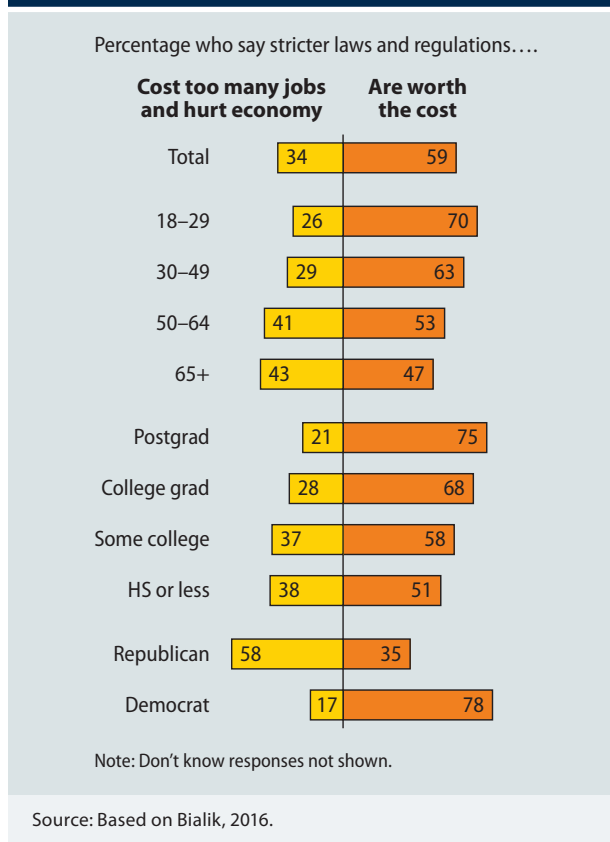
Some government-level progress has been mixed. For example, the EPA has imposed stiffer penalties on automakers that overstate their fuel efficiency, but allows the use of 82 chemicals, including pesticides that Europe restricts or bans (Hakim, 2015; Kessler, 2015).

**Businesses.** Many companies have found that being green is good for their profits, image, and environment, and are now more eco-friendly. For example:

- ▶ Each pair of Levi's new Waste<Less jeans is composed of eight recycled plastic bottles (Berfield, 2012).
- ▶ Ford, Honda, and Toyota use recycled materials—jeans, sweaters, plastic bottles, and sugar cane by-products—for dashboards, tires, seat covers, and cushions (Fleming, 2014).
- ▶ Several companies, including Best Buy and Sprint, have already met their 2020 goal of cutting energy consumption by 20 percent (Martin, 2016).
- ▶ Perdue Farms, the country's fourth-largest poultry producer, no longer uses growth-producing antibiotics that pose health risks to people. The chickens grow just as fast and efficiently as in the past, and getting rid of the drugs hasn't affected the company's profitability (Philpott, 2016).
- ▶ Among others, Ikea, Nike, and H&M (a clothing retail company) use sustainable cotton grown by farmers who use less water and fewer pesticides (Kessenides, 2017).
- ▶ The founder of Patagonia, a popular outdoor clothing and gear store, has run TV commercials urging viewers to protest the Trump administration's selling of public land to corporations (Flasphaler, 2017).

Economic self-interest rather than a concern for the environment sometimes drives such eco-friendly practices. Some corporations are eager to reduce their reliance on water-intensive products like cotton and nuts. Regardless of motives, environmentally friendly policies promote sustainability.

**Figure 15.6** Are Stricter Environmental Laws Worth the Cost?



**Individuals.** A majority of Americans (59 percent) say stricter environmental laws and regulations are worth the expense, compared with 34 percent who believe such regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy. Perceptions differ quite a bit by age, education level, and political affiliation (*Figure 15.6*). Americans are also divided, especially along party lines, over increasing offshore drilling, nuclear power plants, fracking, and coal mining. The only unity is that the vast majority support expanding solar panel and wind turbine farms (89 percent and 83 percent, respectively) (Funk and Kennedy, 2016).

People's environmental beliefs and behavior aren't always consistent. About 75 percent of Americans say they're concerned with helping the environment as they go about their lives, but only 15 percent always bring their own shopping bags, and only 12 percent always choose cleaning products based on whether the ingredients would help or hurt the environment (Funk and Kennedy, 2016). Once again, then, are many of us eco-friendly only when it's convenient?

## STUDY TOOLS 15

### READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you've read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.

# 16

## Social Change: Collective Behavior, Social Movements, and Technology



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### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 16-1 Compare, illustrate, and evaluate the major types of collective behavior, their theories, and functions.
- 16-2 Compare, illustrate, and evaluate the major types of social movements, their theories, and functions.
- 16-3 Describe and illustrate recent technological advances, their benefits, costs, and ethical controversies.

After finishing  
this chapter go to  
**PAGE 345** for  
**STUDY TOOLS**



This chapter examines **social change**, the transformations of societies and social institutions over time. Some collective behavior is short-lived with few long-term societal changes; others, particularly social movements, can have lasting effects. Technology has also played a critical role in sparking social change. Let's begin with collective behavior.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I sometimes feel overwhelmed in keeping up with texting, Twitter, Facebook, and other social media.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree			strongly disagree			

## 16-1 COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

Do you consume energy drinks? Have a tattoo? Look for the label “natural” on food packages? Have you ever joined a club or sports team? Texted? Taken a selfie? If so, you’ve engaged in collective behavior.

### 16-1a What Is Collective Behavior?

**Collective behavior** is the spontaneous and unstructured behavior of a large number of people. Collective behavior encompasses a wide range of actions, including riots, fads, fashion, panic, rumors, and responses to disasters.

Collective behavior has two important characteristics. First, it’s an act rather than a state of mind. You may *feel* panic when a tornado threatens your town, but you don’t engage in collective behavior until you actually *leave* your home and head for a safer location.

Second, collective behavior varies in its degree of spontaneity and structure. Panic, the least structured form of collective behavior, is typically short-lived. Fads (e.g., diets, “ugly” Christmas sweaters) are more structured. They may last several years, are planned, and may be expensive. Other forms of collective behavior, including pro- and antiabortion groups, become highly institutionalized social movements that include a staff, budget, and lobbying.

### 16-1b Why Collective Behavior Occurs

Sociologists have proposed many explanations of collective behavior. Four of the most influential are contagion,

convergence, emergent norm, and structural strain theory. Each has strengths and weaknesses.

## CONTAGION THEORY

*Contagion theory* proposes that individuals act emotionally and irrationally due to a crowd’s almost hypnotic influence. This perspective is rooted in the work of French scholar Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931), who asserted that people in crowds, particularly mobs and riots, change radically. The anonymity of the crowd, a feeling of power, and an infectious “mob mind” embolden people to abandon personal responsibility and to engage in antisocial, and often violent, behavior (Le Bon, 1896/1968).

American sociologists later refined Le Bon’s theory. They emphasized “milling,” a process of people moving about, talking to one another, and becoming increasingly excited. Milling produces a “circular reaction” in which the participants become more intense and more unified in attacking a target (Blumer, 1969). Because people feel anonymous in crowds, they abandon self-control and adopt behavior that they’d reject in other settings (Brown and Goldin, 1973).

## CONVERGENCE THEORY

Contagion theory asserts that crowds are highly suggestible and out of control. In contrast, *convergence theory* proposes that crowds consist of like-minded people who deliberately assemble in a place to pursue a common goal. Thus, collective behavior occurs when people who share similar values, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, and goals come together in, or converge on, a certain location. Instead of the crowd affecting individuals, as contagion theory claims, convergence theory argues that individuals influence a crowd. Examples of convergence theory include marches, rallies, and acts of civil disobedience that oppose a government’s domestic or foreign policies.

**social change** transformations of societies and social institutions over time.

**collective behavior** spontaneous and unstructured behavior of a large number of people.



Thearon W. Henderson/Getty Images Sport/Getty Images

In 2016, NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick (front) and some of his teammates started “taking a knee” instead of standing during the national anthem, to protest racism and police violence. Players across the NFL and at some high school and college football games did the same to show solidarity. Which collective behavior theory, if any, explains these protests? Why?

## EMERGENT NORM THEORY

*Emergent norm theory* posits that crowd members establish rational behavioral norms in response to a precipitating crisis. When Hurricane Harvey deluged Houston and surrounding towns, for example, people used their own boats, Jet Skis, and even air mattresses to rescue strangers from roofs and partly submerged cars, and volunteered at shelters. In effect, then, people aren’t spontaneously “infected” with the emotions of others, as contagion theory postulates. Instead, crowd members develop norms as a situation unfolds (Turner and Killian, 1987).

## STRUCTURAL STRAIN THEORY

*Structural strain theory* (also called *value-added theory*) proposes that collective behavior occurs if six conditions are present (Smelser, 1962). These conditions are “value-added” in the sense that each condition leads to the next one, ending in an episode of collective behavior:

1. *Structural conduciveness* refers to the social conditions that foster collective behavior. When channels for expressing a grievance either aren’t available or fail, like-minded people may resort to protests.
2. *Structural strain* occurs when societal problems (e.g., discrimination, war) make people angry, frustrated, or interfere with their everyday lives.
3. In the *growth and spread of a generalized belief* stage, people begin to see a situation as a widespread problem instead of their own fault, attribute the problem to a

person or group, and believe that something should be done.

4. *Precipitating factors* are incidents or events that trigger action.
5. During the *mobilization for action* stage, leaders emerge.
6. In the *social control* stage, opposing groups prevent, interrupt, or repress those advocating social change. Government officials, the police, community and business leaders, courts, the mass media, and other social control agents—all of whom benefit from the status quo—may ridicule or quash the emerging collective behavior.

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Over time, scholars found little evidence for contagion theory’s claim that crowds are typically irrational or out of control. Crowds can sway emotions, but can also be effective in meeting their objectives, and even mobs can be focused and rational (Couch, 1968; McPhail, 1991).

Convergence theories are useful in describing crowds that are deliberate and planned, but have several limitations. They don’t explain why some people who share the same attitudes join a protest, rally, or demonstration while others don’t, and don’t account for changes in crowd behavior, no matter how well planned (Berk, 1974; McPhail, 1991).

Emergent norm theory helps explain why many crowds are orderly and focused rather than mob-like. Nonetheless, the theory doesn’t explain which norms emerge, why, and how they differ in crowds. In the case of large crowds—those numbering in the thousands, for instance—how are emergent norms disseminated so quickly and accepted by the participants? It’s also not clear why some participants conform to emergent norms while others ignore them and act irrationally (e.g., looting stores and vandalizing property) (Brown and Goldin, 1973; Berk, 1974).

Structural strain theory helps to predict when and where collective behavior might occur, and offers insights on why, at every stage, collective behavior may either fade or escalate. The model doesn’t explain all forms of collective behavior, however. In the case of fads and rumors, as you’ll see shortly, all six stages don’t necessarily occur. A second limitation is that the sequence of stages isn’t necessarily the same as Smelser outlined. The theory also doesn’t say how much structural strain must exist to spark collective behavior (Rule, 1988; Locher, 2002).

A day after the CDC confirmed the first U.S. Ebola case in Texas, and emphasized that the risk of infection was low, there were hundreds of social media rumors that the disease had spread to Iowa and other states. Why did the rumors proliferate? Almost 67 percent of Americans believed that Ebola spreads easily (it doesn't), 40 percent expected a major outbreak in the United States (highly unlikely), and 26 percent were personally terrified that they or someone in their immediate family would get the Ebola virus (also highly unlikely) (Harvard School of Public Health, 2014).



## 16-1c Types of Collective Behavior

There are many forms of collective behavior; some are more fleeting or harmful than others (Turner and Killian, 1987). Let's begin with rumors, one of the most common types of collective behavior.

### RUMORS

There were widespread rumors that on January 1, 2000, a glitch (Y2K) in operating systems would cause computers around the world to crash, leading to global power outages, banks losing all of their customers' accounts, and even airplanes falling from the skies. None of this occurred.

A **rumor** is unfounded information that people spread quickly. Through modern communication technology, a rumor can spread to millions of people within seconds, and incite riots, panic, or widespread anxiety. Because of the Y2K rumor, thousands of people built underground shelters, and millions stocked up on bottled water, canned food, batteries, and medical supplies.

Most rumors (that rock stars Elvis Presley and John Lennon are alive, for example) are harmless. Others can be damaging. After a woman claimed that she found part of a human finger in her cup of Wendy's beef chili, the restaurant's business dropped by half nationally, and rumors warning people to stop eating fast food altogether spread over the Internet (Richtel and Barrionuevo, 2005). The woman admitted, ultimately, that she had planted the finger to try to get a lucrative settlement. Nonetheless, some customers are still leery about eating at fast food restaurants.

Rumors are typically false, so why do so many people believe them? First, rumors often deal with an important subject about which—especially during uncertain economic times or natural disasters—people are anxious,

insecure, or stressed. This makes people especially suggestible. In Hurricane Katrina's aftermath, the media reported numerous rumors of carjacking, murders, thefts, and rapes, the overwhelming majority of which subsequently proved to be false.

Second, there's often little factual information to counter a rumor, or people distrust the sources of information. During Y2K, the people who stockpiled groceries and so forth didn't believe computer scientists or federal officials who assured the general public that there wouldn't be a calamity. Third, rumors offer entertainment, diversion, and drama in our otherwise mundane daily lives (Campion-Vincent, 2005; Heath, 2005). Gossip and urban legends are two of the most common types of rumor.

**Gossip.** **Gossip** is the act of spreading rumors, often negative, about other people's personal lives. Someone once said that "no one gossips about other people's virtues." Because of its tendency to be derogatory, gossip makes us feel superior ("Did you know that Margie just had breast implants? Isn't she pathetic?"). Gossip is also interesting, entertaining, and exposes hypocrisy (Epstein, 2011).

Sometimes, individuals gossip to control other people's behavior and to reinforce a community's moral standards. Comments about someone's drug abuse or marital infidelity strengthen norms of what's deviant or unacceptable, and bonds us with like-minded people (see Chapter 4). In other cases, people gossip because they resent or envy someone's physical appearance or accomplishments. Besides hurting personal

**rumor** unfounded information that people spread quickly.

**gossip** rumors, often negative, about other people's personal lives.



and workplace relationships, gossip often creates fear, resentment, and stress—all of which can increase the likelihood of illness (Sunstein, 2009; Drexler, 2014).

**Urban Legends.** Another form of rumor is **urban legends** (also called *contemporary legends* and *modern legends*), stories—funny, horrifying, or just odd—that supposedly happened somewhere. Some of the most common and enduring urban legends, but with updated variations, deal with food contamination, like the finger at Wendy's. Others have targeted politicians. We still hear, for example, that President Obama wasn't born in the United States, even after he produced his Hawaii birth certificate. (Snopes.com is a useful website that debunks urban legends and Internet rumors.)

Health-related urban legends also persist. In 1998, medical researchers showed conclusively that there's no relationship between autism and vaccinations for measles, mumps, and rubella. Despite the scientific evidence, during the 2015 Republican presidential debates, Donald Trump vigorously asserted that childhood vaccines can cause autism. Two other presidential candidates—Dr. Ben Carson, a retired neurosurgeon, and Senator Paul Rand, an ophthalmologist—didn't disagree with Trump. Doctors, health organizations, and autism advocacy groups quickly criticized and tried to correct

the misinformation, but such “ongoing antivaccine noise by celebrities” helps explain mumps and measles outbreaks in the United States and Europe (Sifferlin, 2014: 7; Welch, 2015; see also Chapters 2, 11, and 14).

Why do urban legends persist much longer than gossip? First, they reflect

contemporary anxieties and fears—about contaminated food, unscrupulous companies, and corrupt and unresponsive governments. Second, urban legends are cautionary tales that warn us to watch out in a dangerous world. There have been tales that sunscreens cause blindness, and that women have died sniffing perfume samples sent to them in the mail. Third, we tend to believe urban legends because we hear them from people we trust, especially family members, coworkers, and friends. Fourth, rejecting misinformation and outright lies is hard work because doing so requires rethinking already-held beliefs. Finally, urban legends—like the one about alligators living in New York City's sewer system or that AriZona tea contains human urine—are fun to tell and “too beguiling to fade away” (Brunvand, 2001; Ellis, 2005; Emery, 2015).

## PANIC AND MASS HYSTERIA

In 2003, an indoor fireworks display to kick off a heavy metal concert in West Warwick, Rhode Island, set off a fire that killed 100 people and injured 200 others. As thick black smoke poured through the audience, hundreds of patrons stampeded for the front door (even though there were three other exits), trampling and crushing those who had fallen beneath them.

Most of the deaths in West Warwick weren't due to the fire but to **panic**—a collective flight, often irrational, from a real or perceived danger. The danger seems so overwhelming that people desperately jam an escape route, jump from high buildings, leap from a sinking ship, or sell off their stock. Fear drives panic: “Each person's concern is with his [or her] own safety and personal security, whether the danger is physical, psychological, social, or financial” (Lang and Lang, 1961: 83).

Panic is similar to **mass hysteria**—an intense, fearful, and anxious reaction to a real or imagined threat by large numbers of people. In mid-2009, the

**urban legends** (also called *contemporary legends* and *modern legends*) rumors about stories that supposedly happened somewhere.

**panic** collective flight, often irrational, from a real or perceived danger.

**mass hysteria** an intense, fearful, and anxious reaction to a real or imagined threat by large numbers of people.





STR/AFP/Getty Images

World Health Organization issued an alert that H1N1 (the “swine flu”) would become a worldwide epidemic and result in numerous deaths. Millions of Americans stood in line for hours, sometimes overnight, because the vaccine was initially in short supply, but the swine flu never materialized on the predicted scale. Unlike panic, which usually subsides quickly, mass hysteria may last longer because warnings—especially about health and food—reinforce our general fears and anxieties about life’s dangers.

## FASHION

As the “Betty Crocker Makeover” on the next page shows, General Mills has been modernizing “Betty” since the 1930s. Doing so may reinforce people’s cynical views about corporate manipulation. On the other hand, updating Betty’s image and fashion may help explain why General Mills has successfully attracted new generations of consumers over the decades, and why Betty Crocker products are now sold worldwide.

**Fashion** is a popular way of dressing during a particular time or among a particular group of people. Over the years, black women’s hairstyles have changed—from Afros in the late 1960s, to straightened hair during the 1980s, to braids, cornrows, dreadlocks, hair extensions, and coloring more recently. All reflect gender politics, racial solidarity, generational differences, identity, and changing images of beauty (Banks, 2000; Desmond-Harris, 2009).

People who want to be fashionable buy clothes with prominent labels, but what’s fashionable changes from year to year. Thus, U.S. adults regularly wear only about 20 percent of their wardrobe (Smith, 2013). Fashion also includes periodic changes in the popularity of furniture, music, language usage, books, automobiles, sports, recreational activities, the names parents give their children, and even the dogs that people own.

Every year, more than 2 million Muslims make a pilgrimage to Mecca (in Saudi Arabia) to participate in the Hajj, an important religious ritual. In 2015, more than 2,400 of the pilgrims were crushed to death during a stampede. The suggested causes included heat (110 degrees Fahrenheit), people rushing to complete the rituals and pushing against each other in opposite directions, confusion among the many first-timers, and panic as people fell and were trampled (Gladstone, 2015; Yan, 2015).

Why do fashions, particularly clothes, change fairly quickly? One reason is that designers, manufacturers, and retailers must continuously generate demand for new products and services to maintain a profit. Retailers have created a number of “shopping holidays” to move merchandise, including clothes (e.g., Amazon’s “Prime Day,” Kohl’s senior discount Wednesdays, and many large department stores’ “Black Friday” sales the day after Thanksgiving). Second, many people keep up with fashion because they don’t want to seem different, out-of-date, or dowdy. Third, shopping for new clothes and other products decreases the boredom of everyday routine. Also, clothes and other merchandise are status symbols that signal being an insider: “Others . . . will admire me for . . . making stylish choices” (Best, 2006: 85–86; for classic analyses of fashion and collective behavior, see Veblen, 1899/1953; Packard, 1959; and Bourdieu, 1984).

## FADS AND CRAZES

A **fad** is a trend that’s popular for a short time. Fads include *products* (e.g., bean bag chairs, hoverboards, pet rocks), *activities* (e.g., twerking, step aerobics, grapefruit diets), and *popular personalities and television characters* (e.g., the Lone Ranger during the 1950s, the Kardashians more recently).

A **craze**, a type of fad, is a temporary, widespread, and obsessive enthusiasm for a particular activity or object. Recent examples include fidget spinners, Hatchimals, and Powerball lotteries that pay millions of dollars. Crazes, like fads, are usually harmless, but there are exceptions. For instance, two men who were following Pokémon Go cartoon creatures on their smartphones suffered injuries when they walked off a cliff in California (Hernandez, 2016).

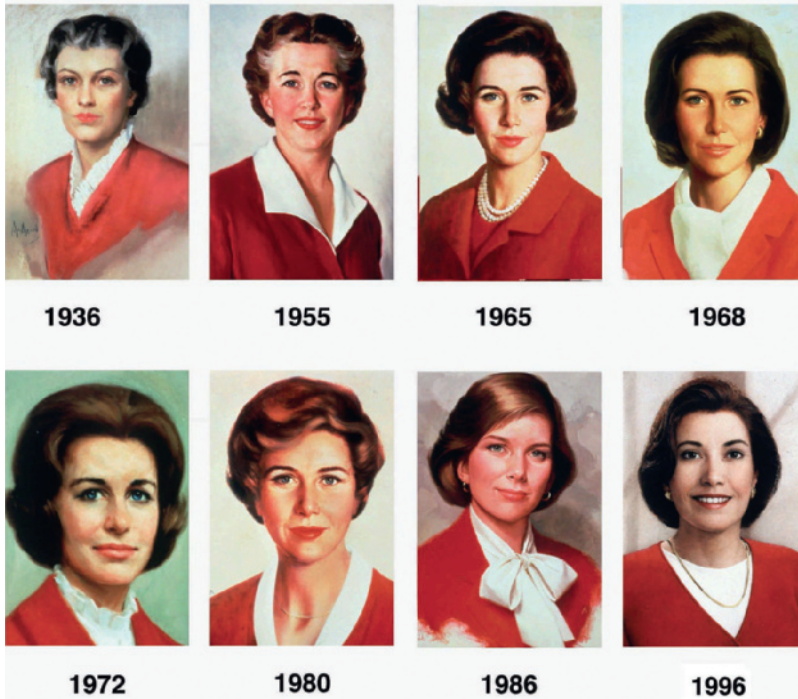
Why do fads and crazes pop up? A major reason is profit. Because children and adolescents

**fashion** a popular way of dressing during a particular time or among a particular group of people.

**fad** a trend that’s popular for a short time.



# BETTY CROCKER MAKEOVER



In 1921, General Mills created Betty Crocker, a fictitious woman, to answer thousands of questions about baking that came in from consumers every year. As fashions and hairstyles changed, so did Betty Crocker's image. The original image of a stern, gray-haired older woman has changed over the years so that, by 1996, she had a darker complexion and wore casual attire. Can you think of other brands that have changed their image over the years to keep up with changing trends?

are especially likely to adopt fads, manufacturers create numerous products and activities that they hope will catch on. The products include toys, sportswear, and new cereals. The hottest fads are usually the must-have Christmas toys that children plead for every year. A few months later, the toy may be thrown away or stuffed in the back of a closet.

Some people dismiss fads as "ridiculous" or "silly," but they serve several functions. In a mass society, where people often feel anonymous, a fad can develop strong in-group feelings and a sense of belonging, especially among people who have similar interests and attitudes. Fads can also be fun, promise to resolve a nagging problem (e.g., being overweight), and help us keep up with technological changes (Marx and McAdam, 1994; Best, 2006).

Most fads are soon forgotten, but some become established. Pez candy dispensers, which originated in 1952 and cost 49 cents, are still inexpensive (under \$2.00), are sold in more than 60 countries, and have been continuously updated to include popular television characters like the Simpsons (Paul, 2002). Other fads, like streaking (running around nude

in public places), reemerge from time to time ("Streaking," 2005).

## DISASTERS

A **disaster** is an unexpected event that causes widespread damage, destruction, distress, and loss. Some disasters are due to *social causes* like war, genocide, terrorist attacks, and civil strife. Some are due to *technological causes*, including oil spills, nuclear accidents, burst dams, building collapses. Others—like floods, landslides, earthquakes, hurricanes, and tsunamis—have environmental origins (Marx and McAdam, 1994).

Disasters often inspire organized behavior rather than chaos. Instead of panicking, most people are rational, cooperative, and altruistic. They often care for family members instead of fleeing, and thousands of volunteers offer financial, medical, and other help.

## PUBLICS, PUBLIC OPINION, AND PROPAGANDA

A **public** is a group of people, not necessarily in direct contact with each other, who are interested in a particular issue. A public is different than the general public, which consists of everyone in a society.

There are as many publics as there are issues—abortion, gun control, pollution, health care, and same-sex marriage, to name just a few. Even within one organization or institution, there may be several publics that are concerned about entirely different issues. At a college, students may be most concerned about the cost of tuition, faculty may spend much time discussing instructional technology, and maintenance employees may be most interested in wages.

**disaster** an unexpected event that causes widespread damage, destruction, distress, and loss.

**public** a group of people, not necessarily in direct contact with each other, who are interested in a particular issue.





Rachel Weill/FoodPix/Jupiter Images

The interaction within a public is often indirect rather than face-to-face—as through the mass media, social media, blogs, or professional journals. Because publics aren't organized groups with memberships, they're often transitory. Publics expand or contract as people lose or develop interest in an issue. A public may surge during a highly publicized and controversial incident, like removing a patient's life support, but then

evaporate quickly. In other cases, publics organize and become enduring social movements (a topic we'll examine shortly).

Some publics express themselves through **public opinion**, widespread attitudes on a particular issue. Public opinion (1) is a verbalization rather than an action; (2) is about a matter that concerns many people; and (3) involves a controversial issue (Turner and Killian, 1987). Like publics, public opinions wax and wane over time. People's interest in crime and education drops, for example, when they're more concerned about pressing issues such as jobs and income.

Public opinion can be swayed by **propaganda**, spreading information (or misinformation) to influence people's attitudes or behavior. Propaganda isn't a type of collective behavior, but affects it in several important ways. First, it can create attitudes that will arouse collective outbursts (e.g., strikes or riots). Second, propaganda can attempt or succeed in preventing collective outbursts, as when corporations convince employees that job losses are due to a weak economy rather than to offshoring (see Chapter 11). Third, propaganda tries to gain followers for a cause, whatever it might be (Smelser, 1962). Propaganda is institutionalized in advertising, political campaign literature, and government policies. It's conveyed in many ways: the mass media, social media, political speeches, religious groups, rumor, and symbols (e.g., flags, bumper stickers).

## CROWDS

Much collective behavior is scattered geographically, but crowds are concentrated in a limited physical space. A **crowd** is a temporary gathering of people who share a common interest or participate in a particular event. Whether it's a few dozen people or millions, crowds come together for a specific reason, such as a religious leader's death, a concert, or a riot.

Crowds differ in their motives, interests, and emotional level:

- ▶ A *casual crowd* is a loose collection of people who have little in common except for being in the same place at the same time and participating in a common activity or event. There's little if any interaction, the gathering is temporary, and there's little emotion. Examples include people watching

**public opinion** widespread attitudes on a particular issue.

**propaganda** spreading information (or misinformation) to influence people's attitudes or behavior.

**crowd** a temporary gathering of people who share a common interest or participate in a particular event.



Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ74-3859]

One of the best-known examples of propaganda in the United States is this Uncle Sam poster, designed in 1917, and used to recruit soldiers for World Wars I and II. Opponents of the Vietnam War used it as an antiwar poster during the 1960s and 1970s.



“Public mourning” includes strangers coming together to show their respect to the dead. Less than a day after Apple’s co-founder Steve Jobs’ death in 2011, fans across the globe created memorials in Japan and other countries. Is this kind of collective behavior an example of a conventional, expressive, or acting crowd? Why?

a street performer, spectators at the scene of a fire, and shoppers at a busy mall.

- ▶ A *conventional crowd* is a group of people that assembles for a specific purpose and follows established norms. Unlike casual crowds, conventional crowds are structured, their members may interact, and they conform to rules that are appropriate for the situation. Examples include people attending religious services, funerals, graduation ceremonies, and parades.
- ▶ An *expressive crowd* is a group of people who show strong emotions toward some object or event. The feelings—which can range from joy to grief—pour out freely as the crowd reacts to a stimulus. Examples include attendees at religious revivals, revelers during Mardi Gras, and enthusiastic fans at a football game.
- ▶ An *acting crowd* is a group of people who have intense emotions and a single-minded purpose. The event may be planned, but acting crowds can also be spontaneous. Examples include people fleeing a burning building, soccer fans storming a field, and college students having a water balloon fight.

**mob** a highly emotional and disorderly crowd that uses force, the threat of force, or violence against a specific target.

**riot** a violent crowd that directs its hostility at a wide and shifting range of targets.

- ▶ A *protest crowd* is a group of people who assemble to achieve a specific goal. Protest crowds

demonstrate their support of or opposition to an idea or event. Most demonstrations—like antiwar protests, boycotts, and labor strikes—are usually peaceful. Peaceful protesters can become aggressive, however, resulting in destruction and violence (Blumer, 1946; McPhail and Wohlstein, 1983).

One type of crowd can easily change into another. A conventional crowd at a nightclub can turn into an acting crowd if a fire erupts; people panic and flee for safety. Any of the five types of crowds—from casual to protest—can become a mob or a riot.

## MOBS

A **mob** is a highly emotional and disorderly crowd that uses force, the threat of force, or violence against a specific target. The target can be a person, group, or property. Mobs often arise when people are demanding radical societal changes, like removing a corrupt government official. In other cases, especially when authority breaks down, people who take advantage of a situation may engage in mob behavior.

A week after the Charlottesville, Virginia clashes, an angry mob—chanting “No KKK, no fascist U.S.A.!”—pulled down a statue honoring Confederate soldiers at a court house in Durham, North Carolina. The crowd stomped and spat on the statue until the police arrived. After attacking, a mob tends to dissolve quickly.

## RIOTS

Compared with mobs, riots usually last longer. A **riot** is a violent crowd that directs its hostility at a wide and shifting range of targets. Unlike mobs, which usually have a specific target, rioters unpredictably attack whomever or whatever gets in their way. Most riots arise out of long-standing anger, frustration, or dissatisfaction that may have smoldered for years or even decades. Some of these long-term tensions are due to discrimination, poverty, unemployment, economic deprivation, or other unaddressed grievances.

There are numerous protests in the United States every year, but race riots have been the most violent and destructive. More than 150 U.S. cities experienced race riots after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. In 1992, riots broke out in 11 cities after four white police officers were acquitted of beating Rodney King, a black motorist, in Los Angeles. The violence resulted in deaths and considerable property damage because of fires and looting.

In 2014 and 2015, riots erupted in Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland, after the controversial deaths of black men at the hands of the police. As in the

past, looting and/or burning local businesses accompanied both of the riots. A few years later, white supremacists marched into Charlottesville, Virginia, to protest the planned removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee, a Confederate general, from a city park. Many carried Confederate flags, gave Nazi salutes, and displayed swastikas and KKK symbols. Counterprotesters, including some with Black Lives Matter signs, confronted the marchers, violence ensued, and a car that barreled into a group of anti-supremacist demonstrators killed a young woman.

Riots are usually expressions of deep-seated hostility, but this isn't always the case. In the 2010 Championship Series, riots broke out after the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Boston Celtics. Such "celebration riots" are due to extreme enthusiasm and excitement rather than anger or frustration, and can lead to "an orgy of gleeful destruction" (Locher, 2002: 95).

Much collective behavior, like a mob or riot, is spontaneous and short-lived. In contrast, because social movements are usually structured and enduring, they create or suppress social changes.

**Table 16.1 Five Types of Social Movements**

Movement	Goal	Examples
Alternative	Change some people in a specific way	Alcoholics Anonymous, transcendental meditation
Redemptive	Change some people, but completely	Jehovah's Witnesses, born-again Christians
Reformative	Change everyone, but in specific ways	Gay rights advocates, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)
Resistance	Preserve status quo by blocking or undoing change	Antiabortion groups, white supremacists
Revolutionary	Change everyone completely	Right-wing militia groups, Communism, ISIS in the Middle East

usually have little face-to-face interaction (Turner and Killian, 1987; Lofland, 1996).

Some U.S. social movements, like white supremacists, are relatively small. Others are large and have subgroups that appeal to different segments of the population. The U.S. environmental movement has at least 50 smaller groups, including Earth First!, Greenpeace, the National Audubon Society, the Union of Concerned Scientists, and the Wilderness Society.

## 16-2b Types of Social Movements

Sociologists generally classify social movements according to their goals (changing some aspect of society or resisting change) and the amount of change they seek (limited or widespread). Some social movements are perceived as more threatening than others because they challenge the existing social order (Table 16.1).

*Alternative social movements* focus on changing some people's attitudes or behavior in a specific way. They typically emphasize spirituality, self-improvement, or physical well-being. These movements are the least threatening to the status quo because they seek limited change and only for some people. For instance, millions of non-Asian Americans, influenced by Asian religions, have embraced yoga, meditation, and healing practices like acupuncture (Cadge and Bender, 2004).

*Redemptive social movements* (also called *religious* or *expressive movements*) propose a dramatic change, but only for some people. They're usually based on spiritual or supernatural beliefs, promising some form of salvation or rebirth. Examples include any religious movements that

**social movement** a large and organized group of people who want to promote or resist a particular social change.

## 16-2 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

There are hundreds of social movements in the United States alone. Why are they so prevalent? And why do they matter?

### 16-2a What Is a Social Movement?

A **social movement** is a large and organized group of people who want to promote or resist a particular social change. "Social movements are as American as apple pie. The abolition of slavery, women's right to vote, unions, open admissions to public colleges and student aid, and Head Start are all changes in our society that were won through social movements" (Ewen, 1998: 81–82).

Unlike other forms of collective behavior, social movements are goal-oriented, deliberate, structured, and can have a lasting impact on a society. And in contrast to many other forms of collective behavior (like crowds, mobs, and riots), the people who make up a social movement are dispersed over time and space, and



actively seek converts (e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses, some Christian evangelical groups) (see Chapter 13).

*Reformative social movements* want to change everyone, but only in a particular way. These movements, the most common type in U.S. society, don't want to replace the existing economic, political, or social class arrangements. Examples include groups that champion the rights of the disabled, gays, crime victims, fat people, and animals.

*Resistance social movements* (also called *reactionary movements*) try to preserve the status quo by blocking change or undoing change that has already occurred. Resistance movements are often called *countermovements* because they usually form immediately after an earlier movement has created change. For example, antiabortion groups that arose in the United States shortly after the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* (1973), which legalized abortion, seek to reverse that decision.

*Revolutionary social movements* want to completely destroy the existing social order and replace it with a new one. These movements range from utopian groups that withdraw from society and try to create their own to terrorists who use violence and intimidation. Examples of the latter include ISIS in the Middle East and Boko Haram in Africa.

## 16-2c Why Social Movements Emerge

A social movement is “an answer either to a threat or a hope” (Touraine, 2002: 89), but not everyone who feels threatened or hopeful joins a social movement. Why not? Let's look at four explanations, beginning with the oldest.

### MASS SOCIETY THEORY

Early on, sociologists believed that the people who formed social movements felt powerless, insignificant, and isolated in modern mass societies, which are impersonal, industrialized, and highly bureaucratized. Thus, according to *mass society theory*, social movements offer a sense of belonging to people who feel alienated and disconnected from others (Kornhauser, 1959).

### CRITICAL EVALUATION

Mass society theory may explain why some people form extreme political movements like Fascism and Nazism,

but subsequent research has shown that movement organizers are typically not isolated but well-integrated into their families

**relative deprivation** a gap between what people have and what they think they should have compared with others in a society.



Black Lives Matter, a civil rights movement, emerged after a white man was acquitted of killing an unarmed black teenager in a Florida suburb in 2013. The group's chapters regularly protest racial profiling, police brutality, and racial inequality in the criminal justice system.

and communities. Also, historically, many political activists in the United States, including those behind the civil rights and women's rights movements during the late 1960s, weren't powerless but came from relatively privileged backgrounds (McAdam and Paulsen, 1994).

### RELATIVE DEPRIVATION THEORY

Relative deprivation theory is broader than mass society theory. **Relative deprivation** is a gap between what people have and what they think they should have compared with others in a society. What people think they should have includes money, social status, power, or privilege.

Relative deprivation theorists note two other elements. First, people often feel that they *deserve* better than they have (“I've worked hard all my life”). Second, they believe that they *can't attain their goals through conventional channels* (“I've contacted my senators, but they ignore me”). Thus, shared beliefs combined with unfulfilled expectations can trigger change-oriented social movements (Davies, 1979; Morrison, 1971).

Relative deprivation also includes people who want to protect their declining power and privilege. For example, the white supremacist/neo-Nazi movement attracts people, particularly low-income whites, who believe that minorities and immigrants are threatening the economic and political status that whites enjoyed in the past.

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Relative deprivation theory helps explain why some social movements emerge. Critics point out, however, that there's a certain degree of relative deprivation in all societies, but people don't always react by forming or joining social movements. Relative deprivation theory also doesn't explain why some people join movements even though they don't see themselves as deprived, and don't expect to gain anything personally if the movement succeeds (Gurney and Tierney, 1982; Johnson and Klandermans, 1995).

## RESOURCE MOBILIZATION THEORY

It takes more than feeling alienated (mass society theory) or disadvantaged (relative deprivation theory) to sustain a social movement. Instead, according to *resource mobilization theory*, a social movement will succeed if it can put together (or mobilize) an organization and leadership dedicated to advancing its cause (Oberschall, 1995; Gamson, 1990). Other important resources include money, devoted volunteers, paid staff, access to the media, effective communication systems, special technical or legal knowledge and skills, equipment, physical space, alliances with like-minded groups, and lobbyists who influence legislation (see Chapter 11).

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

A key contribution of resource mobilization theory is its emphasis on structural factors (like organization and leadership) in explaining why some social movements thrive whereas others shrivel. A major criticism, however, is that resource mobilization theory largely ignores the role of relative deprivation in a social movement's formation. If there aren't large numbers of dissatisfied people to initiate a movement, even plentiful resources won't be able to sustain it (Klandermans, 1984; Buechler, 2000).

## NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THEORY

*New social movements theory*, which became prominent during the 1970s, emphasizes the linkages between culture, politics, and ideology. Unlike the earlier perspectives, new social movements theory proposes that many recent movements (like those that work for peace and environmental protection) promote the rights and welfare of *all* people rather than specific groups in particular countries (Laraña et al., 1994; Melucci, 1995). Thus, new social movements theory is especially interested in "the struggle to liberate the voices of the dispossessed" (Schehr, 1997: 6).

**IF THERE AREN'T  
LARGE NUMBERS  
OF DISSATISFIED  
PEOPLE TO INITIATE  
A MOVEMENT, EVEN  
PLENTIFUL RESOURCES  
WON'T BE ABLE TO  
SUSTAIN IT.**

For these theorists, recent social movements differ from older ones in several ways. They attract a disproportionate number of people who are well-educated and relatively affluent, who represent a wide array of professions (e.g., educators, scientists, actors, businesspeople, political leaders), and who share a broad goal—improving the quality of life for all people around the world. Moreover, new social movements pursue goals or advance values that may not personally benefit its members, such as eradicating diseases in developing countries (Obach, 2004).

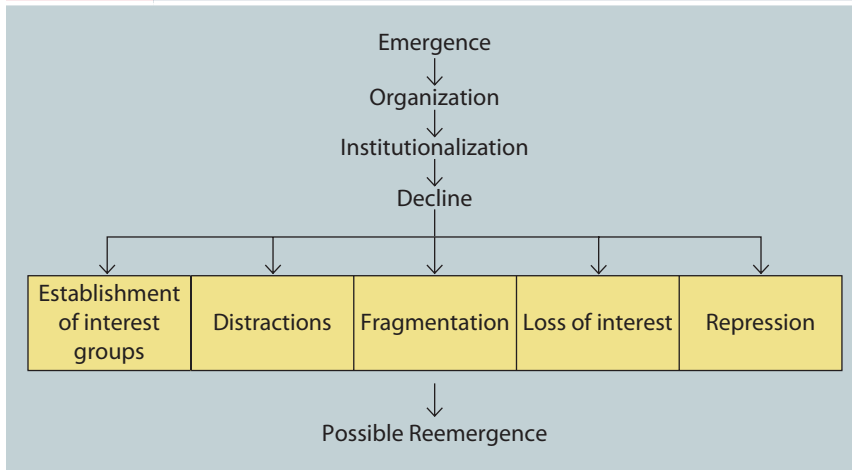
## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Unlike earlier perspectives, new social movements theory helps us understand collective behavior that crosses international boundaries. According to some critics, however, neither this perspective nor the groups that it examines are novel. Some social movements (like feminism and environmentalism) have been around for a long time and still focus on the same basic issues, like women's second-class citizenship and population growth. In addition, some scholars point out that educated middle-class or wealthy activists were as common in the old social movements as in more recent ones (Rose, 1997; Buechler, 2000; Sutton, 2000).

Critics also contend that new social movements theory often overstates people's altruistic motivations. Many people who join environmental groups do so for reasons referred to as NIMBY (not in my backyard). That is, they're concerned about their own community's environment, but show little interest in ecological threats to people elsewhere.

These four theories, despite their limitations, offer insights about social movements because "no

**Figure 16.1** Typical Stages of a Social Movement



single theory is sufficient to explain the complexities of any social movement” (Blanchard, 1994: 8). The next question is why some social movements flourish and others collapse.

## 16-2d The Stages of Social Movements

Most social movements are short-lived. Some never really get off the ground; others meet their goals and disband. Social movements generally go through four stages: emergence, organization, institutionalization, and decline (Figure 16.1) (Tilly, 1978).

### EMERGENCE

During *emergence*, the first stage of a social movement, a number of people are distressed about some condition and want to change it. One or more individuals, serving as agitators or prophets, emerge as leaders. They verbalize the feelings of the discontented, crystallize the issues, and push for action. If leaders don’t get much support, the movement may die. If, on the other hand, the discontent resonates among growing numbers of people, public awareness increases, and the movement attracts like-minded people.

### ORGANIZATION

Once people’s consciousness has been raised, the second stage is *organization*. The most active members form alliances, seek media coverage, develop strategies and tactics, recruit members, and acquire the necessary resources. The organization establishes a division of labor in which leaders make policy decisions and followers perform necessary tasks like preparing mass mailings, developing websites, and responding to phone calls and emails. At this stage, the movement may develop

chapters at local, regional, national, and international levels (see Obach, 2015).

### INSTITUTIONALIZATION

As a movement grows, it becomes *institutionalized* and more bureaucratic: The number of staff positions increases, members draw up bylaws, the organization may hire outsiders (writers, attorneys, and lobbyists) to handle some of the necessary tasks, and the leaders may spend more of their time on speaking tours, in media interviews, and at national or international meetings. As the social movement grows and becomes more

bureaucratic and self-sufficient, the original leaders may move on to better paying and more influential positions in government or the private sector.

### DECLINE

Almost all social movements end sooner or later. (“Why Is the NRA a Successful Social Movement?” describes one exception.) This *decline*, the last stage, may take several forms:

- ▶ If a social movement is successful, it can become an *interest group* and a part of society’s fabric. A small antismoking movement that began in the mid-1970s



Food movements have burgeoned worldwide, especially in urban centers. Many U.S. cities have institutionalized food carts and trucks by passing or revising regulations that support food vending. Doing so encourages neighborhood entrepreneurs to use available city spaces, attracts “foodies,” and offers residents and tourists a variety of ethnic, organic, and gourmet “culinary experiences” (Hanser and Hyde, 2014: 47).



## Why Is the NRA a Successful Social Movement?

An overwhelming majority of Americans want more gun control, such as preventing mentally ill people from buying guns (89 percent), performing background checks of buyers for private sales and gun show sales (84 percent), and creating a federal database to track gun sales (71 percent).

A brief look at the stages of the National Rifle Association (NRA) helps explain why, despite public consensus to the contrary, this social movement has successfully increased gun rights. For example, 15 states, so far, allow people to carry firearms in plain view in public spaces, including bars, schools, and churches.

1. *Emergence* The NRA was founded in 1871 by two former Union veterans to improve their troops' shooting skills. The NRA built a rifle range on Long Island, New York, and organized rifle competitions and clubs. The leaders attracted people—soldiers, hunters, and sportsmen—who shared the common goal of becoming better marksmen.
2. *Organization* In 1871, NRA leaders formed a board of directors to elect a president, elected other officers (vice president, treasurer, and so on), moved the headquarters to Washington, D.C., established a committee to lobby for laws that befitted the NRA, and created a legislative affairs division to update members on upcoming bills. In effect, then, the NRA set up a division of labor, developed strategies, and formed alliances with political decision makers.
3. *Institutionalization* After the passage of the Gun Control Act of 1968, the NRA hired well-paid lobbyists, funded political action committees (see Chapter 11), supported gun-rights candidates, and opposed gun-control candidates. It developed multilayered executive staff positions, elected or paid celebrity spokespersons (e.g., Chuck Norris, Charlton Heston), and formed official chapters in every state.

The NRA also implemented a “savvy business plan” that offers members—for only \$25 a



AP Images/Eric Gay

year—official membership ID cards, discounts “on everything from rental cars to hearing aids,” free items (rosewood hunting knives, heavy-duty duffel bags), a free subscription to one of their many magazines, and insurance for them and their guns. According to an NRA official, its millions of members “give us small amounts of money [that] add up to an annual budget of more than \$300 million” (“Gun Laws: A Shot and a Beer,” 2014). Thus, the NRA embedded its fundamental values and objectives into culturally acceptable activities.

4. *Decline* The NRA isn't facing imminent decline. It offers shooting, training, and gun safety programs for many diverse groups (e.g., women, children, hunters, competitive shooters, law enforcement), which broadens the NRA's member base and loyalty. It has a network of over 15,000 affiliated businesses, associations, and clubs that generate significant revenue and help lobby against gun control.

Perhaps most importantly, to many Americans, guns represent freedom and independence. As a result, 21 percent of gun-owners, compared with only 12 percent of non-gun-owners, contact public officials at least once a year, urging more lenient gun laws.

Sources: Davidson, 1998; Rodengen, 2002; Melzer, 2009; Winkler, 2011; Bellini, 2012; BBC News, 2016; Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2017; Parker et al., 2017; and undated NRA online sites.

now has the enthusiastic support of numerous prestigious organizations, including the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, the American Medical Association, the World Health

Organization, and governing bodies within and outside the United States (Wolfson, 2001).

- Those involved in a social movement may become *distracted* because the group loses sight of its

original goals, their enthusiasm diminishes, or both. In the mid-1960s, when Ralph Nader initially condemned the automobile industry for car safety defects, he gained a large following. As Nader and his consumer rights groups expanded their focus to include environmental issues and corporate crimes, many of the initial followers lost interest.

- ▶ A social movement may experience *fragmentation* because the participants disagree about goals, strategies, or tactics. The environmental movement encompasses numerous groups that focus on different issues—air quality, marine life, land use, and global warming. Participants may also drift away because of time constraints, strategy disagreements, health problems, or similar reasons (see Blee, 2015).
- ▶ Social movements may decline because of *repression*. Many autocratic governments quash dissent. A government can crush an emerging social movement by arresting protestors and imprisoning or even executing leaders (see Chapter 11).

Social movements can wane for a combination of reasons. In 2011, the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement protested socioeconomic inequality, corporate greed, and corporate power over the U.S. government. The group's slogan, "We are the 99%," referred to the income inequality between the top 1 percent and the rest of the population. Despite similar demonstrations in 70 major U.S. cities and over 600 communities, and 900 cities worldwide, the movement faded away. Why? OWS raised awareness of the injustice of this nation's inequality, but ultimately failed because it lacked leadership, clear objectives, solutions, organization, and a long-term commitment (Madrack, 2013; Sandbu, 2013).

A social movement that declines can sometimes experience a resurgence. For example, there have been several waves of the women's rights movement in the United States since the mid-nineteenth century. The first wave ensured women's right to vote in 1920; the second wave expanded employment and educational rights during the 1960s and 1970s; and the third wave, during the 1990s, focused on economic and other inequalities experienced by women of different social classes, sexual orientations, and nationalities. Despite considerable backlash over the past hundred years, American feminism has appealed to diverse groups, agitated in a multitude of spheres ranging from athletics to religion, and has used a variety of strategies to press for social change (Cobble et al., 2014).

## 16-2e Why Social Movements Matter

On an *individual level*, many of us enjoy a variety of rights as workers, consumers, voters, and victims—rights that we owe to highly dedicated people who were determined to change inequitable laws and customs.

On an *institutional level*, social movements can change general practices. Shopping for healthy food is much easier today than it was before the 1990s, when veggie burgers, tofu, and nutrition labeling were practically nonexistent. Now, mainstream grocery stores have large organic food sections, a variety of fruits and vegetables, and breads and cereals made with whole grains, nuts, and less salt, sugar, and chemical additives. The "farm-to-table" movement, with its emphasis on locally grown produce and meat, has benefited people's health and regional economies. In effect, then, vegetarian and consumer groups have changed the way many farms operate and have loosened corporate control of food products (O'Connor, 2015; Kowitt, 2015).

On a *societal level*, social movements have had a major impact in the United States and globally. Most of the world's great religions began as protest movements (see Chapter 13). Also, democratic governments in the United States and other countries grew out of the activities of revolutionary groups that sought greater political and economic freedom (Giugni et al., 1999; della Porta and Diani, 1999).

You've seen that social movements can generate or resist change. Technology is another important source of societal change.

## 16-3 TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

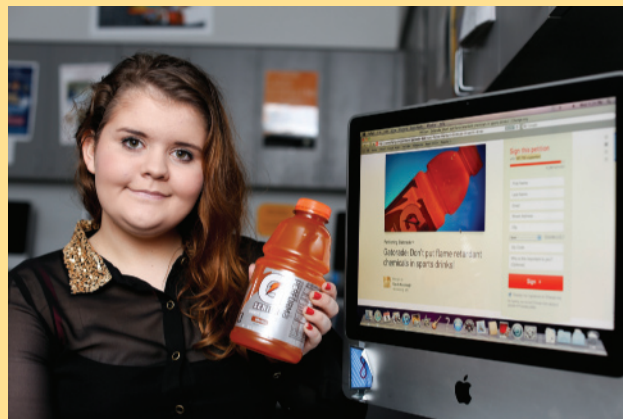
This brief "history" of how to cure an earache has circulated on the Internet:

- ▶ 2000 B.C.—Here, eat this root.
- ▶ 1000 A.D.—That root is heathen, say this prayer.
- ▶ 1850 A.D.—That prayer is superstition, drink this potion.
- ▶ 1940 A.D.—That potion is snake oil, swallow this pill.
- ▶ 1985 A.D.—That pill is ineffective, take this antibiotic.
- ▶ 2000 A.D.—That antibiotic is artificial. Here, eat this root.

As this anecdote suggests, despite technological progress over the centuries, some of the old remedies are

## One Teenager + Technology = Social Change

In 2012, Sarah Kavanagh—a high school sophomore in Hattiesburg, Mississippi—started a Change.org petition to get PepsiCo to remove brominated vegetable oil (BVO) from its Gatorade products. BVO contains a chemical compound that keeps sports and citrus-flavored drinks more uniform by preventing oily ingredients from separating. It's also used as a flame retardant on upholstered furniture and children's products. Sarah gathered more than 200,000 signatures, and PepsiCo eliminated BVO in early 2013. She then created another successful petition that resulted in Coca-Cola's removing BVO from all its beverages by the end of 2014 (Strom, 2014; Velasco, 2014).



JAMES EDWARD BATES/The New York Times/Redux

enjoying renewed popularity (peoplespharmacy.com, for instance, offers home treatments for everything from arthritis to whooping cough). Still, technological advances have brought enormous social changes, including benefits, costs, and ethical concerns.

### 16-3a Some Recent Technological Advances

**Technology**, the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, is vital to human life: “For good or ill, [technologies] are woven inextricably into the fabric of our lives, from birth to death, at home, in school, in paid work” (MacKenzie and Wajcman, 1999: 3; see Chapter 3 for early technological inventions).

In the next 50 years, technology is likely to change our lives more dramatically than ever before. Some companies are working on “smart” pills to improve mental ability and restore brains that have been impaired by disease or injury. Our houses may be built with sensors that automatically test for anthrax, environmental contaminants, allergens, and radioactivity, and with devices that can defend against chemical and biological agents (Rubin, 2004; Murphy, 2005). Whether such predictions will become reality is anyone's guess, but seven companies—including General Motors, Google, Tesla, and Nissan—plan to sell driverless cars by 2020. In the meantime, technological advances are changing our lives. Let's look briefly at a few of the most influential.

### COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

In 1887, English mathematician Charles Babbage designed the first programmable computer. Since then, computers have gone through seven generations of evolution. *Artificial intelligence (AI)*, a branch of computer science, is developing theories and computer systems to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence (e.g., speech recognition, decision making, and understanding). AI advances have spurred the development of *robots*, machines that are programmed to perform humanlike functions. Industrial robots, known as “collaborative robots” or “cobots,” already work alongside people in doing tasks like stacking heavy packages. For \$2,000, you can now buy a laundry-folding robot. By 2025, according to some experts, AI and robots will affect nearly every aspect of daily life (Smith et al., 2014; Salkin, 2017).

Robots have performed repetitive, dirty, or dangerous human tasks, including toxic waste cleanup, mining, minefield sweeping, underwater and space exploration, and locating bombs. Using the most up-to-date information, Watson, IBM's supercomputer, can answer thousands of questions that doctors and nurses might ask about, including the symptoms and treatment of most diseases. It can also answer lawyers' questions on bankruptcy and other topics, complete with citations from legislation or case law. In time, robots may be

**technology** the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes.





Some European nursing homes are using Zora, a robot, to teach their residents exercises and to chat with children in their classrooms. One woman, who hadn't spoken in four months, surprised everyone when she blurted out "I'm well" after Zora asked how she was doing, and then carried on a brief conversation (McFarland, 2015).

able to discuss stock market investment strategies, give you advice about a personal problem, read a book to you in any desired language or in a voice of either sex, cook and serve your meals, and be emotionally savvy companions who cheer you up when you're unhappy ("Artificial Intelligence," 2015; Kharif, 2015).

## BIOTECHNOLOGY

*Biotechnology* is a broad term that applies to all practical uses of living organisms. It covers anything from the use of microorganisms (e.g., yeast) to ferment beer to *genetic engineering*, sophisticated techniques that can change the makeup of cells and move genes across species to produce new organisms.

In medicine, biotechnology includes genetic testing/screening that can determine a child's biological parents, a person's ancestry, inherited disorders, and the chance of developing or passing on a genetic disease. Pig heart valves are already transplanted into patients. It may soon be possible to transplant pig livers, hearts, and other organs, saving some of the 22 people a day who die waiting for an organ transplant. Scientists also predict that it won't be too long before amputees will be able to control their prosthetics using their minds ("Biomedical Engineering," 2017; Kolata, 2017).

## NANOTECHNOLOGY

Another promising innovation is *nanotechnology*, the ability to build objects

one atom or molecule at a time. The key characteristic of these objects is tiny size. Nanotechnology is based on structures measured in nanometers, a unit of measurement equal to 1 billionth of a meter, or 1/80,000th the width of a human hair.

Scientists are also working on nanoparticles that hunt down and kill tumor cells, and nanosensors—microscopic robots with legs, propellers, and cameras—that would live in the bloodstream and send messages to smartphones about signs of infection, an impending heart attack, or other issues that are early warnings for disease or death. Swallowing little pills that contain nanosensors may become a routine part of doctors' office visits in the future (Cha, 2014; "Hunting as a Pack," 2014).

These and other technological innovations promise longer and healthier lives in the future, but what about the present? What are some of the current benefits and costs of technological changes?

## 16-3b Some Benefits and Costs of Recent Technologies

The ever-accelerating pace of change means that we're using technologies that didn't exist just a decade ago. The average American embraces modern technology, but is also wary of some advancements. For example, a majority doesn't want some medical enhancements that could improve people's cognitive or physical capacities (*Table 16.2*).

A computer scientist has noted that every technology has a "dark side" because practically every benefit also has a cost (Lohr, 2011: A1). Here are a few contemporary examples.

### COLLABORATIVE CONSUMPTION

- *Benefits:* Technology has spurred "collaborative consumption" (also called a "sharing economy" and "access economy") that enables people to earn and save money by sharing goods and services. Airbnb matches budget travelers and people with a spare room or other lodging for rent, RelayRides

**Table 16.2** Americans Are Divided About Some Medical Advances

Percentage who say they wouldn't want these enhancements for themselves or their children

Gene editing to greatly reduce a baby's risk of disease	50
Synthetic blood for much improved physical abilities	63
Brain chip implant for much improved cognitive abilities	66

Source: Based on Funk et al., 2016.



SS MIRZA/AFP/Getty Images

### Are restaurant jobs at risk?

allows people to rent your car, and taxi-like services (e.g., Lyft, Uber, Sidecar) bring drivers and passengers together.

- ▶ **Costs:** The sharing economy has created conflict: Airbnb hosts have sometimes ignored zoning laws, don't always pay city or state taxes, and neighbors have complained about noise and a steady stream of strangers. Taxicab companies have protested that ridesharing has decreased their business because the drivers have avoided all regulations, inspections, fees, and insurance requirements (Goodale, 2015; Stein, 2015).

## 3-D PRINTING

- ▶ **Benefits:** 3-D printing—a process for making a physical object from a three-dimensional digital model—is revolutionizing manufacturing. Because the process can reduce manufacturing costs by 25 percent or more, the CEO of an aluminum corporation describes 3-D printing as “the beginning of...a second Industrial Revolution” (Geier, 2014: 76). Among other things, 3-D printing produces medical implants (such as knee replacements), synthetic heart valves, prosthetics that are easy to use, models of buildings, artificial human bones, and even cars that are safe and fuel efficient. Desktop 3-D printers produce a wide range of objects like toys, clocks, ceramics, and wrenches.
- ▶ **Costs:** As with any new technology, 3-D printers have negative impacts: They consume 50 to 100 times more electrical energy than traditional molds, increase usage of plastics that aren't recycled, and emit toxic particles when used in the home that can pose health risks. Moreover, people can print weapons, including plastic guns, that metal detectors or x-ray scanners can't spot (Gilpin, 2014).

## HEALTH AND MEDICINE

- ▶ **Benefits:** People who use health-related mobile gadgets and apps can monitor their blood pressure, calories, and physical fitness. The number of robotic procedures increases by 30 percent each year. Robotic surgery reduces physician fatigue because she/he doesn't have to stand over the patient for hours, and a robot's “hands” can reach into tight spots and move in ways that human hands can't. In addition, minimally invasive robotic surgeries usually result in less blood loss and faster recoveries because there's a smaller incision to heal.
- ▶ **Costs:** Health-related apps encourage “iPochondria” among people who are anxious about their health which, in turn, increases doctors' workloads and insurance costs. Robotic surgery is expensive, the outcomes are generally similar to traditional operations, there are no national training standards for robotic surgery, one company dominates the market, and adverse events increased 34 percent between 2011 and 2012 alone (Langreth, 2013; “M-Health...,” 2014).

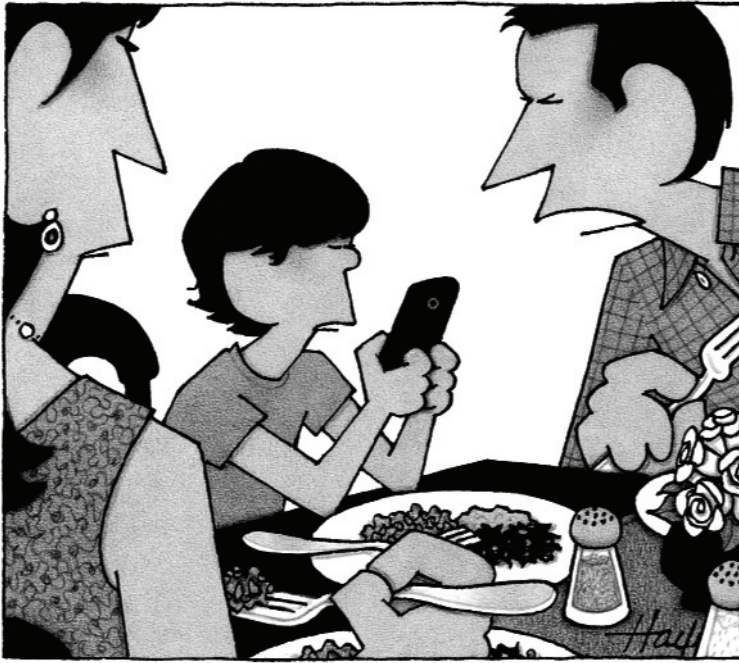
## MONITORING SYSTEMS

- ▶ **Benefits:** New technology allows older people to live at home rather than in an institutional setting. Sensors can track people's medications and falls. Adult children can monitor an aging parent or relative remotely via cellular connections, seeing if they go outside or get home safely after short drives.
- ▶ **Costs:** Medicaid pays for some aging-at-home technology, but Medicare doesn't. Even if families can afford the technology, some older people feel intimidated by even one-button devices and don't use them (Abrahms, 2014; Tsukayama, 2014).

## JOBS AND PRIVACY ISSUES

Some policy analysts fear that technology will produce more jobs for robots than for humans, even in occupations like teaching, sales, nursing, and stock trading. Driverless cars could displace millions of truck drivers, bus drivers, and others who drive for a living. Others contend that computers will never replace jobs that require “people skills” like teamwork, creativity, managing diverse employees, leadership, decision-making, and face-to-face interaction with clients or customers (Colvin, 2014; Arntz et al., 2016).

There's considerably more consensus that almost every technological advance reduces privacy and increases data breaches. In 2016 alone, hackers obtained personal



*"Hey! Elbows off the table."*

data from more than one billion Yahoo accounts. During the presidential election, the Russian government infiltrated the Democratic National Committee's computer network, hoping to undermine Hillary Clinton's campaign. The hackers also targeted voting equipment in at least 21 states, and created several hundred fake Facebook and Twitter accounts to spread anti-Clinton messages during the election. Government auditors and other investigators have warned the White House for several decades about cybersecurity weaknesses, but the warnings have usually been ignored (Davis, 2015; Yeung, 2016; Perloth et al., 2017).

Much software, including smartphone apps and games like Pokémon Go, have lengthy, legalese-filled "terms of service" agreements. Users rarely read these documents, but clicking on "I agree" gives a company "perpetual, irrevocable, transferable, worldwide, royalty-free license to use, copy, modify ... publicly display, publicly perform, and distribute your User Content" (Zicarelli, 2016: 15).

Many "data mining" companies routinely collect information as people click from site to site. Much of this web tracking is done anonymously, but a new crop of "snooper" sites makes it easier than ever before for anyone with Internet access to assemble and sell personal information, including your name, Social Security number, address, what you buy, whom you love, and which sites you've visited.

Google compiles enough data to build comprehensive portfolios of most users—who they are, where they

go, and what they do. To create a new stream of profit, Facebook sells marketers detailed information about its users. Marketers, in turn, can flood millions of websites and mobile apps with targeted ads. At many department stores, cameras have become so sophisticated that companies can analyze what shoppers are looking at, and even their mood (Efrati, 2013; "Marketing in the Digital Age," 2015; Komando, 2016).

Only 14 percent of Americans are "very confident" that government agencies or businesses will keep the data they collect private and secure. However, millions provide information—including gender, age, and income—for as little as a "\$1 off" online coupon or a \$5.00 to \$10.00 prepaid gift card, and agree to be tracked over GPS, Wi-Fi, and cellular networks. The companies then sell the data to storeowners, online retailers, and app developers (Clifford and Hardy, 2013; Olmstead and Smith, 2017).

### 16-3c **Some Ethical Issues**

DNA testing has given millions of people information about their genetic predispositions for diseases like cystic fibrosis, cancer, and Huntington's disease (an incurable neurological disorder). Having such information helps doctors and patients make better health care decisions, but the expanding use of genetic testing has an unforeseen consequence: More people who don't show any symptoms are being told they have genes for potentially fatal diseases that may develop "next month, next year, when you are 60 years old, or never" (Marcus, 2013: D1).

Those affected become "patients-in-waiting" who undergo continuous screening and worry about their condition. Asymptomatic patients with an inherited risk for a genetic heart muscle disease may have a defibrillator implanted, which involves regular maintenance, possible equipment failures, infections, and other complications. Some doctors believe that such preventive measures for patients-in-waiting are unethical because they're unnecessary, risky, and people live in limbo not knowing whether or when a disease will develop (Marcus, 2013).

In a recent breakthrough, an international team of scientists reported successfully editing the DNA in human embryos. The technique could potentially prevent a long list of inheritable diseases, such as cystic fibrosis, heart disorders, Huntington's disease, and breast and ovarian cancer. The findings, however, "set off alarm



bells among critics around the world” who fear that such research could lead to “designer babies.” Wealthy parents, some worry, could use the technology to produce smarter, taller, healthier, and stronger offspring that would have a competitive edge. Designer babies aren’t technically possible, but some geneticists are denouncing any experiments that involve genetically modified human embryos as unethical and irresponsible (Ma et al., 2017; Stein, 2017).

Another ethical dilemma is that biotechnological advances, like other technological developments,

are most readily available to higher-income people. Screening expectant mothers for fetal abnormalities like Down syndrome is becoming more standard, but not all insurers cover the \$1,200 to \$2,700 costs of more sophisticated screening tests for high-risk women (Lewis, 2014). Insurance also rarely covers pediatric prosthetics, such as up to \$40,000 for a hand that’ll have to be replaced about every two years as a child grows (Cohn, 2014). Thus, technological advances are fraught with both promise and pitfalls.

## STUDY TOOLS 16

### READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- ☐ Check your understanding of what you’ve read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- ☐ Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

### ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- ☐ Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- ☐ Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- ☐ Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- ☐ Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.

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## A

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 3  
 Aaron, Daniel G., 117  
*AARP Magazine*, 245  
 AAUW, 167, 168  
 Abbey-Lambertz, Kate, 178  
 Abma, Joyce C., 169  
 Abrahams, Jessica, 131  
 Abrahams, Sally, 343  
 Abrams, Rachel, 72, 297  
 Abudabbeh, Nuha, 198  
 Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, 172  
 Accavitti, Maria, 262  
 Acciai, Francesco, 246  
 Acierno, Ron, 244, 245  
 ACT, Inc., 266  
 Adams, Bert N., 8, 13, 15  
 Adamson, David M., 132  
 Addo, Fenaba R., 238  
 Adkins, Amy, 109, 113, 211  
 Administration on Aging, 244  
 Agence France-Presse, 46  
 Agnvall, Elizabeth, 296  
 Agorist, Matt, 293  
 Agrawal, Sangeeta, 115, 217, 250, 276, 277  
 Agress, Lynne, 186  
 Aguila, Raul, 94  
 Aguilar, Leslie, 39  
 Ahmad, Farah Z., 257  
 Ahmed, Haitham M., 297  
 Ahn, Lauren, 168  
 Ailes, Elizabeth C., 297  
 Akbulut-Yuksel, Mevlude, 199  
 Akcigit, Ufuk, 186  
 Akechi, Hironori, 93  
 Akers, Roland L., 128  
 Akin, Lara B., 276  
 Aldeman, Chad, 256  
 Alfaro, Edna C., 71  
 Al-Jassem, Diana, 234  
 Allen, Joshua, 285  
 Allen, Kathy Grannis, 122  
 Allen, Terre H., 89  
 Allport, Gordon W., 202  
 Al-Mahmood, Syed Z., 157  
 Alper, Becka A., 272  
 Alsever, Jennifer, 137  
 Altintas, Evrim, 76  
 Altonji, Joseph G., 70  
 Alvaredo, Facundo, 151, 154  
 Amann, Jennifer, 323  
 AMAP, 321  
 American Academy of Pediatrics, 73  
 American Association of Suicidology, 9  
 American Bar Association, 178  
 American Psychiatric Association, 133, 300  
 American Psychological Association, 163, 215  
 American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 164  
 American Society of Addiction Medicine, 297  
 American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 75, 252  
 American Sociological Association, 36  
 Amnesty International, 137  
 Amnesty International USA, 137  
 Amrein-Beardsley, Audrey, 264  
 Amstadter, Amanda B., 244, 245  
 Amusa, Malena, 244  
 An, Ruopeng, 289  
 Andersen, Margaret L., 178

Anderson, Craig A., 74  
 Anderson, Elizabeth, 134, 136  
 Anderson, Gerard F., 295  
 Anderson, James F., 128  
 Anderson, Janna, 342  
 Anderson, Monica, 96, 97, 98, 194, 323  
 Andrews, Edmund L., 200  
 Andrzejewski, Adam, 207  
 Anestis, Joye C., 135  
 Anestis, Michael D., 135  
 Angwin, Julia, 99  
 Annie E. Casey Foundation, 147  
 Appel, Lawrence J., 296  
 Aptekar, Sofya, 41  
 Arab American Institute Foundation, 198  
 Aranda, Claudia, 188  
 Arendt, Hannah, 218  
 Arieff, Allison, 315  
 Ariès, Philippe, 76  
 Armstrong, Elizabeth A., 171  
 Arndt, Derek S., 321  
 Arntz, Melanie, 343  
 Aron, Laudon, 283  
 Asante-Muhammad, Dedrick, 141, 187  
 ASA Research Department, 7  
 Asch, Solomon, 104  
 Ashcraft, Amie M., 91  
 Asi, Maryam, 198  
 Associated Press and NORC, 227  
 Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, 131  
 Astone, Nan, 236  
 Atayeva, Renata, 288  
 Atchley, Robert C., 249, 252  
 Atkinson, Anthony B., 154  
 Attina, Teresa M., 285  
 Attinasi, John J., 43  
 AT&T Newsroom, 3  
 Atwater, Peter, 293  
 Aud, Susan, 134, 268  
 Aughinbaugh, Alison, 236  
 Auguste, Byron, 265  
 Aunola, Kaisa, 70  
 Auster, Ellen R., 115  
 Austin, Algernon, 197  
 Autor, David H., 263  
 Avellar, Sarah, 176  
 Avery, Rosemary J., 295  
 Ayoub, Catherine, 75  
 Azofeifa, Alejandro, 127

## B

Babb, Stephen D., 288  
 Babbie, Earl, 25, 28, 33, 35  
 Babcock, Philip, 263  
 Bach, Peter B., 295  
 Bachrach, Deborah, 109  
 Badger, Emily, 311  
 Bagri, Neha Thirani, 48  
 Bahadur, Nina, 94  
 Bai, Ge, 295  
 Bainbridge, William S., 270  
 Baker, Aryn, 175  
 Bales, Robert F., 103, 175, 231  
 Ball, Richard A., 129  
*Baltimore Sun*, 245  
 Bandura, Albert, 65  
 Bandy, Tawana, 35  
 Banerjee, Neela, 280, 322  
 Banfield, Edward C., 148  
 Banks, Curtis, 105  
 Banks, Ingrid, 331  
 Baraldi, Larissa Galastri, 290  
 Barash, David P., 162  
 Barbara Lee Family Foundation, 227  
 Barker, Kristin K., 299, 300, 301  
 Barlow, Jane, 244  
 Barnes, Robert, 74  
 Barnett, Jessica C., 291  
 Barreto, Michelle, 115  
 Barrionuevo, Alexei, 329  
 Barro, Robert J., 276  
 Barrow, Josh, 28  
 Barry, Ellen, 58  
 Barry, Megan, 287  
 Barstow, David, 140  
 Barth, Erling, 168  
 Barthel, Michael, 22  
 Bartlett, Thomas, 267  
 Bartlett, Tom, 33  
 Barton, Allen H., 108  
 Barusch, Amanda S., 249, 252  
 Basken, Paul, 37, 134  
 Bass, Frank, 146  
 Batalova, Jeanne, 185  
 Bates, Nancy, 34  
 Bates, Timothy C., 65  
 Bauer, Lauren, 145  
 Baum, Sandy, 255  
 Baumrind, Diana, 70  
 Bax, Pauline, 50  
 Bazelon, Emily, 241  
 BBC News, 339  
 Beachum, Lateshia, 226  
 Beadle, Amanda Peterson, 298  
 Beard, Henry, 88  
 Beaulieu, Daniel, 198  
 Beck, Melinda, 299  
 Becker, Howard, 103, 132  
 Becker, Howard S., 84, 119  
 Becker, Sam, 46  
 Beckles, Gloria L., 287  
 Beckwith, Ryan Teague, 275  
 Beech, Hannah, 278  
 Begley, Sharon, 63  
 Beil, Laura, 248  
 Beiser, Darr, 134  
 Beitsch, Rebecca, 312  
 Belkin, Douglas, 99  
 Belknap, Joanne, 129, 130, 131  
 Bell, Claes, 144  
 Bellini, Jason, 339  
 Belluck, Pam, 298  
 Belsky, Jay, 262  
 Belyea, Curtis, 312  
 Bendavid, Naftali, 162  
 Bender, Courtney, 335  
 Bengali, Leila, 256  
 Bengali, Shashank, 306  
 Bennett, Jessica, 75, 173  
 Bennett, Susan, 123  
 Bennhold, Katrin, 228  
 Benokraitis, Nijole V., 21, 47, 71, 78, 97, 176, 234, 236, 243  
 Benson, Michael L., 133  
 Benton, Thomas H., 263  
 Berbeco, Minda, 322

Berenson, Tessa, 194  
 Beres, Damon, 99  
 Berfield, Susan, 216, 324  
 Berger, Peter L., 88, 280  
 Berk, Richard A., 328  
 Berkos, Kristen M., 89  
 Berkowitz, Bill, 278  
 Berlin, Overton B., 42  
 Bernstein, Lemmy, 291, 320  
 Bernston, Marit, 171  
 Berrett, Dan, 266  
 Bersani, Bianca E., 199  
 Bertrand, Marianne, 261  
 Berube, Alan, 146, 150, 311, 312  
 Berczofsky, Marcus, 145  
 Bescosolido, Bernice A., 65  
 Best, Joel, 331, 332  
 Betcher, R. William, 175  
 Beteille, Tara, 264  
 Bettinger, Eric P., 258  
 Beutel, Ann, 15  
 Bharadwaj, Prashant, 29  
 Bhardwaj, Deepika, 180  
 Bialik, Carl, 22  
 Bialik, Kristen, 186, 195, 199, 304, 324  
 Bick, Alexander, 212  
 Biesecker, Michael, 124, 226, 322  
 Bietsch, Kristin, 152, 177, 304, 305  
 Biggs, Antonia M., 172  
 Bilefsky, Dan, 274  
 Billingsley, Andrew, 241  
 Bird, Warren, 277  
 Bischoff, Kendra, 313  
 Bitterman, Amy, 167  
 Biunno, J. B., 81  
 Bivens, Josh, 216  
 Blachman-Demner, Dara, 73  
 Black, M. C., 242, 243  
 Black, Sandra E., 65, 258  
 Black, Thomas, 209  
 Blake, Margaret, 170  
 Blake, Mariah, 285, 318  
 Blanchard, Dallas A., 338  
 Blau, Francine D., 168, 186, 216  
 Blau, Peter M., 90, 109  
 Blay, Zeba, 179  
 Blee, Kathleen, 340  
 Blondé, Paul, 120  
 BLS News Release, 107, 167, 168, 211, 287  
 BLS Reports, 143, 145, 167  
 Blumberg, Stephen J., 300  
 Blumenstyk, Goldie, 259  
 Blumer, Herbert, 17, 87, 327, 334  
 Blunden, Jessica, 321  
 Board of Trustees, The, 248  
 Bogaie, Joseph, 173  
 Bogle, Kathleen A., 171  
 Bollag, Burton, 259  
 Bonacich, Edna, 200  
 Bonczar, Thomas P., 135  
 Bookman, Todd, 210  
 Borgerhoff Mulder, Monique, 234  
 Borjas, George J., 186  
 Bos, Angela L., 169  
 Bosk, Charles, 217  
 Boslough, Sarah, 34  
 Botstein, Leon, 266  
 Boudette, Neal E., 124  
 Bouma-Holtrop, Sharon, 6  
 Bourdieu, Pierre, 52, 140, 151, 331  
 Bout, Jan van den, 6  
 Bouvard, Véronique, 26  
 Bowers, S., 117  
 Bowie, Liz, 73  
 Bowles, Samuel, 258  
 Boyle, Matthew, 164  
 Bradshaw, York W., 153  
 Braff, Danielle, 241

Braga, Anthony A., 135  
 Braitman, Keli A., 22  
 Bramer, Wicher M., 179  
 Breining, Sanni N., 133  
 Brescoli, Victoria L., 116, 261  
 Brey, Cristobal de, 167, 265, 268, 279  
 Brill, Steven, 293  
 Brody, Jane E., 74, 97, 297  
 Brodzinsky, Sibylla, 58  
 Brooks, Arthur C., 215  
 Brooks, Clem, 158  
 Brophy-Herb, H. E., 70  
 Brown, Anna, 144, 173, 198, 203, 339  
 Brown, Archie, 206  
 Brown, DeNeen L., 146  
 Brown, Lyn Mikel, 170  
 Brown, Michael, 327  
 Brown, Rachael, 256  
 Brown, Sheryll, 135  
 Brown, Susan I., 236  
 Brown, Taylor N. T., 163  
 Broz, Dita, 291  
 Brudzinski, Michael R., 318  
 Brüggemann, Bettina, 212  
 Bruinius, Harry, 275, 278  
 Brummelman, Eddie, 77  
 Brunvand, Jan H., 330  
 Bryant, Karl, 65  
 Buchanan, Larry, 226  
 Buchheit, Paul, 148, 156  
 Buckland, Gail, 54  
 Buckley, Chris, 307  
 Buechler, Steven M., 337  
 Buffington, Catherine, 168  
 Bughin, Jacques, 209  
 Bukowski, William, 72  
 Bullock, Jungmiwha, 202  
 Bullock, Karen, 25  
 Buntin, John, 313  
 Burd, Stephen, 259  
 Bureau of Labor Statistics, 167, 211, 214, 247, 256, 298  
 Burgess, Ernest, 314  
 Burley, Kim D., 172  
 Burn, Ian, 252  
 Burton, Linda M., 241  
 Bushman, Brad J., 77  
 Buss, David M., 169  
 Busteed, Brandon, 263  
 Butler, Kiera, 191, 315  
 Button, Patrick, 252  
 Buxmann, Peter, 98  
 Byrne, Sahara, 295

## C

Cadge, Wendy, 335  
 Cahalan, M., 268  
 Calacal, Celisa, 201  
 Calderon, Valerie J., 255, 259  
 Callahan, David, 267  
 Cameron, Deborah, 91  
 Campbell, Dakin, 146  
 Campbell, Donald T., 33  
 Campbell, Jacquelyn, 135  
 Champion-Vincent, Véronique, 329  
 Campo-Flores, Arian, 275  
 Cano, Regina Garcia, 197  
 Cantor, David, 261  
 Cantor, Jonathan, 295  
 Cantrell, Steven, 264  
 Card, David, 263  
 Card, Josefina J., 35  
 Carey, Anna, 171  
 Carey, Anne R., 177  
 Carey, Benedict, 133  
 Carey, Kevin, 259

Carl, Traci, 154  
 Carnagey, Nicholas L., 74  
 Carnevale, Anthony P., 256  
 Carney, Ginny, 44  
 Carnoy, Martin, 258, 265  
 Carpenter, Christopher S., 134  
 Carrell, Scott E., 202  
 Carroll, Margaret D., 52  
 Carson, E. Ann, 134, 136  
 Carter, Phillip, 178  
 Casadevall, Arturo, 36  
 Case, Anne, 216  
 Case, Matthew H., 45  
 Cason, Mike, 173  
 Castonguay, Jessica S., 75  
 Catalano, Shannan, 242  
 Catalyst, 115  
 Cattan, Sarah, 70  
 CDC/NCHS National Vital Statistics System, 235  
 Cellini, Stephanie R., 147  
 Center for American Women and Politics, 169  
 Center for Behavioral Statistics and Quality, 290  
 Center for Economic and Policy Research, 211  
 Center for Responsive Politics, 222  
 Center for the Study of Global Christianity, 271  
 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 148, 247  
 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 242, 291  
 Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 292  
 Cerf, Christopher, 88  
 Cha, Ariana Eunjung, 289, 342  
 Chambliss, William J., 128, 129  
 Chamie, Joseph, 239  
 Chandler, Tertius, 310  
 Chandra, Anjani, 169, 170, 171  
 Chasin, Barbara H., 199  
 Chaudhary, Neil K., 22  
 Chaves, Mark, 279  
 Cheah, Ban, 256  
 Chen, Alice, 287  
 Chen, Frances S., 93  
 Chen, Juan, 203  
 Chen, Ronald C., 296  
 Chesler, Phyllis, 16  
 Chesney-Lind, Meda, 63  
 Chetty, Raj, 149, 150, 151  
 Children's Defense Fund, 147  
 Child Trends Data Bank, 223  
 Child Welfare Information Gateway, 77  
 Chin, Margaret M., 196  
 Chira, Susan, 178  
 Chmielewski, Anna K., 257  
 Choksi, Mansi, 58  
 Choma, Russ, 226  
 Choueiti, Marc, 31, 178  
 Christakis, Erika, 63  
 Christakis, Nicholas A., 106  
 Christie, Megan, 124  
 Christina, Greta, 75, 228  
*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 268  
 Chui, Michael, 209  
 Churchill, Ward, 188  
 Cillizza, Chris, 224  
 Cilluffo, Anthony, 195, 199  
 Citizens Against Government Waste, 222  
 Clark, Martyn P., 321  
 Claussen, Angelika H., 300  
 Clayson, Dennis E., 24  
 Clement, Scott, 291  
 Clements, David D., 215  
 Clemmons, Nakia S., 22  
 Clifford, Stephanie, 56, 124, 344  
 Clifton, Jim, 224  
 Cloke, Kenneth, 110  
 Cloud, John, 265  
 Clow, Kimberley A., 75  
 Cluett, Rachel, 322, 323  
 Cobble, Dorothy Sue, 340  
 Cohen, Geoffrey L., 263

Cohen, Jere, 276  
 Cohen, Jessica A., 238  
 Cohen, Lawrence J., 106  
 Cohen, Patricia, 148, 187, 209  
 Cohen, Stefanie, 164  
 Cohn, D'Vera, 6, 21, 184, 185, 192, 217, 235, 236, 238, 239, 255, 273  
 Cohn, Meredith, 345  
 Colapinto, John, 64  
 Colby, Sandra L., 246  
 Collazo, Jaime A., 312  
 College Board, 266  
 Collins, Chuck, 141  
 Collins, Patricia Hill, 178  
 Collins, William J., 150  
 Colvin, Geoff, 110  
 Colvin, George, 343  
 Colvin, Mark, 133  
 Commisceo Global, 95  
 Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 132  
 Congressional Budget Office, 141  
 Conley, Dalton, 66, 148  
 Connell, Dave, 317  
 Connor, Phillip, 185, 306  
 Conrad, Kate, 31  
 Conrad, Peter, 299, 300, 301  
 Considine, Austin, 97  
 ConsumerReports.org, 170  
 Cook, Thomas D., 33  
 Cookson, Peter W., 258  
 Cooky, Cheryl, 178  
 Cooley, Charles Horton, 66, 101  
 Cooper, Alexia D., 137  
 Cooper, David, 210  
 Cooper, Mae, 268  
 Cooper, O. R., 319  
 Cooper, P. Mae, 77  
 Cooperman, Alan, 249, 269, 272, 273, 274, 276  
 Copen, Casey, 169, 171, 239  
 Copen, Casey E., 169, 170, 237, 238, 242  
 Copp, J., 78  
 Corak, Miles, 149, 151  
 Corbett, Christianne, 179  
 Coren, Arthur, 267  
 Cornell, Ada S., 165  
 Corporation for National & Community Service, 107  
 Cortesi, Sandra, 98  
 Costanza, Jennifer, 312  
 Couch, Carl J., 328  
 Couffinal, Agnès, 292  
 Council for Global Equity, 175  
 Couzens, Lance, 145  
 Cox, Cynthia, 292  
 Coy, Peter, 205  
 Crabtree, Steve, 151, 276  
 Craig, Lyn, 166  
 Creanga, Andreea A., 172  
 Cremer, Paul C., 297  
 Cressey, Donald R., 123  
 Cressey, D. R., 132  
 Cresswell, Julie, 153  
 Crissey, Sarah, 223, 224  
 Crockett, Emily, 95  
 Crosnoe, Robert, 287  
 Cross, Jordan, 256  
 Cross, Rob, 112  
 Crowley, Michael, 278  
 Cruikshank, Margaret, 250  
 Cubanski, Juliette, 248  
 Cudd, Ann E., 217  
 Culbert, Samuel A., 113  
 Cullen, Francis T., 129  
 Cullen, Lisa T., 234  
 Cullinane, Jenna, 258  
 Cumberworth, Erin, 137  
 Cunningham, Scott, 240  
 Cunningham, Solveig A., 289  
 Currie, Brian S., 318

Currie, E., 133  
 Curtin, Sally C., 9, 238, 239, 287  
 Curtiss, Susan, 62  
 Cyberbullying Research Center, 98

## D

Dahl, Robert A., 225  
 Dahlin, E., 54  
 Dalphin, John R., 33  
 Daly, Mary C., 256  
 Daly, Matthew, 322  
 Damico, Anthony, 248  
 Daneshpour, Manijeh, 280  
 Daniel, Mary-Alice, 184  
 Daniel, Michael, 285  
 Daniels, Cynthia R., 172  
 Daniels, Kimberly, 237, 242  
 Danielson, Melissa L., 300  
 Dank, Meredith, 178  
 Dao, James, 132  
 Daskal, Lolly, 109  
 Daugherty, Jill, 169, 239  
 Davenport, Coral, 320, 322  
 Davey, Monica, 199  
 David, Meredith F., 98  
 Davidai, Shai, 158  
 Davidson, Osha Gray, 339  
 Davies, James B., 151, 152  
 Davies, James C., 336  
 Davis, Alyssa, 122  
 Davis, Julie Hirschfeld, 344  
 Davis, J. Wade, 318  
 Davis, Karen, 292  
 Davis, Kenneth C., 277  
 Davis, Kingsley, 154  
 Dawson, Steve, 52  
 Day, Martin V., 196  
 Deane, Claudia, 29  
 Death Penalty Information Center, 137  
 Deaton, Angus, 216, 247  
 DeBenedet, Anthony T., 106  
 Deegan, Mary Jo, 12  
 DeGraw, David, 147  
 DeKeseredy Walter S., 131  
 Delaney, Kevin, 6  
 de las Casas, Bartolome, 187  
 deLaski, Andrew, 323  
 della Porta, Donatella, 340  
 Deloitte and Alliance for Board Diversity, 113  
 De Long, J. Bradford, 310  
 DeLuca, Dylan, 178  
 DeMaio, Theresa J., 34  
 Demographia, 311  
 Denny, C. H., 63  
 Deparle, Jason, 149  
 Department of Defense, 132  
 de Pommereau, Isabelle, 174  
 Deprez, Esmé E., 121  
 Desale, Meghana, 298  
 DeSilver, Drew, 28, 158, 210, 265  
 Desmond-Harris, Jeneé, 331  
 Devereux, Paul J., 65  
 de Vogue, Ariane, 173  
 Dewan, Shaila, 144  
 Dewhurst, Martin, 209  
 Diamond, Jeremy, 122, 173  
 Diamond, Milton, 63, 64  
 Diani, Mario, 340  
 Dias, Elizabeth, 168  
 Di Carlo, Matthew, 158  
 Dickey, Jack, 212  
 Dickman, Samuel L., 145, 287  
 Dickson, William J., 110  
 Dillow, Sally A., 167, 261, 265, 268, 279  
 Dilworth-Anderson, Peggye, 241  
 DiMascio, Marianne, 323

Dimock, Michael, 221  
 Dineen, Michael, 244, 250  
 Ding, Ming, 25  
 Dinkes, R., 263  
 D'Innocenzio, Anne, 294  
 DiSalvo, David, 98  
 Ditmar, Kelly, 227, 228  
 Dixon, Travis L., 31  
 Dobbin, Frank, 202  
 Dockterman, Eliana, 72, 97, 168  
 Dodini, Sam, 151  
 Dodson, Lisa, 241  
 Doeringer, Peter B., 200  
 Doherty, Carroll, 135, 142, 221, 272  
 Dolan, Kerry A., 139, 141  
 Dolnick, Sam, 50  
 Domhoff, G. William, 143, 208  
 Dominguez, Kenneth, 288  
 Domosh, Mona, 315  
 Donadio, Rachel, 92  
 Donnelly, Rachel, 287  
 Dorell, Oren, 306  
 Dorfman, Mark, 316  
 Doshi, Namrata, 131  
 Douban, Gigi, 199  
 Douglas, Susan J., 87  
 Dovidio, John F., 202, 261  
 Dow, Dawn Marie, 70  
 Downs, Edward, 31  
 Doyle, Francis X., 278  
 Doyle, Joseph J., Jr., 133  
 Dreid, Nadia, 37  
 Dreweke, Joerg, 172, 298  
 Drewery, Malcolm P., Jr., 193, 196  
 Drexler, Peggy, 94, 171, 330  
 Driscoll, Anne K., 238, 239  
 Dropp, Kyle, 291  
 Drucker, Peter, 112  
 Druker, Steven M., 308  
 Drukker, Austin J., 114  
 Drutman, Lee, 222  
 Du Bois, W. E. B., 12  
 Dugan, Andrew, 47, 221, 224, 235  
 Duggan, Maeve, 97, 98  
 Duhiigg, Charles, 319  
 Dumaine, Brian, 156  
 Duncan, D. T., 289  
 Dunifon, Rachel, 25  
 Dunn, Robert R., 312  
 Durden, Tyler, 207  
 Durkheim, Émile, 9, 126, 127, 255, 269, 275  
 Durose, Matthew R., 137  
 Dye, Thomas R., 226  
 Dyson, Laronistine, 128

## E

Eagan, Kevin, 45  
 Eagle, Alison, 279  
 Eavis, Peter, 128  
 Eberstadt, Nicholas, 146, 211, 307  
 Eckenrode, John, 244, 250  
 Eckhoff, Vickery, 148  
 Eckholm, Erik, 248  
 Eckstein, Rick, 6  
 Economic News Release, 210, 216  
 Edelstein, Sara, 248  
 Edin, Kathryn, 241  
 eDiplomat, 46  
 Edlin, Aaron, 267  
 EEOC, 252  
 Efrati, Amir, 344  
 Egan, Mark L., 178  
 Eggebeen, David J., 238  
 Egley, Arlen, 126  
 Ehrhardt, Anke A., 63  
 Ehrlich, Anne H., 308



Ehrlich, Paul, 308  
 Eilperin, Juliet, 320  
 Eisen, Marvin B., 35  
 Eisenberg, Abne M., 93  
 Eisler, Peter, 285  
 Ekman, Paul, 93  
 Elder, Linda, 6  
 Elgin, Ben, 322  
 Eligon, John, 195  
 Eliot, Lise, 62  
 Ellens, J. Harold, 278  
 Ellis, Bill, 330  
 Ellis, Renee, 71, 235, 247  
 Ellison, Jesse, 173  
 Ely, Robin J., 16  
 Embury-Dennis, Tom, 275  
 Emery, David, 330  
 Emmert, Ashley, 279  
 Emmons, William R., 141  
 England, Paula, 130, 171  
 English, Cynthia, 262  
 Entmacher, Joan, 217  
 EPA, 318, 320, 323  
 Epstein, Joseph, 329  
 Epstein, Robert, 234  
 Erbentraut, Joseph, 323  
 Erchull, Mindy J., 77  
 Erikson, Kai T., 126  
 Ernst & Young, 128, 129  
 Esipova, Neil, 306  
 Espelage, Dorothy L., 131  
 Esping-Andersen, Gosta, 206  
 Estacion, Angela, 238  
 Esterl, Mike, 116  
 Etter, Lauren, 187  
 Etzioni, Amitai, 107  
 Evans, Becky, 46  
 Evans, Harold, 54  
 Evens, Jason M., 321  
 Eversley, Melanie, 51  
 Evich, Helena B., 117  
 Ewen, Lynda Ann, 335  
 Ewert, Stephanie, 260  
 Ewing, Walter A., 186  
 Expedia, 83, 212

## F

Fahrenthold, David A., 143, 322  
 Fairchile, Emily, 65  
 Fakhraie, Fatemeh, 280  
 Famiglietti, James S., 317  
 Fang, Ferric C., 36  
 FAO, IFAD, and WFP, 153  
 Farley, Melissa, 56  
 Farley, Sally D., 91  
 Feagin, Clairece Booher, 192  
 Feagin, Joe R., 11, 192  
 Featherstone, Liza, 16  
 Febo-Vazquez, Isaedmarie, 170  
 Federal Bureau of Investigation, 97, 122, 123, 124, 125, 130, 131, 242  
 Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, 247, 248, 292  
 Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 287  
 Feldman, Jamie, 164  
 Feldstein, Stanley, 93  
 Ferdman, Roberto A., 45  
 Ferguson, Christopher J., 74  
 Ferguson, Emily, 279  
 Ferguson, Gail M., 170  
 Ferguson, Janna, 172  
 Fernald, Anne, 157  
 Ferree, Myra M., 15  
 Feys, Frederik, 179  
 Fiala, Steven C., 288  
 Fiebelkorn, Amy P., 22  
 Figlio, David N., 133  
 File, Thom, 96, 223, 224  
 Filer, Christine R., 75  
 Filipovic, Jill, 72, 228  
 Fine, Gary Alan, 68  
 Finer, Lawrence B., 172, 239  
 Fingerhut, Hannah, 164, 172, 221  
 Finkelhor, David, 244  
 Finkelstein, Eric A., 289  
 Firebaugh, Glenn, 246  
 Fischman, Josh, 320  
 Fisher, William A., 170  
 Fitch, Kimberly, 115  
 Fitzgerald, Therese, 297  
 Flabbi, Luca, 115  
 Flasphaler, Julia, 324  
 Flavin, Jeanne, 130  
 Fleegler, Eric W., 135  
 Fleishman, Jeffrey, 180  
 Fleming, Charles, 324  
 Fleming, John, 99  
 Flesher, John, 226  
 Flint Water Advisory Task Force, 318  
 Flood, Sarah, 166  
 Flores, Andrew R., 163  
 Florida, Richard, 120  
 Floyd, Ife, 148  
 Floyd, R. L., 63  
 Fogarty, Alison C. K., 171  
 Fogg, Piper, 94  
 Fomby, Paula, 66, 238  
 Fontenot, Kayla R., 146, 147, 193, 194  
 Food and Water Watch, 319  
 Foroohar, Rana, 149  
 Foster, Diana G., 172  
 Fowler, James H., 106  
 Fox, Gerald, 310  
 Fox, Lindsay, 200  
 Fox, Richard L., 227  
 Fraire, John, 266  
 Frakt, Austin, 293  
 Franco, Oscar H., 179  
 Frank, Robert, 156  
 Frankel, Matthew, 156, 295  
 Franklin, K., 268  
 Franks, Valerie W., 266  
 Frayer, Lauren, 306  
 Freedom House, 218  
 Freese, Jeremy, 64  
 Freking, Kevin, 322  
 Fremstad, Shawn, 147  
 French, Juliana E., 74  
 Frey, William H., 183, 203, 224, 311, 312, 313  
 Friedlmeier, Mihaela, 31  
 Friedman, Howard S., 223  
 Friedman, Jaclyn, 201  
 Friedman, John N., 150  
 Friedman, Lisa, 322  
 Friedrichs, David O., 132  
 Friesen, Wallace V., 93  
 Frohlich, Jonah, 109  
 Frohwirth, Lon, 172, 239  
 Frohlich, Lauren, 217  
 Frohwirth, L., 172  
 Fry, Richard, 78, 150, 235, 238, 247, 251, 255  
 Fryar, Cheryl D., 52  
 Fryer, Roland G., Jr., 195  
 Fuchs-Schundeln, Nicola, 212  
 Fuentes-Nieva, Ricardo, 151  
 Fulu, Emma, 48  
 Funk, Cary, 249, 269, 272, 324, 342  
 Furnas, Alexander, 222

## G

Galasso, Nick, 151  
 Gallagher, Catherine A., 21  
 Gallup, 215

Galperin, Andrew, 171  
 Galston, William A., 149  
 Gamson, William, 337  
 Ganem, Joseph, 36  
 Gans, Herbert, 14, 52  
 GAO, 114  
 Garbinti, Bertrand, 151  
 García, Emma, 258  
 Garcia-Moreno, Claudia, 48  
 Gardner, Erica, 70  
 Gardner, Marilyn, 214  
 Gardner, Matthew, 156, 186  
 Garfinkel, Harold, 80, 88, 89  
 Garza, Lisa Marie, 130  
 Gasser, Urs, 98  
 Gastanaduy, Paul A., 22  
 Gates, Gary J., 163, 186, 241  
 Gault, Barbara, 215  
 Gavin, Lorrie, 239  
 Gayer, Ted, 114  
 Ge, Yanbo, 190  
 Geary, Katherine A., 77  
 Gebeloff, Robert, 144, 195  
 Gee, Lisa Christensen, 186  
 Geertz, Clifford, 280  
 Geier, Ben, 343  
 Geiger, Abigail, 120, 166, 174, 199  
 George, Katy, 209  
 Gershenson, Seth, 73  
 Gerth, H. H., 12  
 Gewertz, Catherine, 261  
 Geyer, Roland, 323  
 Gibson, David, 279  
 Gibson-Davis, Christina M., 238  
 Gilbert, Dennis, 145  
 Gillespie, Michael Allen, 267  
 Gilliam, Walter S., 262  
 Gillig, Traci, 178  
 Gillis, Justin, 324  
 Gilovich, Thomas, 158  
 Gilpin, Lindsey, 343  
 Gilson, Dave, 227  
 Gimpelson, Vladimir, 158  
 Ginther, Donna, 261  
 Gintis, Herbert, 258  
 Girard, Jeffrey M., 93  
 Giugni, Marco, 340  
 Giuliano, Laura, 263  
 Giving USA Foundation, 107  
 GLAAD, 162  
 Gladstone, Rick, 228, 331  
 Glantz, Stanton A., 288, 296  
 Glassner, Barry, 122  
 Glauber, Bill, 219  
 Glaze, Lauren, 135  
 Gleason, Mary Margaret, 300  
 Gleiber, Michael A., 297  
 Glenn, David, 263  
 Glenza, Jessica, 285  
 Glionna, John M., 71  
 Goffman, Alice, 30, 68, 89  
 Goffman, Erving, 17, 80, 120  
 Gold, Alexander K., 114  
 Gold, Matea, 143  
 Gold, Rachel Benson, 172  
 Goldberg, Michelle, 178  
 Golden, Daniel, 259  
 Goldin, Amy, 327  
 Goldin, Claudia, 168, 248  
 Goldring, Rebecca, 167  
 Goldsmith, Joan, 110  
 Goldstein, Jill M., 297  
 Golshan, Tara, 131  
 Gonzalez-Barrera, Ana, 43  
 Goodale, Gloria, 343  
 Goode, Erica, 136  
 Goodell, Jeff, 322  
 Goodnough, Abby, 94, 290  
 Goodstein, Laurie, 275, 276, 279

Gopnik, Alison, 75  
 Gordon, Linda, 340  
 Gottdiener, Mark, 315  
 Gottlieb, Mark, 92  
 Gottman, John M., 252  
 Goudreau, Jenna, 115  
 Gould, L. Hannah, 285  
 Gouldner, Alvin W., 11  
 Govender, Serusha, 59  
 Governors Highway Safety Association, 127  
 Goyette, Braden, 189  
 Goyette, Kimberly, 237  
 Graf, Nikki, 251  
 Graffunder, Corinne M., 288  
 Graham, Carol, 145, 151  
 Graham, Mark J., 261  
 Graham, Tanya L., 321  
 Graif, Corina, 133  
 Grall, Timothy, 238  
 Gramlich, John, 21, 121, 132  
 Granados, Amy, 31  
 Grandjean, Philippe, 285  
 Grant, Adam, 112  
 Grauerholz, Liz, 6, 65  
 Graves, Joseph L., Jr., 184  
 Gray, Alex, 208  
 Gray, Lucinda, 167  
 Gray, Paul S., 33  
 Grazian, David, 30  
 Greeley, Brendan, 149  
 Green, Jeff, 115, 177, 198  
 Green, Michael, 321  
 Green, P. P., 63  
 Greenberg, Julie, 265  
 Greenfield, Rebecca, 212  
 Greenwood, Shannon, 97  
 Gregory, Sean, 209  
 Gregory, Terry, 343  
 Griffin, Shannon, 248  
 Grigsby, John, 186  
 Grim, Brian J., 274  
 Grobart, Sam, 144  
 Gross, Rita M., 279  
 Grusky, David, 149  
 Grusky, David B., 151, 158  
 Guallar, Eliseo, 296  
 Guarino, Mark, 209  
 Gunders, Dana, 45, 316  
 Gurkoff, Joe, 91  
 Gurney, Joan M., 337  
 Gusfield, Joseph R., 337  
 Guterman, Stanley, 316  
 Guttmacher Institute, 169, 171, 172  
 Guzzo, Karen Benjamin, 241

## H

Haas, Ann P., 165  
 Haas, Steven A., 73  
 Hacker, Jacob S., 143, 206  
 Hacker, Jason Daniel, 201  
 Hafemeister, Thomas L., 244, 245, 251, 252  
 Hagan, Frank E., 121  
 Hahn, Heather, 248  
 Hakim, Danny, 324  
 Hale, Jerold L., 94  
 Hales, Emily, 309  
 Haley, Debra A., 24  
 Halikias, Dimitrios, 259  
 Hall, Avron J., 285  
 Hall, Edward T., 91, 95  
 Hallman, Ben, 296  
 Halperin, David M., 165  
 Halsey, Ashley, III, 22  
 Hamby, Sherry, 244  
 Hamilton, Brady E., 238, 239  
 Hamilton, Laura, 171  
 Hamilton, Malcolm B., 270

Hammadi, Saad, 157  
 Hammond, S. Katherine, 297  
 Hancock, Tina, 86  
 Handelsman, Jo, 261  
 Hanes, Stephanie, 75  
 Haney, Craig, 105  
 Hannah, A. Lee, 322  
 Hansen, A. R., 289  
 Hansen, Lawrence A., 106  
 Hanser, Amy, 338  
 Hanson, Marci J., 92, 94  
 Hanushek, Eric A., 262  
 Hao, Lingxin, 70  
 Hardesty, Jennifer L., 252  
 Hardoon, Deborah, 151, 153  
 Hardy, Quentin, 56, 344  
 Haren, Angela, 316  
 Harlow, Harry E., 62  
 Harlow, Margaret K., 62  
 Harnish, Verne, 109  
 Harrell, Erika, 126, 145  
 Harris, Benjamin Cerf, 168  
 Harris, Benjamin H., 136  
 Harris, Chauncey D., 314, 315  
 Harris, Gardiner, 175, 298  
 Harris, Jenneifer L., 117  
 Harris, Jennifer L., 52  
 Harter, Jim, 109, 211, 217, 250  
 Hartig, Hannah, 16  
 Hartmann, Heidi, 213  
 Harvard School of Public Health, 329  
 Hasegawa, Toshikazu, 93  
 Hasemyer, David, 322  
 Haskins, Ron, 146, 149  
 Hass, B. E., 70  
 Hassan, Amro, 180  
 Hauer, Mathew E., 321  
*Hawai'i Free Press*, 139  
 Hayden, Dolores, 315  
 Hayes, Danny, 227  
 Hayford, Sarah R., 241  
 Healthcare-NOW!, 296  
 Health Resources and Services  
   Administration, 43  
 Heath, Chip, 329  
 Heath, Jennifer, 58  
 Hechter, Michael, 47  
 Hedberg, Katrina, 288  
 Hedegaard, Holly, 9, 287  
 Hedges, Chris, 258  
 Hee Lee, Ye Michelle, 122  
 Heffer, Simon, 54  
 Hegewisch, Ariane, 213  
 Heggeness, Misty L., 251  
 Heider, Eleanor R., 42  
 Heilbroner, R. L., 205  
 Heim, Joe, 196  
 Heiman, Julia R., 170  
 Heinrichs, Markus, 93  
 Heise, Kia, 6  
 Heisler, Candace, 244  
 Hell, Maximilian, 149  
 Helliwell, John, 153  
 Hemphill, Thomas A., 323  
 Henderson, Alex, 295  
 Hendren, Nathaniel, 149, 150, 151  
 Henne, Peter, 274, 278, 279  
 Henningsen, David D., 93  
 Henry, Astrid, 340  
 Henry, Meghan, 148  
 Herman, Bob, 296  
 Herman, Jody L., 163, 165  
 Hernandez, David, 331  
 Hernandez, Elaine M., 287  
 Hernandez, Melba, 244, 245  
 Herzberg, David, 300  
 Heyman, Richard E., 77  
 Hibbard, Roberta, 244  
 Hicks, Maureen Soyars, 211

Hietanen, Jari K., 93  
 Higginbotham, Elizabeth, 86  
 Higgins, Tim, 28, 115  
 Hightower, Jim, 156  
 Hilbert, Richard A., 88  
 Hilger, Nathaniel, 196  
 Hill, Adam, 300  
 Hill, Catey, 161  
 Hill, Catherine, 179  
 Hill, Jason, 265  
 Hill, Misha, 148  
 Hill, Misha E., 186  
 Hill, Terrence D., 316  
 Hillaker, B. D., 70  
 Hillin, Taryn, 99  
 Himelfarb, Igor, 276  
 Himmelstein, David U., 145  
 Hines, Jonas Z., 288  
 Hinkle, Stephen, 102  
 Hirschi, Travis, 134  
 Hirschl, Thomas A., 147  
 Hiss, William C., 266  
 Hixon, Lindsay, 34  
 Hlavka, Heather R., 243  
 Hoecker-Drysdale, Susan, 8  
 Hoeffel, Elizabeth M., 196  
 Hoekstra, Mark, 202  
 Hoffman, Brad, 224  
 Hoffman, Kristi, 171  
 Hoffman, Piper, 120  
 Hogan, Andrew, 211  
 Hogan, Howard, 247  
 Hogan, Marjorie J., 74  
 Hokayem, Charles, 251  
 Holcomb, Jesse, 22  
 Holland, Greg J., 321  
 Hollis-Peel, Meghan E., 135  
 Holloway, Kali, 172, 195  
 Holloway, Kim, 228  
 Holmes, Elizabeth, 164  
 Holmes, Natalie, 150  
 Holstrom, Nancy, 217  
 Homans, George, 90  
 Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette, 200  
 Hong, Gihoon, 186  
 Hong, Jun Sung, 131  
 Hooper, Sophia Yang, 263  
 Hooyman, Nancy R., 297  
 Hormann, Annette, M., 318  
 Horowitz, Juliana, 251, 339  
 Horowitz, Juliana M., 221  
 Horowitz, Juliana Menasce, 79, 169, 202  
 Hotz, V. Joseph, 66  
 Houlihan, Jane, 297  
 Hout, Michael, 141  
 Houts, Renate, 262  
 Howard, Beth, 293  
 Howard, David, 247, 250  
 Howard, Grace, 172  
 Howard, Jeff, 262  
 Howell, James C., 126  
 Hoxha, Denada, 201  
 Hoxie, Josh, 141, 210  
 Hoyt, Homer, 314  
 Hsin, Amy, 260  
 Hsu, A., 321  
 Hsu, Angel, 316  
 Huang, Jon, 17  
 Hubbard, Ruth, 179  
*Huffington Post*, 43  
 Huffman, Matt L., 115, 217  
 Hughes, Everett C., 84  
 Huis, Arnold van, 48  
 Huizinga, David, 132  
 Hummer, Robert A., 287  
 Humphrey, Jamie, 288  
 Hunnicutt, Gwen, 132  
 Hunter, Lori M., 251  
 Hurtado, Sylvia, 45

Hurwitz, Michael, 259  
Hussar, W., 263  
Hutchison, Ray, 315  
Hutter, Mark, 316  
Hyde, Zachary, 338

**I**  
Ianzito, Christina, 297  
IBM Journal Staff, 125  
Iceland, John, 313  
Igielnik, Ruth, 29, 339  
Ikeda, Kyoko, 321  
Independent Television Service, 188  
Infinit Healthcare, 292  
Institute for College Access & Success, The, 268  
Institute of Medicine, 301  
Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 4  
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 320  
International Federation of Health Plans, 293  
International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 223  
Identity Theft Resource Center, 125  
Inter-Parliamentary Union, 174  
Ioannidis, John, 32  
Irving, Shelley K., 147  
Isaacs, Julia, 248  
Iskander, John, 243  
Ivory, Danielle, 319  
Ivry, Bob, 156

**J**  
Jackson, D. D., 16  
Jackson, Janine, 36  
Jackson, Shelly L., 244, 245, 251, 252  
Jacobe, Dennis, 216  
Jacobs, Anna W., 316  
Jacobs, Jerry A., 34  
Jacoby, Samuel, 17  
Jácome, Elisa, 136  
Jagacinski, Carolyn M., 261  
Jamal, Ahmed, 288  
Jambeck, Jenna R., 323  
Jamieson, Denise J., 172  
Jandt, Fred E., 92, 93, 95  
Janis, Irving L., 105  
Janofsky, Michael, 235  
Jaret, Peter, 295  
Jargon, Julie, 111  
Jargowsky, Paul A., 313  
Jaspers, Loes, 179  
Jeffreys, Sheila, 279  
Jenkin, G., 117  
Jenkins, E. Lynn, 243  
Jerman, Jenna, 171  
Jernigan, David, 75  
Jewkes, Rachel, 48  
Johnson, Dave, 146  
Johnson, Frank, 134, 268  
Johnson, Hank, 337  
Johnson, Heather L., 51, 178  
Johnson, Ileana, 206  
Johnson, Kevin, 134  
Johnson, Kirk, 250  
Johnson, Paula A., 297  
Johnson, Rucker C., 301  
Johnston, Hank, 337  
Johnston, Pamela, 46  
Jones, Bradley, 186  
Jones, Charise, 312  
Jones, Christina, 168  
Jones, Jeffrey M., 40, 80, 162, 185, 205, 209, 221, 223, 224, 234, 255  
Jones, Jo, 241  
Jones, Nicholas A., 34, 202

Jones, Rachel K., 171, 298  
Jones, R. K., 172  
Jones, Robert, 202  
Jonsson, Jan O., 158  
Jonsson, Patrik, 30  
Joo, Nathan, 149  
Joshi, Suchi P., 31  
Jucca, Lisa, 305  
Juergensmeyer, Mark, 281  
Julian, Tiffany, 256

**K**  
Kabali, Hilda, 74, 76  
Kaeble, Danielle, 135  
Kahlenberg, Richard D., 261  
Kahn, Lawrence M., 168, 216  
Kahn, Shulamit, 261  
Kaiser Family Foundation, 291  
Kalev, Alexandra, 202  
Kaliouby, Rana el, 93  
Kallakuri, Chetana, 322, 323  
Kalogrides, Demetra, 264  
Kamp, Karin, 222  
Kane, Nazmeen, 166  
Kane, Thomas J., 264  
Kaneda, Toshiko, 152, 177, 304  
Kaneda, Toshiko, 305  
Kang, Cecelia, 200  
Kann, Laura, 165, 169  
Kantor, Jodi, 113, 279  
Kaplan, David A., 115  
Karbownik, Krzysztof, 133  
Karp, David R., 33  
Karver, Tahilin Sanchez, 241  
Kassotis, Christopher D., 318  
Kasumovic, Michael M., 178  
Katz, Jackson, 178  
Katz, Lawrence F., 210, 211, 248  
Katzenbach, Jon, 215  
Kaufman, Alexander C., 173  
Kay, Aaron C., 196  
Kay, Paul, 42  
Kearney, Melissa S., 136, 240, 252  
Kearney, Patricia, 89  
Kearns, Cristin E., 296  
Keating, Dan, 296  
Keating, Elizabeth, 262  
Keels, Micere, 239  
Keeter, Scott, 28, 29  
Keizer, Renske, 238  
Kelderman, Eric, 36  
Kelley, Harold H., 90  
Kelley, Trista, 300  
Kelly, Erin, 202  
Kelly, Meegan, 322, 323  
Kelly, Mim, 243  
Kelly, William R., 137  
Kemp, Alice Abel, 176  
Kemp, J., 263  
Kempner, Joanna, 36  
Kena, Grace, 134, 258, 268  
Kendall, Diana, 157  
Kennedy, Brian, 324, 342  
Kennedy, Courtney, 29  
Kent, Lauren, 174  
Keoun, Bradley, 156  
Kerner, Rose M., 235, 241  
Kerr, Sari Pekkala, 168  
Kessem, Limor, 125  
Kessenides, Dimitra, 324  
Kessler, Aaron M., 324  
Kessler, Glenn, 151  
Kettner, Peter M., 35  
Keverian, Serge, 321  
KewalRamani, A., 263  
KewalRamani, Angelina, 258  
Khan, Shamus R., 151

Kharif, Olga, 342  
Khaw, Lyndal B. L., 252  
Kidder, Katherine, 178  
Kiefer, Francine, 228  
Kiel, Paul, 156  
Kihn, Paul, 265  
Kikuchi, Yukiko, 93  
Kilbourne, Jean, 170  
Kiley, Jocelyn, 173  
Kilgore, James, 81  
Killian, Lewis M., 328, 329, 333, 335  
Killoren, Sarah E., 71  
Kilmann, R. H., 109  
Kilpatrick, Dean G., 244, 245  
Kim, Steven, 292  
Kindy, Kimberly, 197  
King, Brian, 288  
King, Colbert I., 190  
Kinsey, Alfred, 162  
Kirkegaard, Jacob Funk, 156  
Kishi, Katayoun, 278  
Kivisto, Peter, 116  
Klandermans, Bert, 337  
Kleber, Rolf, 6  
Kline, Patrick, 149, 150  
Klos, Diana Mitsu, 166  
Kluger, Jeffrey, 63  
Kneebone, Elizabeth, 146, 311, 312  
Knewstub, Dylan, 241  
Knittel, Christopher R., 190  
Koba, Mark, 113  
Kochhar, Rakesh, 150, 307  
Koenig, David, 205  
Kohut, Andrew, 140  
Kolata, Gina, 342  
Kollar, Melissa A., 146, 147, 193, 194  
Kollock, Peter, 17  
Komando, Kim, 344  
Kominski, Robert, 260  
Kornhauser, William, 336  
Korownyk, Christina, 301  
Kosova, Weston, 22  
Kost, Kathryn, 250  
Kotkin, Joel, 316  
Koutsoukis, Antonios, 151, 152  
Kowaleski-Jones, Lori, 25  
Kowitz, Beth, 340  
Kozłowski, Lynn T., 288  
Kozol, Jonathan, 258  
Krache, D., 77  
Krajicek, David J., 318  
Kramer, Laura, 15  
Kramer, Michael R., 289  
Krantz, Matt, 216  
Kraska, Peter B., 128  
Krasnova, Hanna, 98  
Kraus, Michael W., 158  
Krause, Eleanor, 236  
Kreager, Derek A., 171  
Kreeger, Karen Y., 63  
Kreider, Rose M., 235  
Kreitner, Ronald, 315  
Krisher, Tom, 124  
Krishnamurthy, Prasad, 267  
Kristapovich, Paul, 134, 258, 268  
Kristof, Nicholas, 148, 227  
Krogstad, Jens Manuel, 185, 194, 224  
Kroll, Luisa, 139, 141  
Kromer, Braedyn, 247, 250  
Kross, Ethan, 98  
Krueger, Alan B., 210, 211  
Krumwiede, Kip, 209  
Kuczynski, Kevin, 79  
Kueppers, Courtney, 45  
Kugler, Adriana D., 199  
Kuhl, Patricia K., 75  
Kuhn, Manfred H., 61  
Kulczycki, Andrei, 203  
Kunkel, Dale L., 75



Kuntz, Phil, 156  
 Kuntzle, Julia, 120  
 Kurzman, Charles, 51  
 Kuznekoff, Jeffrey H., 178  
 Kwok, Alvin C., 248  
 Kymlicka, Will, 51

**L**  
 Laan, Ellen T. M., 179  
 Labor Force Statistics, 209, 213  
 La France, Betty H., 93  
 Lai, K. K. Rebecca, 17  
 Lakoff, Robin T., 91  
 Laliberte, Richard, 285  
 Laliker, Melanie, 94  
 Lamb, Sharon, 170  
 Lamontagne, Cassandra, 321  
 Landgrave, Michelangelo, 186  
 Landivar, Liana C., 261  
 Landrigan, Philip J., 285  
 Landsberger, Henry A., 110  
 Laneri, Raquel, 311  
 Lang, Gladys Engel, 330  
 Lang, James M., 59  
 Lang, Kurt, 330  
 Langreth, Robert, 343  
 Langton, Lynn, 121, 123, 126, 145, 242  
 Lankford, Adam, 120  
 Lankford, Hamilton, 265  
 Lannutti, Pamela J., 94  
 Lapinski, John, 16  
 Lappegård, Trude, 238  
 La Puma, John, 179  
 Laraña, Enrique, 337  
 Lareau, Annette, 76  
 Larimore, Jeff, 151  
 LaRossa, Ralph, 18  
 Larson, Christina, 311  
 Lartey, Jamiles, 320  
 Lauerma, John, 131  
 Laughland, Oliver, 320  
 Laughlin, Lynda, 77  
 Lauritsen, Janet L., 244  
 Lavenberg, Julia C., 135  
 Lavy, Victor, 179  
 Law, Kara Lavender, 323  
 Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 339  
 Lawless, Jennifer L., 227  
 Lawn, Richard, 52  
 Lawrence, Lee, 77, 265, 275  
 Layard, Richard, 153  
 Lazear, Edward P., 112  
 LeBlanc, Paul, 166  
 Le Bon, Gustave, 327  
 Lee, Carmen, 178  
 Lee, David M., 170  
 Lee, Debbie, 243  
 Lee, Jennifer, 196  
 Lee, Marlene, 249  
 Lefer, David, 54  
 Legatum Prosperity Index, 155  
 Lehren, Andrew W., 226  
 Leighton, Paul, 129  
 Leinberger, Christopher B., 312  
 Leiserowitz, A., 37  
 Lemert, Edwin M., 133  
 Lemieux, Frederick, 120  
 Lencioni, Patrick, 114  
 Lengermann, Patricia Madoo, 16  
 Lenhart, Amanda, 97, 98  
 Leonardsen, Dag, 129  
 Leonhardt, David, 299  
 Leung, Maxwell, 196  
 Leurent, B., 277  
 Leusink, Peter, 179  
 LeVay, Simon, 162  
 Levin, Diane E., 170

Levin, Jack, 123  
 Levine, Carrie, 226  
 Levine, Hallie, 286  
 Levine, Lawrence W., 52  
 Levine, Phillip B., 240, 252  
 Levin Institute, The, 53  
 Levinson, Lauren, 17  
 Levinthal, Dave, 226  
 Levintova, Hannah, 131  
 Levitt, Larry, 292  
 Levy, Diane K., 188  
 Lewin, Kurt, 103  
 Lewin, Tamar, 97  
 Lewis, David Levering, 12  
 Lewis, Jamie M., 235, 241  
 Lewis, Oscar, 148  
 Lewis, Ricki, 345  
 Li, Shan, 72  
 Lichter, Daniel T., 237, 238  
 Light, Michael T., 134  
 Lilly, J. Robert, 129  
 Lincove, Jane A., 258  
 Lindberg, Laura, 239, 240  
 Lindell, Anna K., 71  
 Lindner, Andrew M., 31, 32  
 Lindo, Jason M., 240  
 Lindsey, Linda L., 251  
 Lino, Mark, 79  
 Linton, Ralph, 54, 83, 85  
 Lipka, Michael, 165, 249, 271, 272, 280  
 Lipman, Joanne, 179  
 Lippit, Ronald R., 103  
 Lippman, Laura, 268  
 Lipton, Eric, 153, 297  
 Liss, Miriam, 77  
 Liu, Changhai, 321  
 Liu, Hui, 287  
 Liu, Sa, 297  
 Livingston, Gretchen, 166, 186, 203, 233, 235, 237, 238, 239, 251  
 Llana, Sara M., 58  
 Lluberas, Rodrigo, 151, 152  
 Lo, Min-Hui, 317  
 Lobo, Arun P., 203  
 Locher, David A., 328, 335  
 Lodge, Amy C., 170  
 Loeb, Susanna, 264, 265  
 Lofland, John, 335  
 Logan, John, 315  
 Lohan, Tara, 319  
 Lohr, Steve, 342  
 Long, Bridget T., 258  
 Long, J. Scott, 170  
 López, Gustavo, 183, 185, 186  
 Lopez, Mark H., 21, 29, 43  
 Lopez, Mark Hugo, 6, 184, 192, 194, 202  
 Lorber, Judith, 161  
 Louie, J. D., 46  
 Louis, Catherine Saint, 76  
 Loumarr, Ess, 117  
 Louzada, Maria Laura da Costa, 290  
 Love, Robert, 295  
 Loveless, Tom, 264  
 Loveless, Tracy A., 147  
 Lowenberger, Amanda, 323  
 Lowery, Brian S., 201  
 Lowery, Wesley, 228  
 Lozano, Jennifer B., 45  
 Lublin, Joann S., 124  
 Luckey, John R., 41  
 Luckmann, Thomas, 88, 280  
 Ludwig, David S., 33  
 Luff, Tracy, 171  
 Lugaila, Terry A., 241  
 Lugo, Luis, 249, 269, 272  
 Lundberg, Shelly, 238, 249  
 Lundborg, Petter, 65  
 Luscombe, Richard, 306

Luttrell, Wendy, 241  
 Lutz, William, 88  
 Lyerla, Rob, 127  
 Lynas, Mark, 37  
 Lynch, Eleanor W., 92, 94  
 Lynch, Patrick, 312  
 Lynn, David B., 65  
 Lynn, M., 16

**M**  
 Ma, Hong, 345  
 Ma, Jennifer, 255  
 Maass, Kevin T., 21  
 Maccoby, Eleanor E., 70  
 MacDorman, Marian F., 287  
 Mach, Annie I., 165  
 Macionis, John J., 315  
 Macis, Mario, 115  
 MacKenzie, Don, 190  
 MacKenzie, Donald, 341  
 Mackie, Christopher, 186  
 MacMillan, Harriet, 244  
 Madden, Mary, 98  
 Madhvani, N., 117  
 Madrick, Jeff, 340  
 Magill, Bobby, 320  
 Majlesi, Kaveh, 65  
 Makary, Martin A., 285  
 Makinen, Julie, 47  
 Malone, Clare, 17  
 Malthus, Thomas Robert, 308  
 Manduca, Robert, 149  
 Mangan, Katherine, 197, 259  
 Maniaci, Renata, 239  
 Mann, Michael E., 36  
 Manning, Eileen, 258  
 Manning, Jennifer E., 257  
 Manning, Wendy D., 237, 238  
 Manyika, James, 209  
 Manza, Jeff, 158  
 Marceec, Dan, 216  
 Marchman, Virginia A., 157  
 Marcotte, Amanda, 278  
 Marcus, Amy Dockser, 344  
 Marikar, Sheila, 113  
 Markey, Charlotte N., 74  
 Markey, Richard M., 74  
 Marks, Mindy, 263  
 Marquand, Robert, 51  
 Marsden, Peter V., 141  
 Martin, Andrew, 294  
 Martin, Chris, 324  
 Martin, Daniel D., 68  
 Martin, Emily, 217  
 Martin, John A., 70  
 Martin, Joyce A., 238, 239  
 Martin, Lawrence L., 35  
 Martin, Molly A., 64  
 Martin, Sophie, 59  
 Martin, Steven, 236  
 Martínez, Daniel E., 186  
 Martinez, Gladys M., 169, 239  
 Martins, Vinicius J. B., 153  
 Marx, Gary T., 332  
 Marx, Karl, 9, 10, 155, 206, 277  
 Masci, David, 37, 165, 173, 273  
 Maslach, Christina, 105  
 Massey, Douglas S., 11, 259  
 Masters, Coco, 234  
 Masucci, Madeline, 123  
 Mata, Douglas A., 300  
 Matanoski, Joseph, 319  
 Mathews, T. J., 238, 287  
 Mathiowetz, Nancy, 29  
 Matjasko, Jennifer L., 243  
 Matthew, Dayna Bowen, 150, 195  
 Matthews, H. Damon, 321

Matthews, T. J., 239  
 Mattson, Margaret E., 127  
 Mattu, Surya, 99  
 Matvos, Gregor, 178  
 Matzke, Nicholas J., 275  
 Mauer, Joanna, 323  
 Maupin, Angela N., 262  
 Maxwell, Steve, 318  
 Mayerowitz, Scott, 205  
 Mayo, Elton, 110  
 Mayo, Michael, 130  
 McAdam, Doug, 336, 340  
 McAdam, Douglas, 332  
 McAfee, Andrew, 30  
 McCabe, Brian J., 313  
 McCabe, Janice, 65, 73  
 McCaffrey, Mark, 322  
 McCart, Anne T., 22  
 McCarthy, Julie, 122  
 McCarthy, Justin, 25, 135, 165, 173, 177, 221, 248, 295  
 McCarthy, Margaret E., 244, 250  
 McCleary, Rachel M., 276  
 McClellan, Chandler B., 134  
 McClendon, David, 231  
 McCoy, Charles, 53  
 McCulloch, Charles E., 172  
 McDermott, Rose, 106  
 McDevitt, Jack, 123  
 McDonald, Kim A., 63  
 McDonough, Katie, 228  
 McDuff, Daniel, 93  
 McElrath, Suzy Maves, 6  
 McEwan, Melissa, 251  
 McFalls, Joseph A., 303  
 McFarland, Joel, 255, 257, 263, 264, 265, 267  
 McFarland, Mac, 341  
 McGeeney, Kyley, 29, 256  
 McGirt, Ellen, 200  
 McHale, Susan M., 71, 72  
 McIntosh, Peggy, 188  
 McIntyre, Robert S., 156  
 McKee, Arthur, 265  
 McKenna, Phil, 320  
 McKenzie, Brian, 312  
 McKernan, Signe-Mary, 147, 155  
 McKerrow, Alexa, 312  
 McKinnon, Mark, 210  
 McLaren, John, 186  
 McManus, Tim, 169  
 McNeill, David, 36  
 McPartland, Thomas S., 61  
 McPhail, Clark, 328, 334  
 McPhate, Mike, 137  
 McRae, Susan, 238  
 McShane, Marilyn D., 128, 133  
 Mead, George Herbert, 67, 68  
 Mehrotra, Kartikay, 58  
 Meier, Ann, 166  
 Meier, Barry, 297  
 Meisler, Laurie, 225  
 Mellott, Leanna M., 237  
 Melton, Glennon, 98  
 Meltzoff, Andrew N., 75  
 Melucci, Alberto, 337  
 Melzer, Scott, 339  
 Mencher, Steve, 49  
 Mendelsohn, Oliver, 140  
 Mendoza, Jessica, 313  
 Menissi, Fatima, 279  
 Mercer, Andrew, 29, 116, 135  
 Merelli, Annalisa, 178  
 Merton, Robert K., 13, 69, 83, 88, 102, 109, 127, 191, 214  
 Merz, C. Noel Bairey, 297  
 Merz, John F., 36  
 Messerli, Joe, 267  
 Messing, Jill T., 135

Messner, Michael A., 178  
 Meston, Cindy M., 169  
 Meteyer, Karen B., 70  
 Mettler, Suzanne, 259  
 Meyer, Marshall W., 109  
 Michaels, Meredith W., 87  
 Michels, Robert, 109  
 Miles-McLean, Haley, 77  
 Milgram, Stanley, 104  
 Miller, Amanda J., 238  
 Miller, Claire C., 56  
 Miller, D. W., 35  
 Miller, Edgar R., III, 296  
 Miller, Elizabeth, 73  
 Miller, Lisa, 279, 280  
 Miller, Matt, 265  
 Miller, Shari, 132  
 Mills, C. Wright, 5, 12, 227  
 Mills, Theodore M., 103  
 Millsap, Adam, 319  
 Milman, Oliver, 285, 320  
 Ming, Liu, 180  
 Minson, Julia A., 93  
 Miremadi, Mehdi, 209  
 Mischel, Walter, 65  
 Mishel, Lawrence, 216  
 Mishkin, Allison F., 74  
 Mishra, Deepak R., 321  
 Mitchell, Amy, 22  
 Mitnik, Pablo A., 151  
 Mohamed, Besheer, 273, 276  
 Mohangoo, Ashna D., 287  
 Mohdin, Aamna, 17  
 Mollborn, Stephanie, 169  
 Molotch, Harvey, 315  
 Money, John, 63  
 Monk, Ellis P., Jr., 202  
 Montanaro, Domenico, 222  
 Monteiro, Carlos Augusto, 290  
 Montez, Jennifer Karas, 298  
 Montlake, Simon, 210  
 Monto, Martin, 171  
 Mooney, Chris, 321  
 Moore, Ann M., 172, 239  
 Moore, Elizabeth S., 75  
 Moore, Kathleen, 316  
 Moore, Kristin, 244  
 Moore, Kristin Anderson, 241  
 Moore, Lisa Jean, 161  
 Moore, Peter, 162  
 Moore, Wilbert E., 154  
 Morello, Carol, 34  
 Morgan, Ivy, 134  
 Morgan, Jacob, 211  
 Morgan, Rachel E., 21, 122, 123, 242  
 Morgenson, Gretchen, 207  
 Morin, Rich, 16, 17, 116, 135, 145, 194, 202, 272, 273  
 Moro, Andrea, 115  
 Moroney, Robert M., 35  
 Morris, Desmond, 92  
 Morris, Edward W., 131  
 Morris, Theresa, 297  
 Morrison, Denton E., 336  
 Morrison, Fred, 262  
 Mosher, William D., 169, 171, 237, 241, 242  
 Moss-Racusin, Corrinne A., 261  
 Motel, Seth, 145, 198  
 Motivans, Mark, 124  
 Moubarac, Jean-Claude, 290  
 Moyer, Imogene, 12, 129  
 Mozaffarian, Dariush, 33, 290  
 Mudallal, Zainab, 212  
 Mui, Ylan Q., 216  
 Mulford, Carrie, 73  
 Mullen, Ann, 260  
 Mulrow, Cynthia, 296

Mumford, Elizabeth A., 242  
 Mumford, Lewis, 310  
 Mumford, Megan, 145  
 Munoz-Boudet, Anna Maria, 261  
 Munsell, Christina R., 117  
 Murdock, George P., 39, 48, 49  
 Murphey, David, 77, 241, 244, 268, 287  
 Murphy, Cait, 341  
 Murphy, John, 187  
 Murphy, Kevin, 42  
 Murray, Charles, 148  
 Musick, Kelly, 166  
 Musto, Michela, 178  
 Muzzy, Wendy, 244, 245  
 Myers, Caitlin, 240  
 Myers, Joe, 120  
 Myers, John P., 192

## N

Nadel, Steven, 323  
 Nagel, Susan C., 318  
 Nagoski, Emily, 300  
 Naili, Hajer, 179  
 Najar, Nida, 48  
 Najim, Adil, 186  
 Nakashima, Ellen, 56  
 Narang, Jimmy, 149  
 Nash, Elizabeth, 172  
 National Center for Education Statistics, 264  
 National Center for Health Statistics, 9, 246, 284, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 295, 299  
 National Center for Statistics and Analysis, 3  
 National Center on Elder Abuse, 244  
 National Conference of State Legislatures, 232  
 National Diabetes Statistics Report, 283  
 National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 262  
 National Institute of Mental Health, 77  
 National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 290  
 National Institute on Drug Abuse, 134, 291  
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 321  
 National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, 286  
 National Public Radio, 201  
 National Retail Federation, 125  
 National Science Board, 209, 275  
 National Survey of Student Engagement, 263  
 National Women's Law Center, 216  
 Naudeau, Sophie, 72  
 Nazroo, James, 170  
 Nechepurenko, Ivan, 309  
 Neelakantan, Shailaja, 177  
 Neeley, Brett, 210  
 Neff, Linda J., 288  
 Neff, Roni A., 316  
 Neider, Linda L., 110  
 Nelemans, Stefanie A., 77  
 Nelson, Libby, 95  
 Nelson, Timothy J., 241  
 Nerlander, Lina, 291  
 Neuhaus, Jessamyn, 58  
 Newberry, Sydne, 299  
 Newkirk, Margaret, 199  
 Newman, Tricia, 248  
 Newmark, David, 252  
 Newport, Frank, 98, 135, 142, 143, 144, 148, 158, 209, 221, 238, 269, 272, 273, 275, 276, 277  
 New York Times, 95  
 Ngabirano, Anne-Marcelle, 161  
 Nguyen, Dan, 156  
 Nguyen, Frances, 168  
 Nicholas, Tom, 186  
 Nichols, Andrew Howard, 259  
 Nichols, James, 162

Niebrugge-Brantley, Jill, 16  
 Niederdeppe, Jeff, 295  
 Nielsen Company, The, 21, 96  
 Nieves, Emanuel, 141  
 Niolon, Phyllis H., 243  
 Niquette, Mark, 207  
 Nir, Sarah Maslin, 191  
 NOAA National Centers..., 321  
 Noah, Aggie J., 246  
 Noeth, Bryan J., 141  
 Nolan, Jim, 123  
 Nolette, James, 22  
 Norman, Jim, 16, 114, 123, 247, 315  
 Norris, Tina, 196  
 Nossiter, Adam, 234  
 Nowrasteh, Alex, 186  
 Nunn, Ryan, 145  
 Nurmi, Jari-Erik, 70  
 Nusbaum, Rebecca L., 91  
 Nussbaum, A. David, 196  
 Nyhan, Brendan, 37, 291  
 Nyseth, Hollie, 6

## O

Oakes, Jeannie, 262  
 Oates, Aubrey, 93  
 Oates, Russ, 307  
 Obach, Brian K., 337, 338  
 Oberschall, Anthony, 337  
 O'Brien, Laureen K., 316  
 O'Brien, Jodi, 17  
 Ochs, Susan M., 124  
 O'Connor, Anahad, 179, 296  
 O'Connor, Daryl B., 170  
 O'Connor, Siobhan, 240  
 O'Donnell, Victoria, 53  
 OECD, 152, 212, 265, 292  
 OECD/European Union, 309  
 Office for Human Research Protections, 35  
 Office of the Deputy Chief..., 95  
 Office of the Inspector General, 199, 296  
 OfficeTime, 113  
 Ogburn, William F., 40  
 Ogden, Cynthia L., 52  
 Ogunro, Nola, 257  
 Ogunwole, Stella U., 193, 196  
 Oh, Hyeyoung, 295  
 O'Keefe, Ed, 143  
 O'Keefe, Kevin, 179  
 Oliphant, Baxter, 137, 339  
 Oliver, Melvin L., 148  
 Olivetti, Claudia, 168  
 Olivier, Donald C., 42  
 Olmstead, Kenneth, 125, 344  
 Olsen, Emily O'Malley, 165  
 Olsen, Lauren D., 7  
 Olson, Bradley, 318  
 Olson, Cheryl K., 74  
 Olson, Jonathan R., 35, 173  
 Olson, Julie S., 287  
 Opp, Karl-Dieter, 47  
 Oppel, Richard A., Jr., 122  
 Oreopoulos, Philip, 256, 258  
 Ormrod, Richard, 244  
 Orobio de Castro, Bram, 77  
 Ortman, Jennifer, 247  
 Ortman, Jennifer M., 246  
 Osborne, Cynthia, 66  
 Oster, Emily, 287  
 Osterman, Michelle J. K., 238, 239  
 Oudekerk, Barbara, 73  
 Overbeek, Geertjan, 77  
 Owen, Daniela J., 77  
 Owens, Chelsea, 265  
 Oxfam, 144, 151  
 Oxfam America, 129

## P

Packard, Vance, 331  
 Padgett, Tim, 280  
 Pager, Devah, 195  
 Pagliese, Anita, 306  
 Pai, Mallesh M., 29  
 Palen, J. John, 311  
 Palmer, Griff, 319  
 Paludi, Michele A., 278  
 Pan, Jessica, 261  
 Pantano, Juan, 66  
 Parashar, Umesh D., 285  
 Park, Robert, 314  
 Parker, Jeffrey G., 72  
 Parker, Kim, 21, 45, 78, 79, 116, 135, 166, 169, 202, 233, 235, 236, 238, 241, 247, 251, 255, 272, 273, 339  
 Parker, Laura, 168  
 Parker, Lucie, 136  
 Parrillo, Vincent N., 315  
 Parris, Terry, Jr., 99  
 Parrott, Caroline Titcomb, 131  
 Parrott, Scott, 131  
 Parsons, Chelsea, 135  
 Parsons, Talcott, 175, 214, 231, 255, 294  
 Partnership for Public Service, 112  
 Pasko, Lisa, 63  
 Passel, Jeffrey S., 6, 184, 185, 235, 247  
 Pastor, Patricia, 145  
 Patchell, Beverly, 135  
 Patel, Jugal K., 226  
 Patel, Sujana, 109  
 Pathe, Simone, 222  
 Patten, Eileen, 192, 198, 202, 247  
 Paul, Annie Murphy, 63  
 Paul, Noel C., 332  
 Paul, Richard, 6  
 Paulsen, Ronnelle, 336  
 Pauly, John, 133  
 Payea, Kathleen, 255  
 Payne, David, 209  
 Payne, K. K., 78  
 Paz-Bailey, Gabriela, 291  
 Pazol, Karen, 172  
 Peacock, Georgina, 300  
 Pearce, Adam, 226  
 Pearlstone, Norman, 319  
 Pearson, Jennifer, 180  
 Pedersen, Paul, 51  
 Pendleton, Neil, 170  
 Perlis, Clifford S., 36  
 Perlmutter, David D., 263  
 Perlroth, Nicole, 344  
 Perna, L. W., 268  
 Perrin, Andrew, 96, 97, 98  
 Perrucci, Robert, 143, 149  
 Perry, Brea L., 131  
 Perry, Gina, 105  
 Perry, Mark J., 323  
 Perry-Jenkins, Maureen, 70  
 PerryUndem, 95, 221  
 Persell, Caroline Hodges, 258  
 Peter, Jochen, 31  
 Peter, Tom A., 48, 174  
 Peters, Elizabeth, 236  
 Petersen, Andrea, 77  
 Peterson, James L., 35  
 Peterson, Scott, 54  
 Petronijevic, Uros, 256  
 Petrosino, Anthony, 135  
 Pettypiece, Shannon, 114, 299  
 Pew Center on the States, 136  
 Pew Charitable Trusts, 144  
 Pewewardy, Cornel, 197  
 Pew Hispanic Center, 185  
 Pew Research Center, 149, 224, 271, 272, 273, 274

Pflanz, Mike, 175  
 Pflaumer, Alicia, 59  
 Phelps, Glenn, 151  
 Philips, Matthew, 318  
 Phillips, L. Taylor, 201  
 Phillips, M., 51  
 Phillips, Matthew, 216  
 Phillips, Richard, 156  
 Philpott, Tom, 324  
 Pianigiani, Gaia, 304  
 Pianta, Robert C., 262  
 Piazza, Jo, 201  
 Pieper, Katherine, 178  
 Pieper, Katherine M., 31  
 Pierce, Lamar, 30  
 Pierson, Paul, 143  
 Piketty, Thomas, 141, 151, 154, 156  
 Pineau, Marisa Gerstein, 186  
 Piore, Michael J., 200  
 Pipkin, Whitney, 97  
 Pittingolo, Rob, 188  
 Pittman, Dan, 116  
 Pittz, Will, 184  
 Planty, M., 263  
 Plateris, Alexander A., 235  
 Plax, Timothy G., 89  
 Plumer, Brad, 322  
 Plutzer, Eric, 322  
 Polansky, Jonathan R., 288  
 Polderman, Tinca, 64  
 Polgreen, Lydia, 234  
 Polikoff, Morgan S., 264  
 PolitiFact, 22  
 Pollack, Alixandra, 187  
 Pollack, Andrew, 299  
 Pollack, William S., 175  
 Pollak, Rienhard, 158  
 Pollak, Robert A., 238, 249  
 Pollick, Michael, 206  
 Polsby, Nelson W., 225  
 Pong, Suet-ling, 70  
 Ponte, Iris, 72  
 Popovich, Nadja, 324  
 Population Reference Bureau, 303  
 Porter, Andrew C., 264  
 Porter, Caroline, 99  
 Porter, Eduardo, 149, 209  
 Porter, Michael E., 321  
 Porter, Nicole D., 136  
 Portes, Jonathan, 309  
 Postel, Sandra, 317  
 Potok, Mark, 51  
 Poushter, Jacob, 175  
 Powell, John T., 316  
 Powers, Charles H., 69  
 Prasad, Ajnesh, 115  
 Pratt, Beverly M., 34  
 Prein, Andreas, 321  
 Preston, Caroline, 208  
 Price, Barbara Raffel, 131  
 Price-Feeney, Myeshia, 98  
 Princiotta, Daniel, 268  
 Pringle, Kimberly, 285  
 Project on Government Oversight, 36  
 Protect Our Defenders, 132  
 Protess, Ben, 319  
 Provasnik, G. Kena, 263  
 Pryor, John H., 266  
 Przybylski, Andrew K., 74  
 Psyllos, Stephanie, 16  
 Puddington, Arch, 218, 219  
 Pudrovska, Tetyana, 287  
 Purdie-Vaughns, Valerie, 263  
 Putnam, Hannah, 265  
 Putnam, Robert D., 151



## Q

Qian, Zhenchao, 237  
Qin, Amy, 233  
Quakenbush, Caleb, 248  
Quinney, Richard, 128

## R

Rackin, Heather, 238  
Radesky, Jenny, 97  
Radford, Jynnah, 183, 185  
Rainie, Lee, 120, 342  
Raj, Suhasini, 48, 140  
Ramakrishnan, Karthick, 257  
Rampell, Catherine, 113, 148  
Ranieri, Anna, 91  
Rank, Mark R., 147  
Rano, Jason, 297  
Rape Crisis Center, 131  
Raphael, Steven, 312  
Rasmussen, Roy M., 321  
Ratcliffe, Caroline, 147, 155  
Rathbun, Amy, 258  
Rattner, Adi, 298  
Ravenga, Ana, 261  
Ray, Julie, 306  
Ray, Rebecca, 212  
Rayasam, Renuka, 193  
Raymo, James, 237  
Reardon, Sean F., 200, 257, 313  
Reaves, Brian A., 243  
Rebele, Reb, 112  
Recht, Hannah, 292  
Redd, Susan B., 22  
Redd, Zakia, 241  
Redden, Molly, 320  
Reddy, Sumathi, 29, 93  
Rees, Daniel I., 134  
Reeves, Jay, 40  
Reeves, Richard V., 148, 149, 150, 172, 195, 236, 259, 266  
Reger, Jo, 15  
Regnerus, Mark, 169  
Reich, Robert, 257, 258, 259  
Reid, Ann H., 322  
Reilly, Steve, 134  
Reiman, Jeffrey, 129  
Rein, Lisa, 113, 114  
Reingold, Jennifer, 115  
Reinhart, R. J., 224  
Reinhold, Steffen, 238  
Reiss, Fraidy, 58  
Reiss, Steven, 280  
Reitzes, Donald C., 18  
Resnick, Heidi S., 244, 245  
Restaurant Opportunities Center United, 177  
Reuben, Cynthia, 145  
Reyes, Chin R., 262  
Reynolds, Kelly A., 318  
Rheault, Magali, 256  
Ricciardelli, Rosemary, 75  
Rich, Motoko, 167, 258  
Richburg, Keith B., 136  
Riche, Martha Farnsworth, 311  
Richey, Alexandra S., 317  
Richie, Christina, 280  
Richtel, Matt, 329  
Rideout, Victoria, 74, 76  
Riesman, David, 225  
Riffkin, Rebecca, 113, 263  
Rinehart, Sarah, 131  
Rios, Edwin, 225  
Riosmena, Fernando, 288  
Rios-Vargas, Merarys, 193, 196  
Ripley, Amanda, 265  
Risk Based Security, 125

Ritzer, George, 5, 69, 111  
Rizga, Kristina, 275  
Roach, Andrea L., 71  
Robbins, Katherine G., 217  
Robbins, Katherine Gallagher, 216  
Roberti, Amada, 172  
Roberts, Andrea L., 285  
Roberts, James A., 98  
Roberts, Keith A., 269  
Roberts, Laura M., 16  
Roberts, Yvonne, 97  
Robertson, Campbell, 173  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 291  
Robinson, Laurie O., 135  
Robles, Omar, 236  
Roche, Michael, 130  
Rochman, Bonnie, 77, 300  
Rodell, Matthew, 317  
Roden, Lee, 132  
Rodengen, Jeffrey L., 339  
Rodgers, Bill, 278  
Rodgers, Phillip L., 165  
Rodgers, Timothy, 125  
Rodgers, William M., III, 195  
Rodrigue, Edward, 148  
Rodriguez, Nestor, 79  
Roethlisberger, F. J., 110  
Rohrlich, Justin, 124  
Rojas-Cheatham, Ann, 297  
Roland, James, 292  
Roman, Caterina Couvis, 132  
Romer, Dan, 21  
Romero, Yvette, 225  
Ronfeldt, Matthew, 265  
Root, Elisabeth, 288  
Roscigno, Vincent J., 252, 268  
Rose, Fred, 337  
Rose, Peter, 49  
Roselli, Tim, 48  
Rosen, Raymond C., 170  
Rosen, Ruth, 16  
Rosenau, Joshua, 322  
Rosenberg, Martha, 296  
Rosenberg, Matthew, 344  
Rosenblatt, Lauren, 252  
Rosenfeld, Steven, 298  
Rosenthal, Bill, 119  
Rosenthal, Elizabeth, 296  
Rosenthal, Lily, 148  
Rosin, Hanna, 171  
Ross, Brian, 124  
Ross, Martha, 295  
Ross, Terris, 258  
Rossano, Matt J., 48  
Rossen, Lauren M., 238  
Rossi, Alice K., 69, 102  
Rossi, Max, 305  
Rossin-Slater, Maya, 251  
Roth, Jeffrey, 133  
Roth, Steve, 151  
Rotherham, Andrew, 256  
Rothman, Sheila M., 311  
Rothstein, Richard, 265  
Rovner, Joshua, 136  
Rowe-Finkbeiner, Kristin, 217  
Roylance, Tyler, 218, 219  
Rubin, Alissa J., 320  
Rubin, Kenneth, 72  
Rubin, Richard, 207  
Rubin, Rita, 341  
Ruetschlin, Catherine, 187  
Ruiz, Michelle, 168  
Ruiz, R., 268  
Rule, James B., 328  
Rumbaut, Rubén G., 186  
Rushe, Dominic, 320  
Rutter, Virginia, 93  
Ryan, Camille, 96, 193, 195

Ryan, Micheal K., 115  
Ryberg, Renee, 268  
Ryzhkov, Vladimir, 218

## S

Saad, Lydia, 29, 40, 125, 209, 224, 227, 247, 274  
Sachs, Jeffrey, 153  
Sachs, Jeffrey S., 309  
Sacks, Vanessa, 244  
Saez, Emmanuel, 141, 149, 150, 154, 156  
Sagarin, Edward, 126  
Sagon, Candy, 297, 299  
Sahgal, Neha, 174, 183  
Salamone, Frank A., 52  
Sales, Nancy Jo, 170  
Salganicoff, Alina, 297  
Salkin, Allen, 342  
Salonius-Pasternak, Dorothy, 72  
Sampson, Robert J., 133  
Samuelson, Kate, 225  
Sanbonmatsu, Lisa, 258  
Sanburn, Josh, 44, 318  
Sánchez, Erika L., 16  
Sand, Edith, 179  
Sand, Michael S., 170  
Sandbu, Martin, 340  
Sandstrom, Aleksandra, 231, 272, 274  
Sandstrom, Kent L., 68  
Sanes, Milla, 212  
Sang-Hun, Choe, 52  
Santos, José Luis, 259  
Santos, Rob, 188  
Sapir, Edward, 42  
Sarda, Vishnudas, 117  
Sassler, Sharon, 238  
Saulny, Susan, 34  
Savaya, Riki, 73  
Sawchuck, Stephen, 265  
Sawhill, Isabel V., 236, 239  
Scarborough, Roscoe, 53  
Scarlett, W. George, 72  
Schachter, Jason P., 223  
Schaefer, David R., 73  
Schaeffer, Robert K., 209  
Schaffer, Amy, 178  
Schak, Oliver, 134  
Schanzenbach, Dianne Whitmore, 145  
Schanzer, David, 51  
Schap, TusaRebecca, 79  
Schehr, Robert C., 337  
Schieman, Scott, 281  
Schiesel, Seth, 74  
Schiffman, Holly H., 77  
Schivardi, Fabiano, 115  
Schlesinger, Izchak M., 42  
Schlesinger, Robert, 210  
Schlosser, Andrea, 240  
Schmidt, Laura A., 296  
Schmidt, Peter, 190, 266  
Schmitt, John, 212  
Schmitt, Manuela T., 115  
Schmitt, Hannah, 268  
Schneider, Mark, 255  
Schneider, Monica C., 169  
Schnittker, Jason, 299  
Schoen, Cathy, 292  
Schoenike, Rebecca, 6  
Schönel, Maren, 93  
Schopler, John, 102  
Schramm, J. B., 256  
Schriesheim, Chester A., 110  
Schrobsdorff, Susanna, 168  
Schultz, Ellen E., 215  
Schur, Edwin M., 119  
Schurman-Kaufman, Deborah, 133  
Schut, Henk, 6

- Schutz, Alfred, 88  
 Schwartz, Carly, 145  
 Schwartz, Jennifer, 130  
 Schwartz, Larry, 245  
 Schwartz, Marlene B., 117  
 Schwartz, Martin D., 129  
 Schwartz, Nelson, 291  
 Schwartz, Peppper, 93  
 Schwartz, Rhonda, 124  
 Schwarz, Alan, 300  
 Schweizer, Peter, 222  
 Schwyzer, Hugo, 75  
 Sciupac, Elizabeth, 342  
 Scommegna, Paola, 237, 241, 246  
 Scott, Robert E., 209  
 Seager, Joni, 315  
 Seidman, Robert B., 129  
 Selingo, Jeffrey J., 256  
 Seltzer, Sarah, 75  
 Selway, William, 121  
 Semega, Jessica L., 146, 147, 193, 194, 316  
 Semuels, Alana, 126  
 Sengupta, Somini, 56  
 Senju, Atsushi, 93  
 Sentencing Project, The, 136  
 Senter, Mary S., 7  
 Seru, Amit, 178  
 Seto, Donny, 321  
 Seward, Zachary M., 225  
 Shannon, Sarah, 6  
 Shannon-Missal, Larry, 120  
 Shapiro, Jenessa R., 261  
 Shapiro, Thomas M., 148  
 Shariff, Azim F., 276  
 Sharifzadeh, Virginia-Shirin, 197  
 Sharp, Gregory, 313  
 Shaik, Zain, 318  
 Shaw, Christina M., 93  
 Shaw, Kathryn L., 112  
 Shea, Christopher, 93  
 Shear, Michael D., 275  
 SHEEO, 268  
 Shellenbarger, Sue, 77  
 Shepherd, Julianne Escobedo, 130  
 Sheppard, Kate, 37, 172  
 Sherman, Erik, 262  
 Sherman, Ryne A., 170  
 Sherman-Williams, Bonnie, 35  
 Sherwood, Jessica Holden, 144  
 Shibutani, Tamotsu, 69  
 Shic, Frederick, 262  
 Shifflett, Shane, 296  
 Shilo, Guy, 73  
 Shivji, Azim, 148  
 Shleifer, Andrei, 310  
 Shorrock, Anthony, 151, 152  
 Shorto, Russell, 309  
 Shriver, Maria, 147  
 Shter, Rachel, 16  
 Sidhu, Preety, 259  
 Siegel, Michael B., 117  
 Siegman, Aron W., 93  
 Sifferlin, Alexandra, 330  
 Sigmundson, H. Keith, 63, 64  
 Signal, L., 117  
 Silver-Greenberg, Jessica, 124  
 Silverman, Rachel E., 112, 238  
 Silverstein, Jason, 123  
 Simmel, Georg, 103  
 Simmons, Tavia, 71  
 Simon, Paula, 266  
 Singal, Pooja, 298  
 Singer, Natasha, 99  
 Singh, Shruti, 187  
 Singh, Tushar, 288  
 Sinter, Audrey, 311  
 Sjoberg, Gideon, 310  
 Skinner, Victor, 134  
 Skoning, Gerald D., 121  
 Skoumal, Robert, 318  
 Slater, Dan, 162  
 Slep, Amy M. S., 77  
 Slowikowski, Jeff, 135  
 Smedley, Audrey, 49  
 Smeeding, Tim, 151  
 Smelser, Neil J., 83, 328, 333  
 Smiley-McDonald, Hope, 145  
 Smith, Aaron, 96, 97, 98, 125, 211, 274, 342, 344  
 Smith, Adam, 205  
 Smith, David, 320  
 Smith, Dorothy E., 15  
 Smith, Elliott G., 244, 250  
 Smith, Erica L., 244  
 Smith, Gregory, 273, 276  
 Smith, Gregory A., 269, 272  
 Smith, Jane L., 279  
 Smith, N., 37  
 Smith, Oliver, 320  
 Smith, Pamela R., 102  
 Smith, Patricia K., 287  
 Smith, Ralph R., Jr., 93  
 Smith, Ray A., 331  
 Smith, Samantha, 147  
 Smith, Shawna N., 170  
 Smith, Stacy L., 31, 178  
 Smith, Tom W., 141  
 Smith, Trevor J., 321  
 Smock, Pamela, 176  
 Smock, Pamela J., 237  
 Snider, Laureen, 128  
 Snipp, C. Matthew, 196  
 Snow, Daniel, 30  
 Snyder, Howard N., 137  
 Snyder, T., 263  
 Snyder, Thomas D., 167, 261, 265, 268, 279  
 Soble, Jonathan, 304  
 Socha-Dietrich, Karolina, 292  
 Sokoloff, Natalie J., 131  
 Soldatov, Andrei, 218  
 Somerville, Glenn, 209  
 Son, Maarten van, 6  
 Sonfield, Adam, 250  
 Song, Lisa, 322  
 Sorenson, Susan, 255  
 Spalter-Roth, Roberta, 7  
 Sparks, Sarah D., 265  
 Speigel, Lee, 317  
 Spencer, Herbert, 13  
 Spenkuch, Jorg L., 195  
 Sperry, Shelley, 323  
 Spiker, Marie L., 316  
 Spiller, Michael W., 291  
 Spitznagel, Eric, 124  
 Spivak, Howard R., 243  
 Spotts, Peter N., 321  
 Spradley, J. P., 51  
 Sprigg, Peter, 173  
 Squires, David, 292  
 Srivastava, Mehul, 58, 157  
 Staff, Jeremy, 171  
 Stager, Curt, 322  
 Stanley, Megan, 148  
 Stanton, Christopher T., 112  
 Starr, Christine R., 170  
 Startz, Dick, 265  
 Stasson, Mark F., 91  
 Statista, 97, 109  
 Stearns, Christina, 265  
 Stearns, Jenna E., 238  
 Steel, Emily, 129  
 Steele, Ellen, 248  
 Steele, Euridice Martínez, 290  
 Steen, R. Grant, 36  
 Steffensmeier, Darrell J., 130  
 Stein, Joel, 343  
 Stein, Rob, 345  
 Steinberg, Julia R., 172  
 Steiner, Emily, 288  
 Steinmetz, Katy, 72, 162, 233, 315  
 Stencil, Sandra, 249  
 Stepan-Norris, Judith, 210  
 Stepler, Renee, 116, 135, 192, 236, 237, 249  
 Stern, Scott, 321  
 Steuerle, C. Eugene, 248  
 Steuerle, Eugene, 155  
 Steve, Kenneth, 244, 245  
 Stillars, Alan L., 29  
 Stokes, Bruce, 42, 205  
 Stokes, Linda, 39  
 Stoll, Michael A., 312  
 Stone, Arthur A., 247  
 Stone, Geoffrey R., 45  
 Stranges, Saverio, 296  
 Strasburger, Victor C., 74  
 Straus, Murray A., 251  
 Streat, William B., 88  
 Streib, Jessi, 158  
 Streit, Cara, 71  
 Streitfeld, David, 113  
 Stremikis, Kristof, 292  
 Strickland, Michael, 17  
 Stroebe, Margaret, 6  
 Stroebe, Wolfgang, 6  
 Strom, Stephanie, 207, 323, 341  
 St. Rose, Andresse, 179  
 Stubbs, Rebecca, 288  
 Student Loan Report, The, 268  
 Stullich, Stephanie, 134  
 Sturm, Roland, 289  
 Sudarkasa, Niara, 241  
 Suddath, Claire, 97  
 Sullivan, Andrew, 173  
 Sullivan, Deirdre, 312  
 Summers, Nick, 129  
 Sumner, William G., 119  
 Sun, Hugette, 236  
 Sunstein, Cass R., 330  
 Superville, Darlene, 240  
 Sustainable Packaging Coalition, 323  
 Sutherland, Edwin H., 123, 132  
 Sutton, Philip W., 337  
 Suziedelyte, Agne, 29  
 Svajlenka, Nicole P., 295  
 Swanson, Emily, 45  
 Swenson, Sean, 317  
 Swick, Andrew, 178  
 Swift, Art, 54, 200, 221, 277  
 Sydnie, R. A., 8, 13, 15  
 Sykes, Selina, 234  
 Szarota, Piotr, 93
- T**  
 Tabachnick, Rachel, 278  
 Tabuchi, Hiroko, 72, 124  
 Taibbi, Matt, 129  
 Tajfel, Henri, 102  
 Takeuchi, David T., 203  
 Tan, Jacinth J. X., 158  
 Tannen, Deborah, 91  
 Tannenbaum, Frank, 132  
 Tanur, Judith M., 29  
 Tashner, Taryn, 77  
 Taub, Amanda, 37  
 Tavis, Carol, 105, 133  
 Taylor, Bruce G., 242  
 Taylor, Carl S., 102  
 Taylor, Frederick W., 110  
 Taylor, Jay, 218, 220  
 Taylor, Jim D., 129  
 Taylor, Paul, 21, 29, 78, 196, 241, 251, 272, 273

Taylor, Susan C., 184  
 Tefferi, Andrew, 296  
 Tenbrunsel, Ann, 129  
 Terando, Adam J., 312  
 Tétreault, Mary Ann, 220  
 Tharoor, Ishaan, 51  
 Theodorou, Angelina, 279  
 Theodorou, Angelina E., 41, 231  
 Thibaut, John W., 90  
 Thio, Alex D., 129  
 Thomaes, Sander, 77  
 Thomas, Anita Jones, 201  
 Thomas, Brian F., 317  
 Thomas, Dorothy Swaine, 88  
 Thomas, Jordan, 129  
 Thomas, Logan, 151  
 Thomas, Reuben J., 171  
 Thomas, W. I., 88  
 Thompson, Arienne, 61  
 Thompson, Kimberly M., 31  
 Thornton, Arland, 237  
 Thorpe-Moscon, Jennifer, 187  
 Thumma, Scott, 277  
 Thurow, L. C., 205  
 Tierney, Kathleen T., 337  
 Tilley, Charles, 340  
 Tillitt, Donald E., 318  
 Tilly, Charles, 338  
 Timberg, Craig, 56  
 Timberlake, Cotten, 122  
 Timberlake, Jeffrey M., 313  
 Timmermans, Stefan, 295  
 Titus, Kori, 288  
 Tobar, Hector, 43  
 Todoroff, M., 16  
 Tomasetti, Cristian, 285  
 Tope, Daniel, 65, 316  
 Tormey, Simon, 218  
 Torpey, Elka, 208, 211  
 Toth, Emily, 91  
 Touraine, Alain, 336  
 Townsend, Joseph, 200  
 Townsend, Timothy G., 174, 316  
 Tozzi, John, 285, 292  
 Tracer, Zachary, 292  
 Traister, Rebecca, 236  
 Tran, Van C., 194  
 Trap, Paul, 177  
 Treisman, Daniel, 158  
 Trotman, Melanie, 278  
 Truant, Patricia L., 316  
 Truman, Benedict I., 287  
 Truman, Jennifer L., 21, 121, 122, 123, 242, 244  
 Trumbull, Mark, 149  
 Tsai, J., 63  
 Tsai, Tijen, 307  
 Tsukayama, Hayley, 343  
 Tucker-Drob, Elliot M., 65  
 Tumin, Melvin M., 155  
 Turk, Austin, 128, 129  
 Turkle, Sherry, 98  
 Turner, Heather, 244  
 Turner, Margery A., 188  
 Turner, Nicholas, 149, 150  
 Turner, Ralph H., 328, 329, 333, 335  
 Turner, William L., 241  
 Turpin-Petrosino, Carolyn, 135  
 Twenge, Jean M., 170  
 2012 Survey of Business Owners, 194, 195  
 2013 Indian Gaming Industry Report, 197  
 Tynan, Michael A., 288  
 Tyson, Alec, 142

## U

Uecker, Jeremy, 169  
 Uhlmann, Eric L., 116  
 Uibo, Helen, 93

Ullman, Edward L., 314  
 Ulmer, Jeffrey T., 134  
 Umberson, Debra, 170, 287  
 Underhill, Wendy, 225  
 UNICEF, 175  
 United Human Rights Council, 188  
 United Nations, 157, 174, 310, 311, 317  
 United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 277  
 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 310  
 United Nations Development Program, 151  
 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 306  
 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 132  
 United Nations Population Division, 303, 304  
 United States Senate, 124, 129  
 UN Women, 157  
 Upadhyay, Ushma D., 172  
 Updegraff, Kimberly A., 71  
 Upton, John, 322  
 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 115  
 U.S. Census Bureau, 6, 143, 184, 185, 192, 193, 195, 207, 223, 224, 225, 239, 240, 257, 260, 307, 308, 311  
 U.S. Census Bureau News, 45, 183, 197  
 U.S. Census Bureau Newsroom, 312  
 U.S. Department of Commerce, 185  
 U.S. Department of Education, 262, 263  
 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 49, 77, 243, 288  
 U.S. Department of Justice, 77, 135, 292  
 U.S. Department of State, 177  
 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 285  
 Useem, Ruth H., 103  
 U.S. Office of Personal Management, 114  
 U.S. Senate, 106  
 U.S. Senate Special Committee, 246  
 U.S. Travel Association, 212

## V

Vaidyanathan, Shruti, 322, 323  
 Valkenburg, Patti M., 31  
 Valle, Linda A., 243  
 Vallotton, Claire, 75  
 van Agtmael, Peter, 80  
 VanAudenhove, Kristi, 243  
 Vanden Brook, Tom, 119  
 Vanorman, Alicia G., 237  
 Van Vooren, Nicole, 7  
 Vassallo, Trae, 168  
 Vaughn, Brigitte, 287  
 Veblen, Thorstein, 144, 331  
 Velasco, Schuyler, 341  
 Velkoff, Victoria A., 247  
 Venator, Joanna, 172, 239  
 Venkatesh, Sudhir, 29  
 Venkat Narayan, K. M., 289  
 Ventura, Stephanie J., 239  
 Veron, Rachel, 258  
 Vespa, Jonathan, 233, 235, 241  
 Vicens, A. J., 114  
 Vicziany, Maria, 140  
 Villarruel, F. A., 70  
 Vines, Paula L., 196  
 Visser, Susanna N., 300  
 Vitello, Paul, 63  
 Vlasic, Bill, 124  
 Vogelstein, Bert, 285  
 Vogtman, Julie, 216  
 Vold, George B., 128  
 Volz, Matt, 197  
 Von Drehle, David, 165  
 Vongkiatkajorn, Kanyakrit, 137  
 Vornovitsky, Marina S., 291

## W

Wajcman, Judy, 341  
 Walk Free Foundation, 139  
 Wallace, Bruce, 45  
 Wallace, Gregory S., 22  
 Wallace, Michael, 153  
 Wallis, Cara, 31  
 Walls, Mark, 74  
 Walmsley, Roy, 136  
 Walsh, Ben, 226  
 Walsh, Bryan, 307  
 Walsh, Kate, 265  
 Walters, Richard H., 65  
 Wan, William, 48  
 Wanamaker, Marianne H., 150  
 Wang, W., 289  
 Wang, Wendy, 45, 203, 235, 236, 241, 251, 255  
 Wang, Xiaolei, 134, 268  
 Wang, Y. Claire, 11  
 Ware, Iain, 70  
 Warner, Kenneth E., 288  
 Warner, Margaret, 9, 287  
 Warren, Kenneth R., 63  
 Wartik, Nancy, 237  
 Wasley, Paula, 47, 267  
 Waters, Mary C., 186  
 Watson, Liz, 217  
 Watt, Rian, 148  
 Wax-Thibodeaux, Emily, 113  
 Wealth-X, 156  
 Wealth-X and UBS, 257  
 Weathers, Cliff, 177, 301  
 Weaver, Rosanna Landis, 216  
 Webb, Alex, 174  
 Weber, Lyn, 86  
 Weber, Max, 11, 108, 140, 219, 276  
 Weigand, Eugenio, 135  
 Weinberg, Bruce A., 168  
 Weinhold, Bob, 286  
 Weintraub, Arlene, 77  
 Weise, Elizabeth, 119  
 Weise, Karen, 225  
 Weisleder, Adriana, 157  
 Weisman, Carrie, 91, 300  
 Weiss, Carol H., 35  
 Wejner, Cyprian, 291  
 Welch, Ashley, 330  
 Weller, Chris, 58  
 Wellford, Rachel, 222  
 Wells, Brooke E., 170  
 Welty, Leah, 136  
 Wenneras, Christine, 16  
 Wenninger, Helena, 98  
 West, Candace, 179  
 West, James E., 202  
 Westcott, Lucy, 312  
 White, Alexander, 125  
 White, James W., 7  
 White, Nicole, 244  
 White, Philip, 75  
 White, Ralph K., 103  
 Whiteaker, Chloe, 225  
 Whitehead, Jaye C., 173  
 White House Council of Economic Advisers, 211  
 Whitehurst, Grover J., 63  
 Whitelaw, Kevin, 42  
 Whiteman, Shawn D., 71  
 Whitesides, John, 210  
 Whitlock, Craig, 114  
 Whitmill, Jennifer, 288  
 Whorf, Benjamin Lee, 42  
 Whoriskey, Peter, 296  
 Wicker, Christine, 280  
 Widjaja, Thomas, 98  
 Wiehe, Meg, 186  
 Wiik, Kenneth A., 238  
 Wikswo, Mary E., 285



Wilbur, Tabitha G., 268  
 Wilcox, W. Bradford, 177  
 Wile, Rob, 140  
 Wilke, Joy, 221, 238  
 Wilkinson, Charles, 197  
 Wilkinson, Lindsey, 180  
 Willett, Megan, 312  
 Williams, Amy M., 261  
 Williams, Claudia, 215  
 Williams, Frank P., III, 128, 133  
 Williams, Heidi, 287  
 Williams, Jane, 295  
 Williams, Lauren, 188  
 Williams, Robin M., Jr., 44  
 Williams, Timothy, 130, 315  
 Williamson, John B., 33  
 Willmott, Paul, 209  
 Wilson, Janet Sullivan, 135  
 Wilson, Jill H., 311  
 Wilson, Thomas C., 316  
 Wilson, Valerie, 195  
 Wilson, William Julius, 148  
 Wiltz, Teresa, 247  
 Winerip, Michael, 250  
 Wines, Michael, 344  
 Wing, Nick, 145  
 WIN-Gallup International, 274, 276  
 Wingert, Pat, 22  
 Wingfield, Adia Harvey, 90  
 Winkler, Adam, 339  
 Winship, Michael, 227  
 Wirth, Louis, 316  
 Wissoker, Doug, 188  
 Witkus, Carolyn, 125  
 Witters, Dan, 276, 277, 316  
 Woessman, Ludger, 262  
 Wohlstein, Ronald T., 334  
 Wold, Agnes, 16  
 Wolff, Edward N., 141  
 Wolfson, Mark, 339  
 Wollhandler, Steffie, 145

Wolven, Jacqueline, 91  
 Wolverson, Brad, 267  
 Women's Bureau, 240  
 Wondergem, Taylor R., 31  
 Wong, Brittany, 90  
 Wong, Curtis M., 42  
 Wood, Jade, 248  
 Wood, Julia T., 91, 94  
 Wood, Susan F., 297  
 Woodward, Bob, 114  
 Woolf, Steven H., 283  
 Woolhandler, Steffie, 287  
 World Bank, 153, 174, 284  
 World Bank and Collins, 152  
 World Economic Forum, 151, 152, 157, 174  
 World Factbook, 306  
 World Food Programme, 308  
 World Health Organization (WHO), 63, 152, 174, 178, 283, 284, 319  
 World Health Organization and UNICEF, 317  
 World Meteorological Organization, 321  
 World Population Review, 306  
 World Water Assessment Program, 318  
 Worley, Heidi, 174  
 Wright, David, 143, 149  
 Wu, Yuping, 297  
 WUNRN, 315, 316  
 WWAP, 317, 319  
 Wyckoff, James, 265  
 Wysong, Earl, 143, 149

## X

Xie, Yu, 237, 260

## Y

Yagan, Danny, 150  
 Yamashita, M., 268

Yan, F., 289  
 Yan, Holly, 331  
 Ybarra, Michele, 98  
 Yeager, David, 117  
 Yeager, David S., 263  
 Yeung, Ken, 344  
 Yglesias, Matthew, 205  
 Yokota, Fumise, 31

## Z

Zagorsky, Jay L., 287  
 Zahedi, Ashraf, 58  
 Zajacova, Anna, 298  
 Zanna, Mark P., 196  
 Zarya, Valentina, 200  
 Zeitlin, Jennifer, 287  
 Zhang, J., 289  
 Zhang, Jijun, 134, 258, 268  
 Zhang, Qiang, 319  
 Zhang, Sisi, 155  
 Zhang, Yuanyuan, 31  
 Zhou, Min, 196  
 Zibel, Alan, 223  
 Zicarelli, Gabriella E., 344  
 Zickuhr, Kathryn, 98, 120  
 Ziegler, Harmon, 226  
 Zierahn, Ulrich, 343  
 Zimbardo, Philip, 105  
 Zimmerman, Don H., 179  
 Zimmerman, Jonathan, 288  
 Zimmerman, Julie B., 316  
 Zoepf, Stephen, 190  
 Zoll, Rachel, 45  
 Zolna, Mia R., 172, 239  
 Zong, Jie, 185  
 Zucman, Gabriel, 141, 156  
 Zweigenhaft, Richard L., 143

# SUBJECT INDEX

## A

Abdullah (prince), 93  
 abortion, 171–172, 240, 298  
 absolute poverty, 145  
 Abu Ghraib prison, 105  
 access economy, 342–343  
 acculturation, 188–189, 288  
 achieved status, 84  
 achievement and success, as U.S. value, 44  
 achievement gap, 257–258, 264  
 acting crowds, 334  
 activity and work, as U.S. value, 44  
 activity theory, 249  
 acute diseases, 286  
 Addams, Jane, 12  
 adolescence  
   arrests in, 131  
   childbearing in, 239, 240  
   depression in, 286–287  
   *quinceañera*, 251  
   risky behavior in, 286  
   sex education in, 240  
   sexual activity in, 169, 171  
   socialization in, 77  
   stereotypes of black female teenagers, 244  
 adulthood  
   sexual activity in, 169–170  
   socialization in, 77–79  
 advanced industrial society, 308, 309  
 Advanced Placement (AP) courses, 266  
 advergaming, 75  
 advertising  
   direct-to-consumer drug, 295  
   of erectile dysfunction drugs, 300  
   popular culture and, 75  
   by tobacco companies, 288  
 affiliation, religious, 272  
 affirmative action, 266, 267  
 Affordable Care Act (ACA, Obamacare), 291, 292, 293, 298  
 affordable housing, 313  
 African Americans. *See* blacks  
 age  
   health and, 285–286  
   poverty and, 147  
   religious participation and, 272  
   of voters, 223  
 ageism, 252  
 aggression and violent video games, 74  
 aging  
   competition for resources and, 248  
   conflict theory and, 250  
   diversity of population, 246  
   end-of-life care, 296  
   functionalism and, 249–250  
   of labor force, 247  
   life expectancy and, 245–246  
   overview, 245  
   right to die issue in, 248  
   symbolic interactionism and, 251–252  
 agnostics, 272  
 AIDS, 291  
 air pollution, 319–320  
 Alaska Natives, 196–197, 321  
 alienation, 10, 109, 112–113  
 alternative social movements, 335  
 alternative workforce, 210–211  
 Alzheimer's disease, 286  
 American Indians, 185, 190, 196–197  
 American values, 44–45  
 anomie, 127, 128  
 antibiotic resistance, 285, 324  
 anticipatory socialization, 68  
 anti-Muslim organizations, 51  
 apartheid in South Africa, 187  
 applied evaluation research, 35  
 arithmetic rate, 308  
 arranged marriages, 4, 176, 234  
 arrests, reasons for, 130  
 artificial intelligence, 341–342  
 Asch, Solomon, 104  
 ascribed status, 84  
 asexuals, 162  
 AshleyMadison.com hack, 119  
 Asian Americans, 195–196, 273. *See also* ethnicity  
 assimilation, 189  
 atheists, 272  
 attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), 300  
 authoritarianism, 219  
 authoritarian leaders, 103  
 authoritarian parenting, 70  
 authoritative parenting, 70  
 authority  
   in bureaucracies, 108  
   characteristics of, 219  
   in families, 233–234  
   knowledge based on, 21  
   types of, 220  
 autism and vaccinations, 22, 330  
 auto industry, corporate crimes in, 124

## B

Babbage, Charles, 341  
 baby boomers, 246, 248, 250, 312  
 back stage, 89  
 Bangladesh, garment factory collapse in, 157  
 Beck, Kristin, 163  
 Becker, Howard, 132–133  
 behavior. *See also* collective behavior  
   deviant, 119  
   formal and informal, 85  
   learning and performing, 65  
   socialization and, 61  
   subjective understanding of, 11  
 belief, religious, 272, 280–281  
 “Betty Crocker Makeover,” 331, 332  
 Beyoncé, 143  
 bias crimes, 123  
 binge drinking, 290  
 biotechnology, 342  
 birth order, 66  
 birth rates, 238, 303–304  
 bisexuals, 162  
 Black Lives Matter, 336  
 blacks. *See also* race  
   deaths of, at hands of police, 334–335  
   demographics of, 194–195  
   health of, 287  
   religious participation of, 272  
   terminology for, 185  
 Blumer, Herbert, 17  
 boomerang children/generation, 78, 233  
 bottled water, 318–319  
 bourgeoisie, 10, 155

brominated vegetable oil, 341  
*Brown v. Board of Education*, 188  
*Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Association*, 74  
 Buddhism, 271, 278  
 bureaucracies  
   defined, 108  
   dysfunctions of, 108–109  
   getting around ideal characteristics of, 110, 112  
   ideal characteristics of, 108  
   incompetence, waste, and corruption in, 113–114  
 bureaucratise, 88  
*Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores*, 298  
 Bush, George W., 93, 319–320  
 Bush, Jeb, 143

## C

calculability and McDonaldization, 111  
 campaign contributions, 222  
 cancer, 285  
 capitalism  
   characteristics of, 205  
   deviance, social inequality, and, 128–129  
   gender inequality and, 177  
   Marx on, 9–10  
   Protestant ethic and, 276  
   racial-ethnic inequality and, 199–200  
   sexism and, 178  
   social stratification and, 155–156  
 capitalists, 10  
 capital punishment, 137  
 careers with sociology degree, 7  
 Carson, Ben, 330  
 casino gaming, 197  
 caste systems, 139–140  
 casual crowds, 333–334  
 causation, 25–26  
 celebration riots, 335  
 CEO pay/salaries, 57, 213, 216  
 certificates, 259  
 cesarean sections (C-sections), 297  
 Chana, Ziona, 234  
 change. *See* social change  
 charismatic authority, 220  
 charismatic leaders, 269  
 charitable donations, 107  
 cheating in college and graduate school, 267  
 chemicals in food, products, and water, 285, 318  
 child maltreatment, 243–244  
 children. *See also* socialization  
   cost of raising, 79  
   diagnosis of ADHD in, 300  
   fetal alcohol spectrum disorders in, 286  
   global stratification and, 152  
   hypersexualization of, 170  
   of immigrants, 186  
   multiracial, 202, 203  
   nature-nurture debate and, 62–65  
   obesity in, 289  
   prenatal alcohol exposure and, 63  
 chilly climates, 261  
 Christianity, 271  
 chronic diseases, 286  
 churches, 270  
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 234–235

- Church of Scientology, 270
- cigarette smoking, 288
- cities, origin and growth of, 310, 314
- civil liberties, 218
- civil religion, 274
- class conflict, 10
- class systems, 140. *See also* social class
- climate change, 320–321
- Clinton, Hillary, 16, 17, 22, 227, 228, 344
- closed-ended questions, 28
- closed stratification systems, 139–140
- Cobb, Craig, 202
- coercive organizations, 107
- coercive power, 219
- cognitive labor, 263
- cohabitation, 236–238
- collaboration in workplace, 110, 112
- collaborative consumption, 342–343
- collective behavior
  - crowds, 333–334
  - defined, 327
  - disasters, 332
  - explanations of, 327–328
  - fads and crazes, 331–332
  - fashion, 331
  - mobs, 334
  - panic and mass hysteria, 330–331
  - publics, public opinion, and propaganda, 332–333
  - riots, 334–335
  - rumors, 329–330
- college entrance examinations, 265–266
- colleges and universities, 266–268
- college students, abusive drinking by, 290
- Collins, Jason, 165
- coming out, 162
- commercialization of sex, 179
- common sense, sociology as, 4
- communication
  - in bureaucracies, 109
  - nonverbal, 91–95
- communication symbols, 40
- communism, 206
- compartmentalizing roles, 87
- compromise regarding roles, 87
- compulsory voting, 225
- computer-assisted telephone interviewing, 27
- computer science field, 262
- computer technology, 341–342
- Comte, Auguste, 8, 13
- concentric zone theory, 314
- concepts, 23
- concerted cultivation, 76
- concrete ceiling, 201
- confidentiality, 36
- confirmation bias, 22
- conflict
  - between roles, 86–87
  - between values, 45
- conflict theory
  - on culture and society, 57–58
  - on deviance, 128–129
  - on education, 256, 257–260
  - on family and aging, 249, 250
  - on gender and sexuality, 176, 177–178
  - on health care systems, 294, 295–297
  - overview, 14–15, 19
  - power elite model, 225
  - on racial-ethnic inequality, 199–200
  - on religion, 277–278
  - on social groups, 111, 113–115
  - on social stratification, 154, 155–156
  - on urbanization, 314, 315
  - on work and economy, 215–216
- conformity
  - group, 104–106
  - informal social controls and, 134
  - in strain theory, 127
  - as U.S. value, 44
- conglomerates, 207
- conspicuous consumption, 144
- contact hypothesis, 201–202
- contagion theory of collective behavior, 327
- content analysis, 31–32, 34
- continuity theory, 252
- contraception, 172, 239, 240, 275, 298
- control and McDonaldization, 111
- control groups, 32
- control theory, 134
- control variables, 23
- convenient care clinics, 109
- conventional crowds, 334
- convergence theory of collective behavior, 327
- conversational dominance, 91
- Cooley, Charles Horton, 66–67
- corporate crimes, 124, 129
- corporate welfare, 156
- corporations, 207, 322, 324
- correlation, 26
- cosmetic surgery, 75, 164
- cost-benefit studies, 35
- costs
  - of cohabitation, 238
  - of deviance, 126
  - of environmental laws, 324
  - of health care, 291–293
  - of higher education, 268
  - of online interaction, 97–99
  - of technology, 342–343
- Couch, Ethan, 130
- countercultures, 50–51
- countermovements, 336
- crazes, 331–332
- creationism, 275
- credential inflation, 259
- credentialism, 258–259
- credibility of surveys, 29
- crime
  - controlling, 134–137
  - corporate crimes, 124
  - cybercrime, 125
  - defined, 119
  - hate crimes, 123
  - measurement of, 121
  - organized crime, 125
  - street crimes, 121–123
  - victimless crimes, 125
  - violent and property crimes, 122–123
  - white-collar crimes, 123–124
- crime control model, 135–137
- crime rates, 122, 123
- criminal deviance, 121
- criminal justice system, 134–137
- criminology, sociology compared to, 14
- crisis pregnancy centers, 172
- critical sociological thinking, 6
- critical thinking skills, 6, 23
- crony capitalism, 206–207
- Crooks, Hulda, 245
- cross-dressers, 163
- cross-sectional studies, 25
- crowds, 333–334
- crude birth rates, 303–304
- crude death rates, 304–305
- cults, 269–270
- cultural capital, 52, 140
- cultural imperialism, 53–54
- cultural integration, 54
- cultural lag, 56
- cultural pluralism, 51
- cultural relativism, 50
- cultural universals, 48–49
- culture
  - characteristics of, 39–40
  - common sense and, 4
  - conflict theory on, 57–58
  - defined, 39
  - deviance and, 120
  - education as transmitting, 255
  - eye contact and, 93
  - facial expressions and, 93
  - feminist theories on, 57, 58–59
  - functionalism on, 56–57
  - gender and sexuality and, 173–175
  - generational transmission of, 39, 61
  - gestures and, 91–92
  - high, 52
  - ideal, 49
  - language and, 42–44
  - as learned, 39
  - mass media and, 53
  - material and nonmaterial, 39–40
  - norms and, 45–48
  - personal space and, 95
  - popular, 52–54, 73–75
  - of poverty, 147–148
  - rape culture, 131–132
  - real, 49
  - rituals and, 48
  - sexual attitudes and behavior and, 162
  - as shared, 39
  - social interaction patterns and, 90–91
  - symbolic interactionism on, 57, 59
  - symbols of, 40–42
  - technology and changes in, 54–56
  - touch and, 93, 94
  - values and, 44–45
- culture bound, 51
- culture shock, 51–52
- cuneiform script, 40
- cyberbullying, 98
- cybercrime, 125
- cyberspace, 95
- cyberstalking, 98
- cystic fibrosis, 190–191

## D

- DARE program, 35
- data analysis, 27
- data breaches, 124–125
- data collection
  - content analysis, 31–32
  - evaluation research, 34–35
  - experiments, 32–33
  - field research, 29–30
  - methods overview, 34
  - by National Security Agency and retailers, 56
  - privacy issues with, 344–345
  - secondary analysis, 33–34
  - as step in research process, 27
  - surveys, 27–29
  - by tech giants, 99
- data mining, 344
- dating, interracial, 202–203
- dating cohabitation, 237
- Davis, Kingsley, 154–155
- Davis, Viola, 200
- Davis-Moore thesis, 154–155
- deafness, 301
- death penalty, 137
- death rates, 304–305
- debt from student loans, 268
- decision-making, 5–6
- decline stage of social movements, 338–340
- deductive reasoning, 23–24
- de facto* segregation, 188
- defensive hate crimes, 123
- definition of situation, 18
- deforestation, 320
- degradation ceremonies, 80
- dehumanization, 109



- deindustrialization, 208
  - de jure* segregation, 188
  - dementia, 286
  - democracy
    - as political system, 218
    - as U.S. value, 44–45
  - democratic leaders, 103
  - Democrats, 221
  - demographics
    - of cohabitation, 237
    - of health and illness, 285–286
    - of immigration, 185
    - of marriage and divorce rates, 236
    - of nonmarital childbearing, 239
    - of online interaction, 96
    - of poverty, 147
    - of single-parent households, 241
    - of social mobility, 150
    - of voters, 223–224
  - demographic transition theory, 308–309
  - demography, 303
  - denominations, 270
  - dependency theory, 153
  - dependent variables, 23
  - depression, 286–287, 300
  - designer babies, 345
  - developmental differences by gender, 62–63
  - deviance. *See also* crime
    - characteristics of, 119–120
    - conflict theory and, 128–129
    - controlling, 134–137
    - defined, 119
    - differential association theory of, 132
    - feminist theories and, 130–132
    - functionalism and, 126–128
    - labeling theory of, 132–133
    - medicalization of, 133
    - primary and secondary, 133
    - standards for, 120–121
    - symbolic interactionism and, 132–133
  - DeVos, Betsy, 275
  - Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, 133, 299–300
  - dictatorships, 218–219
  - differential association theory, 132
  - diffusion, 54
  - direct observational understanding, 11–12
  - disability, 284–285
  - disasters, 332
  - discouraged workers, 211
  - discovery, 54–55
  - discrimination, 190–191
  - disease, 283
  - diseases of wealth, 283
  - distracted driving, 3, 56
  - diversity
    - of metropolitan areas, 313
    - multiracial, 202
    - understanding, 6
    - of U.S. population, 183, 184
    - of workforce, 212–213
  - division of labor, 9, 108, 180
  - divorce. *See also* marriage
    - Facebook as causing, 22
    - social networks and, 106
    - trends in, 235–236
  - DNA editing, 344–345
  - DNA testing, 344
  - dominant groups, 187
  - dominant-minority group relations, 187–189
  - doubled-up households, 233
  - double segregation, 258
  - doublespeak, 88, 89
  - double standard, 115, 170–171, 180
  - dramaturgical analysis, 89
  - Drew, Charles R., 194
  - driving, distracted, 3, 56
  - drone parenting, 233
  - dropout rate, 265
  - Dr. Oz Show* (TV series), 301
  - drug prices, 293, 295
  - Du Bois, W. E. B., 12, 14
  - Durkheim, Émile, 8–9, 13, 127
  - dyads, 103
  - dysfunctions, 13, 126
- E**
- early industrial society, 308, 309
  - earmarks, 222
  - earnings. *See* income
  - Ebola, 329
  - ecclesiae, 270–271
  - economic capital, 140
  - economics, sociology compared to, 14
  - economic systems. *See also* capitalism
    - communism, 206
    - mixed economies, 206–207
    - socialism, 205–206
  - economy
    - conflict theory and, 215–216
    - corporations and, 207–208
    - defined, 205
    - deviance and, 126
    - gender and participation in, 174
    - health care and, 293–294
    - marriage and divorce rates and, 236
    - single-parent households and, 241
    - as social institution, 116
    - social mobility and, 149
    - work in, 208–214
  - ecosystem, 316
  - edge cities, 311
  - education
    - cigarette smoking and, 288
    - conflict theory and, 256, 257–260
    - defined, 255
    - feminist theories and, 256, 260–261
    - functionalism and, 255–257
    - gender and, 166–167
    - gender pay gap by, 168
    - issues in, 263–268
    - marriage and divorce rates and, 235
    - nonmarital childbearing by, 238
    - poverty and, 147
    - by race and ethnicity, 195
    - religion and, 273
    - as social institution, 116, 117
    - social mobility and, 150
    - symbolic interactionism and, 256, 261–263
    - of voters, 223
  - e-fencing, 125
  - efficiency
    - McDonaldization and, 111
    - practicality and, as U.S. value, 44
  - egalitarian family system, 234
  - elder abuse and neglect, 244–245
  - Elderly Rights Law in China, 48
  - electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), 288
  - electronic communities, 106
  - electronic media and socialization, 73–74, 76
  - Ellison, Larry, 139
  - emergence stage of social movements, 338, 339
  - emergent norm theory of collective behavior, 328
  - Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 283
  - emigrants, 305
  - emotional attachment, 62
  - empirical study of society, 8
  - employee-owned companies, 113
  - employment. *See also* bureaucracies; work
    - in bureaucracies, 108
    - during college, 263
    - in dangerous jobs, 287
    - disengagement and detachment from, 109, 112–113
    - in health care occupations, 298
    - inequality in, 113, 115
    - job satisfaction and productivity, 211–212
    - low-wage, 210
    - part-time, temporary, and gig, 210–211
    - prestige and, 142
    - technology and, 344–345
    - work roles, 78–79
  - empty nest, 77–78
  - end-of-life care, 296
  - endogamy, 232
  - environment
    - air pollution, 319–320
    - disasters and, 321, 332
    - global warming, 320–321
    - in health and illness, 285
    - sustainable development, 321–324
    - water, 316–319
  - environmental racism, 318
  - EpiPen, 293
  - erectile dysfunction, 298, 300
  - ethics
    - in social research, 35–37
    - technology and, 344–345
  - ethnic groups
    - African Americans, 194–195
    - American Indians and Alaska Natives, 196–197
    - Asian Americans, 195–196
    - defined, 184
    - Latinos, 192–194
    - Middle Eastern Americans, 197–198
    - whites, 191–192
  - ethnicity
    - education by, 195
    - family composition by, 240
    - health and, 287–288
    - higher education and, 257
    - Internet and smartphone use by, 96
    - intimate partner violence by, 242
    - language and, 43
    - life expectancy by, 246
    - median household income by, 194
    - nonmarital childbearing by, 238
    - of offenders and victims, 122
    - poverty and, 147
    - prisoners by, 136
    - reading and math scores by, 264
    - religious participation and, 273
    - social mobility and, 150–151
    - social significance of, 184–185
    - of voters, 224
    - wealth divide and, 141
  - ethnocentrism, 49
  - ethnographies, 29
  - ethnomethodology, 88–89
  - euphemisms, 88
  - evaluation research, 34–35
  - evolution, teaching of, 275
  - exchange theory, 251–252
  - exiting role or status, 87
  - exogamy, 232
  - experimental groups, 32
  - experiments, 32–33, 34
  - explanatory understanding, 11–12
  - expressive crowds, 334
  - expressive movements, 335–336
  - expressive needs of groups, 103
  - expressive roles, 175
  - extended families, 232–233
  - external pressures for cultural change, 56
  - extracurricular activities, 76, 78
  - extreme poverty, 152–153
  - exurbs, 311
  - eye contact, 93

# F

- Facebook, 98, 99, 344
  - facial expressions, 92–93
  - fads, 331–332
  - fake news, 22
  - false consciousness, 277
  - family. *See also* children; marriage; parents
    - authority and power in, 233–234
    - child maltreatment in, 243–244
    - cohabitation, 236–238
    - conflict theory and, 250
    - courtship and mate selection, 234
    - defined, 231
    - elder abuse and neglect, 244–245
    - feminist theories and, 250–251
    - functionalism and, 249
    - functions of, 231–232
    - gender and, 166
    - intimate partner violence in, 242–243
    - monogamy and polygamy, 234–235
    - nuclear and extended, 232–233
    - residence patterns, 233
    - single-parent households, 240–241
    - as social institution, 116, 117
    - social mobility and, 151
    - structure of, and poverty, 147
    - symbolic interactionism and, 251–252
  - family planning services, 240
  - fashion, as collective behavior, 330–331
  - fast-food restaurants
    - in Asian markets, 53
    - McDonaldization of society, 111
    - rumors about, 329
  - female genital mutilation/cutting, 175
  - female infanticide, 306
  - females
    - hypersexualization of, 170
    - violence against, 157, 174–175
  - feminist generation gap, 16
  - feminist theories
    - on culture and society, 57, 58–59
    - on deviance, 130–132
    - on education, 256, 260–261
    - on family and aging, 249, 250–251
    - on gender and sexuality, 176, 178–179
    - on health care systems, 294, 297–299
    - overview, 15–16, 19
    - patriarchal model of politics, 225, 227–228
    - on racial-ethnic inequality, 199, 200–201
    - on religion, 278–280
    - on social groups, 111, 115
    - of social interaction, 88, 90–91
    - on social stratification, 154, 156–157
    - on urbanization, 314, 315–316
    - on work and economy, 215, 216–217
  - feminization
    - of higher education, 167
    - of poverty, 147
  - fertility, 303–304
  - fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, 286
  - fictive kin, 241
  - field research, 29–30, 34
  - field trips, 74
  - filial piety, 49
  - financial independence, 78
  - Fiorina, Carly, 227
  - flags, 41
  - flibanserin, 300
  - Flint, Michigan, water supply in, 318
  - folk religionists, 271
  - folkways, 46–47
  - food consumption, 48, 49, 59
  - food deserts, 287
  - food movements, 338, 340
  - forced secularization, 274
  - foreign-born population, 185
  - formal behaviors, 85
  - formal deviance, 120
  - formal organizations
    - bureaucracies, 108–110, 112
    - characteristics and types of, 107
    - confidence in, 114, 126, 135
    - defined, 106–107
  - formal social controls, 134
  - fossil fuels, 319
  - fracking, 318
  - fragmentation of social movements, 340
  - Francis (pope), 276
  - freedom and equality, as U.S. value, 44
  - front stage, 89
  - functionalism
    - on culture and society, 56–57
    - on deviance, 126–128
    - on education, 255–257
    - on family and aging, 249–250
    - on gender and sexuality, 175–177
    - on health care systems, 293–295
    - overview, 13–14, 19
    - pluralism and, 225–226
    - on racial-ethnic inequality, 199
    - on religion, 276–277
    - on social groups, 112–113
    - on social stratification, 154–155
    - on urbanization, 314–315
    - on work and economy, 214–215
  - functions, 13, 126–127
  - fundamentalism, 274–275
  - Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 234–235
- # G
- game stage, 68
  - Gandhi, Mohandas, 276
  - Gates, Bill, 46, 144
  - gay bashing, 165
  - gay marriage. *See* same-sex marriage
  - gay men, 162
  - gender. *See also* men; women
    - cigarette smoking and, 288
    - cross-cultural variations in violence and, 63
    - culture and, 58
    - defined, 161
    - developmental and health differences by, 62–63
    - effect of advertising and, 76
    - feminist theory focus on, 15–16
    - group leadership and, 115
    - health and, 286–287
    - language and, 42–43
    - norms and, 46
    - of offenders and victims, 122, 130–132
    - play and, 71–72
    - poverty and, 147
    - prisoners by, 136
    - smiling and, 93
    - social interaction patterns and, 90–91
    - social mobility and, 150
    - symbolic interactionism and, 176, 179
    - touching and, 94
  - gendered institutions, 166
  - gendered racism, 200–201
  - gender education gap, 260–261
  - gender expression, 163–164
  - gender identity, 63, 163–164
  - gender inequality
    - conflict theory on, 176, 177–178
    - feminist theories and, 175, 178–179
    - global, 174
    - in U.S., 166–169
  - gender pay gap, 167–168, 213–214, 216, 298
  - genderqueer, 163
  - gender roles, 131, 164, 175–176
  - gender stereotypes, 164
  - gender stratification, 157–158, 298
  - generalized other, 68, 69
  - generational transmission
    - of culture, 39, 61
    - of wealth, 140
  - genetic engineering, 342
  - genetic testing, 344
  - genocide, 187–188, 277
  - gentrification, 313
  - geometric rate, 308
  - gestures, 91–92
  - ghost houses in Japan, 304
  - gig economy/gig work, 210–211
  - glass ceiling, 115, 201
  - glass escalator, 115
  - global feminism, 16
  - global health, 283, 284
  - globalization
    - defined, 209
    - of popular culture, 53–54
  - global population, 303–306
  - global stratification, 151–152
  - global warming, 320–321
  - goal displacement, 108–109
  - gobbledygook, 88
  - Goffman, Erving, 17, 68–69
  - Google, 344
  - gossip, 329–330
  - government. *See also* bureaucracies
    - defined, 217
    - distinction between church and state in, 274–275
    - environmental performance of, 323–324
    - health care and, 291, 292, 293
    - language of, 43
    - as social institution, 116, 117
    - social mobility and, 149
  - grade inflation, 266–267
  - graduation rates from colleges and universities, 267–268
  - grandparents, as socialization agents, 71, 72
  - greenhouse effect, 320
  - greenwashers, 322
  - group leadership, 103–104, 112, 115
  - groupthink, 106
  - guns, 134–135
- # H
- habitus*, 151
  - hacking, 125, 343–344
  - Haji, 331
  - Hallmark Christmas ornaments, 42
  - harassment online, 98
  - Harlow studies, 62
  - hate crimes, 123
  - hate groups, 51
  - Hawthorne studies, 110
  - health
    - aging and, 248–249
    - conflict theory and, 294, 295–297
    - defined, 283
    - differences in, by gender, 62–63
    - disability and, 284–285
    - fashion and, 297
    - feminist theories and, 294, 297–299
    - functionalism and, 293–295
    - global, 283, 284
    - insurance coverage, 291
    - medicalization of, 299–300
    - social class and, 145
    - social determinants of, 285–291
    - symbolic interactionism and, 294, 299–301
    - technology and, 343
    - urban legends related to, 330
    - in U.S., 283

health care  
 as big business, 296  
 costs of, 291–293  
 defined, 283  
 as medical-industrial complex, 295  
 retail clinics for, 109  
 as social institution, 116, 1117  
 heart disease in women, 297  
 heavy drinking, 290  
 helicopter parents, 77, 233  
 Hepatitis C, 293  
 heterosexism, 165  
 heterosexuals, 162  
 hidden curriculum, 258  
 high culture, 52  
 high schools, 264–266  
*hijab*, 41, 274, 280  
 Hinduism, 271  
 Hispanics. *See* Latinos  
 HIV, 291  
 homelessness, 14, 30, 148  
 homophobia, 165  
 homosexuals, 162  
 honor killings, 174  
 hooding up, 171  
 hospice care, 296  
 hospitals, costs related to, 292–293, 296  
 hot spots, 135  
 housing, affordable, 313  
 Hull House, 12  
 human capital, 176  
 humanitarianism, as U.S. value, 44  
 hydraulic fracturing, 318  
 hypersexualization, 170  
 hypotheses, 23, 27

**I**  
 I, differentiating from me, 67–68  
 ice sheets, melting of, 321  
 ideal culture, 49  
 ideal types, 101  
 ideology, 221  
 Iguru, Oyo Nyimba Kabamba, 219  
 illicit drugs, 290  
 illness. *See* health  
 imitation, learning through, 65, 67, 72–73  
 immigrants, 305  
 immigration  
   attitudes toward, 186  
   foreign-born population, 185  
   impact of, 186  
   nonmarital childbearing and, 240  
   social mobility and, 149  
 impersonality of bureaucracies, 108  
 implicit bias, 262  
 impression management, 68–69, 89  
 incarceration, 136–137  
 incest taboo, 231  
 incidence, 283  
 income  
   defined, 140  
   education and, 256  
   global, and health, 283, 284  
   median household income by race and ethnicity, 194  
   nonmarital childbearing by, 238  
   of voters, 223  
 income inequality, 140–141, 151–152  
 independent variables, 23  
 individual discrimination, 190  
 individualism, as U.S. value, 45  
 individuals  
   blaming for poverty, 147–148  
   environmental performance of, 324  
   uniqueness of, 3–4  
 inductive reasoning, 23–24

Industrial Revolution, 9, 310  
 inequality  
   in earnings, 213–214, 216  
   in employment, 113, 115  
   gender, 15–16, 166–169, 174, 175–179  
   gender roles and, 131  
   gender stratification and, 157–158  
   global wealth and income, 151  
   racial-ethnic, 198–202  
   religion and, 278  
   sexual, 174–175, 177  
   social, 15, 128–129  
   structural, 134  
   as universal, 153–154  
   U.S. wealth and income, 140–141  
 infancy, socialization in, 75–76  
 infant mortality rates, 152, 283, 284, 287, 305  
 inflated language, 88  
 informal behaviors, 85  
 informal deviance, 120  
 informal social controls, 134  
 informal social groups, 110  
 informed consent, 36  
 informed decisions, making, 5–6  
 in-groups, 102  
 innovation, 54, 128, 255  
 institutional discrimination, 190  
 institutionalization stage of social movements, 338, 339  
 institutional review boards (IRBs), 35–36  
 instrumental needs of groups, 103  
 instrumental roles, 175  
 intellectual property theft, 123  
 interactionism. *See* symbolic interactionism  
 interest groups, 338–339  
 intergenerational mobility, 149  
 interlocking directorates, 207–208  
 internalization of cultural behaviors and expectations, 61  
 internal migration, 306  
 international educational comparisons, 264–265  
 international migration, 305–306  
 International Red Cross and the Red Crescent Movement, 41–42  
 International Society of Krishna Consciousness, 270  
 interracial dating and marriage, 202–203  
 intersexuals, 161–162  
 interviews, 28  
 intimate partner violence, 242–243  
 intolerance, religious, 277–278  
 intragenerational mobility, 148–149  
 invention, 54, 186  
 Investigation Discovery, 129  
 iron law of oligarchy, 109  
 Islam, 41, 271, 274, 277–278, 280, 331

**J**  
 Janis, Irving, 105–106  
 Jobs, Steve, 198  
 job sprawl, 312  
 Judaism, 271  
 junk food, 289

**K**  
 Kaepernick, Colin, 328  
 Kavanagh, Sarah, 341  
 King, Martin Luther, Jr., 7, 276, 334  
 King, Rodney, 334  
 King Arthur Flour Company, 113  
 knowledge, bases of, 21  
 knowledge workers, 112  
 Kurdi, Aylan, 306

**L**  
 labeling theory  
   deviance and, 132–133  
   education and, 262  
   health and illness, 300  
   racial-ethnic inequality and, 201  
 labor unions, 209–210  
 Lady Gaga, 154  
 laissez-faire leaders, 103–104  
 language  
   culture and, 42–44  
   doublespeak, 88, 89  
 latent functions, 13–14  
 later life, socialization in, 79. *See also* aging  
 Latinos  
   demographics of, 192–194  
   health of, 287–288  
   *quinceañera* ritual, 251  
   religious participation of, 273  
   terminology for, 184–185  
 laws, 47, 129  
 leadership  
   of groups, 103–104, 112, 115  
   religious, by women, 279–280  
 learned, culture as, 39  
 learning behaviors, 65  
 Le Bon, Gustave, 327  
 legacies, 259  
 legitimate power, 219  
 Lemert, Edwin, 133  
 lesbians, 162  
 LeVin, Ryan, 130  
 LGBT population  
   in Asia, Africa, and Middle East, 175  
   marriage in, 235  
   percentage of, 162, 163  
   societal reactions to, 165–166  
 liberal feminism, 16  
 life chances, 145  
 life expectancy, 245–246, 283, 284, 286, 287, 305  
 lifestyles  
   environmental performance and, 322–323  
   health and, 288–291  
   social class and, 143  
 literature review, 26  
 lobbyists, 222–223, 293  
 longitudinal studies, 25  
 long-term unemployed, 211  
 looking-glass self, 66–67  
*Loving v. Virginia*, 203  
 lower class, 144–145  
 lower-middle class, 144  
 lower-upper class, 143–144  
 low-fat diets, 290  
 low-wage work, 210, 216  
 lying, 92–93

**M**  
 macrosociology, 5  
 Madoff, Bernard, 124  
 “majority-minority” regions, 191  
 males, violence against, 175  
 Malthus, Thomas, 308  
 Malthusian Theory, 308  
 manifest functions, 13–14  
 manufacturing industry, 208–209, 319  
 marijuana, 290  
 marriage. *See also* divorce; same-sex marriage  
   arranged, 4, 176, 234  
   defined, 232  
   endogamy and exogamy, 232  
   functions of ceremony of, 13–14



interracial, 202–203  
 magic 5 to 1 ratio in, 252  
 sexual activity in, 170  
 social exchange theory and, 90  
 trends in, 235–236  
 marriage market, 234  
 Martineau, Harriet, 8  
 Marx, Karl, 9–10, 14, 155, 206, 277  
 mass hysteria, 330–331  
 mass media  
   culture and, 53  
   as social institution, 116, 117  
   as socialization agent, 73–74, 76  
   street crimes and, 128  
 mass shootings, 120  
 mass society theory of social movements, 336  
 master status, 84  
 Mateen, Omar, 128  
 material culture, 40  
 material facts, 8  
 material possessions, as U.S. value, 44  
 maternal mortality rates, 298  
 matriarchal family system, 233  
 matrilineal residence pattern, 233  
 McDonaldization of society, 111  
 me, differentiating from I, 67–68  
 Mead, George Herbert, 17, 67–68  
 Medicaid, 291, 292, 296  
 medical and medication errors, 285  
 medical-industrial complex, 295, 296  
 medicalization  
   of deviance, 133  
   of health, 299–300  
 medical talk shows, 301  
 medical technology, 293  
 medical tourism, 293  
 Medicare, 248, 292, 293, 296  
 medicine, 116, 117, 292. *See also* health care  
 megacities, 310–311  
 men. *See also* gender  
   as controlling women's health, 298  
   cross-cultural variations in violence in, 63  
   models and idealized images of masculinity, 75  
   public space and, 94  
   sex with men, and HIV, 291  
 mental illness, labeling of, 133, 299–300  
 mergers, 14–15, 207  
 meritocracy, 155, 266  
 Merton, Robert K., 13, 127–128, 191  
 Mestral, George de, 55–56  
 metropolitan statistical areas, 312  
 microsociology, 5  
 middle class, 144, 149  
 Middle Eastern Americans, 197–198  
 migrants, 305  
 migration, 305  
 Milgram, Stanley, 104–105  
 military veterans and disability, 285  
 millennials  
   acceptance of sexual orientation by, 162  
   as boomerang generation, 78, 233  
   as drone parents, 233  
   marriage attitudes of, 235  
   as “nones,” 272  
   support for Sanders by, 16  
 milling, 327  
 Mills, C. Wright, 5, 227  
 minimum wage, 210  
 minority groups, 187  
 miscegenation, 202–203  
 misinformation, 21  
 mixed authority forms, 220  
 mixed economy, 206–207  
 “mobility optimism,” 158  
 mob mind, 327  
 mobs, 334  
 models and idealized images of masculinity, 75  
 modernization theory, 153

Mohamed, Ahmed, 189  
 monarchies, 219  
 Money, John, 64  
 monitoring studies, 35  
 monitoring systems, 343  
 monogamy, 234  
 monopoly, 205  
 Moore, Roy, 173  
 Moore, Wilbert, 154–155  
 mores, 47  
 Mormon Church, 234–235  
 mortality, 298, 304–305. *See also* infant mortality  
   rate  
 motherhood penalty, 217  
 multiculturalism, 51, 183. *See also* multiculturalism  
 multigenerational households, 71, 247  
 multiple nuclei theory, 314  
 multiracial, 202  
 Muslims, 271. *See also* Islam  
 myths, 21

## N

Nader, Ralph, 340  
 nanotechnology, 342  
 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 12  
*National Crime Victimization Survey* (Department of Justice), 121  
 National Rifle Association (NRA), 339  
 natural disasters, weather- and climate-related, 321  
 natural growth, 76  
 nature (biology), importance of, 62–63  
 nature-nurture debate, 64–65  
 needs assessment studies, 35  
 negative sanctions, 47–48  
 neglect, 243  
 negotiation of roles, 87  
 neolocal residence pattern, 233  
 neo-Malthusians, 308  
 new religious movements (NRMs), 269–270  
 new social movements theory, 337–338  
 new urban sociology, 315  
 Nobel Prize winners, 186  
 no-fault divorce law, 235  
 noncriminal deviance, 121  
 “nones,” 272, 273  
 nonmarital childbearing, 238–240  
 nonmarital sex, 40, 169, 176  
 nonmaterial culture, 40  
 nonmaterial facts, 8  
 nonparticipant observation, 29  
 nonprobability sample, 24–25  
 nonverbal communication, 91–95  
 normalization of deviance, 121  
 normative organizations, 107  
 norms, 45–48, 126  
 norovirus, 285  
*nouveau riche*, 143–144  
 NRA (National Rifle Association), 339  
 nuclear families, 232  
 nurse practitioners, 299  
 nursing homes, 296  
 nurture (environment), importance of, 63

## O

Obama, Barack, 202, 320, 330  
 Obama, Michelle, 7, 164, 220  
*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 173  
 obesity, 52, 117, 289, 299  
 observation, learning through, 65  
 occupational sex segregation, 167  
 Occupy Wall Street movement, 10, 340  
 offenders, 122, 130–131  
 offshoring, 209

old-age dependency ratio, 246–247  
 oldest-old, 245, 246  
 old-old, 245  
 oligopoly, 205  
 one-child policy in China, 307  
 online communities, 106  
 online interaction, 95–99  
 online surveys, 28  
 open-ended questions, 28  
 open stratification systems, 139–140  
 opioids, 290–291  
*Orange Is the New Black* (Netflix series), 5, 81  
 O'Reilly, Bill, 178  
 organization stage of social movements, 338, 339  
 organized crime, 125  
 out-groups, 102  
 overdose deaths, 291  
 Oz, Mehmet, 301

## P

panics, 330, 331  
 parental leave policy, 251  
 parenting styles, 70, 77  
 parents  
   gendered tasks of, 166  
   nonmarital childbearing, 238–240  
   online interaction of, 97  
   as role models, 65  
   roles as, 79  
   single black fathers, 241  
   as socialization agents, 70  
 parole, 135  
 Parsons, Talcott, 13, 294  
 participant observation, 29  
 participation, religious, 272–273  
 part-time work, 210  
 “patients-in-waiting,” 344  
 patriarchal model  
   of politics, 227–228  
   of religion, 278–280  
 patriarchy/patriarchal family system, 131, 157, 217, 233–234, 250–251  
 patrilineal residence pattern, 233  
 Paul, Rand, 330  
 peer groups, as socialization agents, 71–73  
 Pence, Mike, 228  
 people skills, 344  
 perceptions of deviance, 120  
 Perdue Farms, 324  
 performing behaviors, 65  
 peripheral theory of urban growth, 315  
 permissive parenting, 70  
 personal choices. *See* lifestyles  
 personal space, 94–95  
 pesticides, 316  
 petit bourgeoisie, 10  
 phishing, 125  
 physical abuse, 242, 243  
 physician-assisted suicide, 248  
 physicians, as gatekeepers, 295  
 Plain Writing Act of 2010, 43  
 plastic trash, 319, 323  
 play, as socialization agent, 71–72  
 play stage, 67–68  
 pluralism, 189, 225–226. *See also* multiculturalism  
 police and crime prevention, 135  
 political action committees (PACs), 222  
 political freedom, 218  
 political parties, 221–222  
 political science, sociology compared to, 14  
 political systems  
   authoritarianism and monarchies, 219  
   democracy, 44–45, 218  
   overview, 217–218  
   totalitarianism and dictatorships, 218–219

- politics
    - attitudes toward, 224
    - authority and, 219–220
    - in churches, 274
    - conflict theory and, 226–227
    - defined, 205
    - education and, 264
    - environmental performance and, 322
    - feminist theories and, 227–228
    - functionalism and, 225–226
    - gender and, 168–169, 174
    - health policies and, 291
    - power and, 219
    - Russian government interference in, 344
    - voting, 223–225
  - pollution
    - of air, 319–320
    - of water, 318
  - polyandry, 234
  - polygamy, 234–235
  - polygyny, 234
  - popular culture, 52–54, 73–75
  - population
    - changes in, 303–306
    - defined, 303
    - global, 303–306
    - growth in, 307–309
    - for sampling, 24
    - sex ratios, 306–307
  - population pyramids, 307
  - pork spending, 222
  - positive checks on population size, 308
  - positive sanctions, 47
  - postbureaucratic organizations, 110
  - post industrial society, 308, 309
  - postmodern theory, 18
  - posttests, 32
  - poverty
    - absolute and relative, 145
    - demographics of, 147
    - explanations of, 147–148
    - extreme, 152–153
    - global, 309
    - urbanism and, 315–316
  - poverty line/threshold, 146–147
  - poverty rates, 148
  - power
    - as basis of social stratification, 142
    - deviance and, 129
    - in families, 233–234
    - personal space and, 95
    - politics and, 219
  - power elite model, 225, 226–227
  - Precious* (movie), 244
  - predictability and McDonaldization, 111
  - pregnancy, 61, 63, 171–172, 239, 298
  - preindustrial society, 308, 309
  - prejudice, 190
  - prejudiced discriminators, 191
  - prejudiced nondiscriminators, 191
  - premarital cohabitation, 237
  - prenatal alcohol exposure, 63
  - preparatory stage, 67, 68
  - prestige, 141–142
  - pretests, 32
  - prevalence, 283
  - prevention of crime, 134–135
  - preventive checks on population size, 308
  - primary deviance, 133
  - primary groups, 101–102
  - primary labor market, 199
  - privacy issues
    - online interactions and, 98–99
    - technology and, 344–345
  - privatization of water supply, 318–319
  - privilege
    - education and, 259
    - white privilege, 188
  - probability sample, 24
  - probation, 135
  - probes, 28
  - processed foods, 290
  - profane, 269
  - profit
    - environmental performance and, 322
    - fads and, 331–332
  - progress, as U.S. value, 44
  - proletariat, 10, 155
  - propaganda, 333
  - property crimes, 122
  - Protestant ethic, 276
  - protest crowds, 334
  - psychological abuse, 242, 243
  - psychology, sociology compared to, 14
  - public mourning, 334
  - public opinion, 333
  - public order crimes, 125
  - public policies and practices, shaping, 6
  - publics, 332–333
  - Puerto Rico, 306
  - punishment, 137
  - Putin, Vladimir, 218
- ## Q
- qualitative research, 25
  - quantitative research, 25
  - questionnaires, 27–28
  - quinceañera*, 251
- ## R
- race. *See also* ethnic groups; ethnicity
    - education by, 195
    - family composition by, 240
    - health and, 287–288
    - higher education and, 257
    - Internet and smartphone use by, 96
    - intimate partner violence by, 242
    - language and, 43
    - life expectancy by, 246
    - median household income by, 194
    - nonmarital childbearing by, 238
    - poverty and, 147
    - prisoners by, 136
    - reading and math scores by, 264
    - religious participation and, 273
    - social mobility and, 150–151
    - social significance of, 183–184
    - unemployment and, 212
    - of voters, 224
    - wealth divide and, 141
  - race riots, 334–335
  - racial-ethnic groups
    - defined, 184
    - discrimination within, 191
    - perspectives on relations between, 198–202
    - in workforce, 213–214
  - racial groups, 183–184
  - racial profiling, 135
  - racial socialization, 70
  - racism
    - defined, 189–190
    - environmental, 318
    - gendered, 200–201
  - radical feminism, 16
  - random digit dialing, 27
  - random sample, 24
  - random sample surveys, 27
  - rape culture, 131–132
  - rational-legal authority, 220
  - reactivity, 30
  - Reagan, Ronald, 7
  - real culture, 49
  - reality, social construction of, 88
  - rebellion, 128
  - recidivism, 136–137
  - redemptive social movements, 335–336
  - reference groups, 69, 102–103
  - reformative social movements, 335, 336
  - refugees, 185, 305, 306
  - rehabilitation, 137
  - Reimer, David, 63, 64
  - reinforcement, 65
  - relational status, 83–84
  - relationships, online, 97
  - relative poverty, 145
  - reliability, 24
  - religion
    - churches, 270
    - conflict theory and, 277–278
    - contraceptive coverage and, 298
    - cults, 269–270
    - defined, 269
    - denominations, 270
    - ecclesiae, 270–271
    - education and, 273
    - feminist theories and, 278–280
    - functionalism and, 276–277
    - participant characteristics, 272–273
    - religiosity, spirituality, and, 269
    - sects, 270
    - as social institution, 116
    - symbolic interactionism and, 280–281
    - in U.S., 271–272
    - world religions, 271
  - religiosity, 269, 271–272
  - replacement rate, 304
  - replication of experiments, 32
  - repression of social movements, 340
  - Republicans, 221
  - research. *See also* data collection; scientific method
    - ethics and, 35–37
    - knowledge based on, 21–22
    - methods of, 21
    - steps in, 26–27
  - residential segregation, 313
  - resistance social movements, 335, 336
  - resocialization, 79–80
  - results of research
    - belief in and acceptance of, 36–37
    - presenting and explaining, 27
  - retail clinics for health care, 109
  - retaliatory hate crimes, 123
  - retirement, 79, 247–248
  - retreatism, 128
  - revolutionary social movements, 335, 336
  - rewards systems in bureaucracies, 108
  - right to die, 248
  - riots, 334–335
  - ritualism, 128
  - rituals, 48, 57, 58, 251, 280
  - Ritzer, George, 111
  - robots, 341, 342
  - Rodriguez, Alfredo, 193
  - Roe v. Wade*, 171, 336
  - role conflict, 86–87
  - role models, 65, 72–73
  - role performance, 85
  - roles, 61, 85–87. *See also* gender roles
  - role set, 85–86
  - role strain, 86–87
  - role taking, 61, 67
  - Rowling, J. K., 150, 164
  - rules and regulations in bureaucracies, 108–109
  - rumors, 329–330
- ## S
- sacred, 269
  - salaries

- of CEOs, 57, 213, 216
- education and, 256
- gender pay gap, 167–168, 213–214, 216
- global comparison of, 209
- in health care occupations, 298
- low-wage jobs, 210
- of teachers, 265
- same-sex marriage
  - acceptance of, 25
  - data on, 34
  - legalization of, 235
  - religion and, 276
  - trends in, 173
- sampling/samples, 24–25, 27
- sanctions, 47–48
- Sanders, Bernie, 16, 228
- sandwich generation, 79, 247
- Sapir, Edward, 42
- Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, 42
- scapegoats, 190
- Scared Straight, 135
- schooling, 255. *See also* education
- schools
  - colleges and universities, 266–268
  - elementary and middle schools, 263–264
  - high schools, 264–266
  - selective, 258, 259, 268
  - as socialization agents, 83, 255
  - student engagement and, 262–263
- Schuetz v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action*, 266
- science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, 261
- scientific management, 110
- scientific method
  - concepts, variables, and hypotheses, 23
  - correlation and causation, 25–26
  - deductive and inductive reasoning, 23–24
  - defined, 22–23
  - qualitative and quantitative approaches, 25
  - reliability and validity, 24
  - sampling, 24–25
  - time dimension, 25
- scientific misconduct, 36
- secondary analysis, 33–34
- secondary deviance, 133
- secondary groups, 101–102
- secondary labor market, 199–200
- sects, 270
- secularization, 273–275
- segregation
  - de facto* and *de jure*, 188
  - double, 258
  - occupational sex, 167
  - residential, 313
- selective perception, 201
- selective schools, 258, 259, 268
- self
  - development of sense of, 66–68
  - socialization and, 61
  - staging, 68–69
- self-esteem, 76–77
- self-fulfilling prophecy, 88, 262
- self-managing work teams, 110
- sentencing for crime, 135–136
- serendipity effect, 55
- serial cohabitation, 237
- serial monogamy, 234
- setting priorities related to roles, 87
- sex
  - commercialization of, 179
  - defined, 161
  - educational attainment by, 260
  - life expectancy by, 246
  - religious participation and, 272
  - of voters, 223
- sex education, 240
- sexism, 164–165, 177, 178, 278–280
- sex ratios, 306–307
- sex reassignment, unsuccessful, 63, 64
- sex trafficking industry, 177–178
- sexual abuse, 242, 243, 277
- sexual assault on campuses, 261
- sexual double standard, 170–171, 180
- sexual harassment, 168
- sexual identity, 162
- sexuality
  - defined, 169
  - families and, 232
  - feminist theories and, 175, 178–179
  - functionalism and, 176–177
  - medicalization of, 300
  - symbolic interactionism and, 176, 179–180
  - throughout life course, 169–170
- sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), 291
- sexual orientation, 162–163
- sexual scripts, 170
- “sexy babes” trend, 170, 179
- shared, culture as, 39
- shared meanings, 17–18
- sharing economy, 342–343
- Shivashankar, Vanya, 196
- siblings, as socialization agents, 70–71
- sickle cell disease, 190
- sick role, 294
- significant others, 18, 67
- silence, 91
- Simmel, Georg, 103
- single mother by choice, 241
- single-parent households, 240–241
- singles, 236
- 16 and Pregnant* (TV series), 240
- size of groups, 103
- skimming, 125
- slavery systems, 139
- Slayen, Galia, 171
- smoking, 288
- social capital, 140
- social change. *See also* collective behavior; social movements
  - defined, 327
  - deviance and, 127
  - language and, 43–44
  - religion and, 276
  - technology and, 340–345
- social class
  - achievement gaps and, 257–258, 264
  - cognitive growth and, 76
  - defined, 140
  - effects of, 145
  - family and, 232
  - health and, 287
  - Internet use and, 96
  - lower class, 144–145
  - measurement of, 142–143
  - middle class, 144, 149
  - migration and, 306
  - religious participation and, 273
  - retirement and, 247
  - social contexts and, 157–158
  - upper class, 143–144
  - of voters, 223–224
  - working class, 144
- social class residential segregation, 313
- social construction
  - of gender, 179
  - of illness, 299
  - of race, 184
  - of reality, 88
  - of religion, 280–281
  - of sexuality, 179–180
- social contexts, 157–158, 261–262
- social control
  - criminal justice system and, 134–137
  - education and, 258–259
  - of medicine and health care, 295
- religion and, 276
- types of, 134
- social desirability bias, 29
- social dynamics, 8
- social epidemiology, 283
- social exchange theory, 88, 90
- social facts, 8–9
- social groups
  - conflict theory and, 113–115
  - defined, 101
  - feminist theory and, 115
  - functionalism and, 112–113
  - group conformity, 104–106
  - in-groups and out-groups, 102
  - primary and secondary, 101–102
  - reference groups, 102–103
  - size and structure of, 103–104
  - symbolic interactionism and, 115–116
  - theories of, 112
- social identity and socialization, 61
- social inequality, 15, 128–129
- social institutions, 116–117
- social integration, 9
- social interaction
  - defined, 17, 83
  - feminist theories of, 90–91
  - nonverbal communication, 91–95
  - online communication, 95–99
  - role and, 85–87
  - social exchange theory and, 90
  - status and, 83–85
  - symbolic interactionism and, 87–89
- social interventions, 34–35
- socialism, 205–206
- socialization
  - in adolescence, 77
  - in adulthood, 77–79
  - in childhood, 76–77
  - defined, 61
  - family as agent of, 232
  - importance of, 62
  - in infancy and toddlerhood, 75–76
  - in later life, 79
  - purposes of, 61
  - resocialization, 79–80
  - social learning theories of, 65–66
  - in South Korea, 71
  - symbolic interactionism theories of, 66–69
  - in total institutions, 80–81
- socialization agents, 69–75
- social learning theories of socialization, 65–66
- social media, 95–96
- social mobility
  - defined, 148
  - factors in, 149–151
  - trends in, 149
  - types of, 148–149
- social movements
  - defined, 335
  - explanations for emergence of, 336–338
  - importance of, 340
  - stages of, 338–340
  - types of, 335–336
- social networking sites, 96
- social networks, 104–106
- social organization, 11
- social policies and practices
  - research and, 22
  - shaping, 6
- Social Security, 247, 248
- social solidarity, 9
- social statistics, 8
- social strain theory of deviance, 127–128
- social stratification
  - bases of, 140–142
  - closed and open systems of, 139–140
  - conflict theory and, 154, 155–156
  - defined, 139



social stratification (*Continued*)  
 feminist theories and, 154, 156–157  
 functionalism and, 154–155  
 global, 151–154  
 symbolic interactionism and, 154, 157–158  
 social structure, 83  
 social work, sociology compared to, 14  
 society. *See also* culture  
   blaming for poverty, 148  
   defined, 39  
   McDonaldization of, 111  
   as socially constructed, 17  
   as social system, 13  
 socioeconomic status (SES), 142  
 sociological imagination, 5  
 sociological perspective, 4  
 sociology. *See also* theory  
   as common sense, 4  
   defined, 3  
   other social sciences compared to, 14  
   reasons to study, 5–7  
   subfields of, 18  
   value free, 11, 12  
 Sotomayor, Sonia, 150  
 sources of conflict, 14–15  
 special-interest groups, 222–223  
 Spencer, Herbert, 13  
 Spielberg, Steven, 259  
 spirituality, 269  
 spontaneous abortion, 171  
 sports teams, logos, nicknames, and mascots of, 189  
 spring break, 21  
 Stanford Prison Experiment, 32, 105  
 state religions, 270–271  
 status, 83–85  
   status consistency, 142  
   status inconsistency, 84–85, 142  
   status set, 83–84  
   stay-at-home fathers, 166  
   stereotypes, 190  
   stigma, 119–120, 133, 300  
   strain theory of deviance, 127–128  
   street crimes, 121–123  
   structural factors in social mobility, 149  
   structural inequality, 134  
   structural strain theory of collective behavior, 328  
   structured interviews, 28  
   structures, 13  
   student engagement, 262–263  
   student loan debt, 268  
   subcultures, 50  
   subjective, common sense as, 4  
   subjective understanding of behavior, 11  
   substance abuse, 290–291  
   suburbanization, 311  
   suburban poor, 146  
   sugar consumption, 289, 296  
 suicide  
   Durkheim on, 9  
   gender and, 287  
   physician-assisted, 248  
   rates by sex and age, 9  
   of Reimer, 64  
   by transgender people, 165  
 surrogates, grandparents as, 71  
 surveys, 27–29, 34  
 sustainable development, 321–324  
 Sutherland, Edwin, 132  
 symbolic interaction, 40  
 symbolic interactionism  
   on culture and society, 57, 59  
   on deviance, 132–133  
   on education, 256, 261–263  
   on family and aging, 249, 251–252  
   on gender and sexuality, 176, 179–180  
   on health care systems, 294, 299–301  
   overview, 16–18, 19  
   on racial-ethnic inequality, 199, 201–202

on religion, 280–281  
 on social groups, 111, 115–116  
 on social interaction, 87–89  
 on socialization, 66–69  
 on social stratification, 154, 157–158  
 on urbanization, 314, 316  
 on work and economy, 215, 217  
 symbols, 17, 40–42, 280  
 Syrian refugees, 306

## T

taboos, 47, 231  
 taxes  
   dodging, 129  
   education and, 255  
   social stratification and, 156  
 tax havens, 153  
 Taylor, Frederick Winslow, 110  
 teachers  
   effective teaching, 264  
   grade inflation and, 266–267  
   preparation and quality of, 265  
   as socialization agents, 83, 255  
   student engagement and, 262–263  
 technology  
   cultural change and, 54–56  
   defined, 341  
   disasters and, 332  
   reliance on, 97–98  
   social change and, 340–345  
   socialization and, 73–74  
 tech sector, as bad urbanists, 315  
 teenagers. *See* adolescence  
 teen pregnancy, 61, 298  
 temporary work, 210  
 terrorism, religious, 278, 281  
 testosterone-boosting drugs, 179  
 test scores, 264  
 Theismann, Joe, 7  
 theories. *See also* conflict theory; feminist theories;  
   functionalism; symbolic interactionism  
   of Addams, 12  
   of Comte, 8  
   contemporary, 13–19  
   defined, 7  
   of Du Bois, 12  
   of Durkheim, 8–9  
   of Martineau, 8  
   of Marx, 9–10  
   of social interaction, 87–91  
   of socialization, 65–69  
   social learning, 65–66  
   of Weber, 11–12  
 thinking critically, 6, 23  
 Thomas Theorem, 88  
 3-D printing, 343  
 thrill hate crimes, 123  
 tiny houses, 312  
 toddlerhood, socialization in, 75–76  
 total fertility rates (TFRs), 304, 305  
 total institutions, 80–81  
 totalitarianism, 218–219  
 touch, 93–94  
 toys and socialization, 71–72  
 tracking, 262  
 tradition, knowledge based on, 21  
 traditional authority, 220  
 traffic congestion, 312  
 transgender, 163, 165–166, 175  
 transnational conglomerates, 208  
 transnational corporations, 208  
 transsexuals, 163  
 triads, 103  
 triple oppression, 200  
 Trump, Donald, 16, 17, 22, 51, 95, 122, 151,  
   165–166, 223, 227–228, 320, 322, 330

Trump, Melania, 50  
 Tumin, Melvin, 155  
 Turner, Brock, 131  
 two-income households, 217  
 two-party system, 221–222

## U

unaffiliated, 271, 272, 273  
 underclass, 145  
 undocumented/unauthorized immigrants,  
   185, 186  
 unemployment, 5, 211, 212  
*Uniform Crime Report* (FBI), 121  
 uninsured population, 291  
 uninvolved parenting, 70  
 University of Chicago, 12  
 unprejudiced discriminators, 191  
 unprejudiced nondiscriminators, 191  
 unstructured interviews, 28  
 upper class, 143–144  
 upper-middle class, 144  
 upper-upper class, 143  
 uptalk, 91  
 urban ecology, 314  
 urbanism, 316  
 urbanization  
   conflict theory and, 314, 315  
   consequences of, 312–313  
   defined, 310  
   feminist theories and, 314, 315–316  
   functionalism and, 314–315  
   global view of, 310–311  
   symbolic interactionism and, 314, 316  
   in U.S., 311–313  
 urban legends, 330  
 urban sprawl, 312  
 utilitarian organizations, 107

## V

vacation time off, 212  
 vaccinations, 22, 330  
 validity, 24  
 value-added theory, 328  
 value-free sociology, 11, 12  
 values  
   culture and, 44–45  
   deviance and, 126  
   rituals and, 48  
 vaping, 288  
 variables, 23  
 Velcro, invention of, 55–56  
 Venkatachalam, Gokul, 196  
*verstehen*, 11  
 victimization survey, 121  
 victimless crimes, 125  
 victims, 122–123, 131–132  
 violation of interaction rules, 88–89  
 violence  
   cross-cultural variations in gender and, 63  
   against females, 157, 174–175, 178  
   intimate partner violence, 242–243  
   against males, 175  
   mobs and, 334  
   patriarchy and, 250–251  
   religious, 277–278, 281  
   riots and, 334–335  
   sexual, 131–132  
   of video games, 74  
 violent crimes, 122–123  
 visual cues, 91–92  
 volunteering, 107  
 voter fraud, 225  
 voting in elections, 223–225  
 vouchers for private schools, 264, 275

## W

- walkable urbanism, 312
- Walker, Madame C. J., 194
- Walmart, 114, 157
- Walt Disney Company, 205, 206
- wardrobing, 122
- Washington, Booker T., 12
- wasteful spending in health care, 296
- waste in landfills, 316, 319
- water, 316–319
- wealth
  - defined, 140
  - diseases of, 283
  - global, 151–152
  - social mobility and, 151
- Weber, Max, 11–12, 108, 145, 219–220, 276
- welfare capitalism, 206
- well-being, 276, 277
- Wells Fargo, 124
- white-collar crimes, 123–124, 129
- white privilege, 188
- whites and white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs), 191–192
- white supremacists, 335
- Whorf, Benjamin, 42
- Williams, Robin, 7
- Winfrey, Oprah, 22, 73, 143, 189
- women. *See also* gender
  - in exile in Ghana, 120
  - fashion, health, and, 297
  - global stratification and, 152
  - health costs related to, 297–298
  - in labor force, 248
  - as offenders, 130–131
  - religion as subordinating and excluding, 278–280
  - in S&P 500 companies, 115
  - as stay-at-home mothers, 217
  - urban planning and, 315
  - as victims, 131–132
  - violent video games and aggression against, 74
  - votes of, in 2016 presidential election, 16, 17
  - in workplace, 212–213
- women's rights movement, 340
- work. *See also* employment
  - conflict theory and, 215
  - defined, 208
  - deindustrialization and globalization, 208–209
  - feminist theories and, 216
  - functionalism and, 214–215
  - job satisfaction and productivity, 211–212
  - low-wage jobs, 210
  - offshoring and labor unions, 209–210
  - part-time, temporary, and gig, 210–211
  - retirement and, 247–248
  - symbolic interactionism and, 217
  - unemployment and discouraged workers, 211
- working class, 144
- working poor, 145
- workplace. *See also* employment; work
  - aging of labor force, 247
  - collaboration in, 110, 112
  - gender inequality in, 167–168
  - sexism in, 178
  - women and minorities in, 212–213
- work roles, 78–79
- work teams, 110
- world-system theory, 153–154

## Y

- Y2K, 329
- young-old, 245

## Z

- zero population growth, 309
- Zimbardo, Philip, 32, 105
- Zuckerberg, Mark, 143

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