

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

FIFTEENTH EDITION



KORNBLUM | SECCOMBE | JULIAN

Social Problems

This page intentionally left blank

Social Problems

FIFTEENTH EDITION

William Kornblum

*City University of New York
Graduate School and University Center*

Fifteenth Edition Revised by:

Karen Seccombe

Portland State University

Joseph Julian, Emeritus

San Francisco State University

PEARSON

Boston Columbus Indianapolis New York City San Francisco
Amsterdam Cape Town Dubai London Madrid Milan Paris Montréal Toronto Delhi
Mexico City São Paulo Sydney Hong Kong Seoul Singapore Taipei Tokyo

VP, Product Development: Dickson Musslewhite
Publisher: Charlyce Jones Owen
Editorial Assistant: Laura Hernandez
Program Team Lead: Amber Mackey
Program Manager: Rob DeGeorge
Managing Editor: Denise Forlow
Project Manager: Lynne Breitfeller
Field Marketing Manager: Brittany Pogue-Mohammed

Product Marketing Manager: Tricia Murphy
Full Service Vendor: Integra Software Services, Inc.
Operations Supervisor: Mary Fischer
Operations Specialist: Mary Ann Gloriande
Cover Art Director: Maria Lange
Cover Designer: Lumina Datamatics
Cover Art: Neil Leslie/Alamy
Printer/Binder: Courier/Kendallville
Cover Printer: Phoenix Color/Hagerstown

Acknowledgements of third party content appear on pages 482–492, which constitutes an extension of this copyright page.

Copyright © 2017, 2012, 2009 by Pearson Education, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. This publication is protected by copyright, and permission should be obtained from the publisher prior to any prohibited reproduction, storage in a retrieval system, or transmission in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise except as authorized for use under the product subscription through which this digital application is accessed. For information regarding permissions, request forms and the appropriate contacts within the Pearson Education Global Rights & Permissions department, please visit www.pearsoned.com/permissions/.

PEARSON, ALWAYS LEARNING, and REVEL are exclusive trademarks in the U.S. and/or other countries owned by Pearson Education, Inc. or its affiliates.

Unless otherwise indicated herein, any third-party trademarks that may appear in this work are the property of their respective owners and any references to third-party trademarks, logos or other trade dress are for demonstrative or descriptive purposes only. Such references are not intended to imply any sponsorship, endorsement, authorization, or promotion of Pearson’s products by the owners of such marks, or any relationship between the owner and Pearson Education, Inc. or its affiliates, authors, licensees or distributors.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kornblum, William, author.

Social problems/William Kornblum and Karen Seccombe.—15th edition.
pages cm

ISBN 978-0-13-397458-4—ISBN 0-13-397458-8

1. Social problems—United States. 2. United States—Social conditions—1980–

I. Seccombe, Karen, II. Title.

HN59.2.K66 2017

306.0973—dc23

2015030686

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Student Version:

ISBN 10: 0-13-397458-8

ISBN 13: 978-0-13-397458-4

Books a la Carte:

ISBN 10: 0-13-397461-8

ISBN 13: 978-0-13-397461-4

PEARSON

Brief Contents

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----|
| 1 | Sociological Perspectives on Social Problems | 1 |
| 2 | Problems of Health <i>and Health Care</i> | 28 |
| 3 | Problems of Mental Illness and Treatment | 59 |
| 4 | Alcohol and Other Drugs | 89 |
| 5 | Crime and Violence | 119 |
| 6 | Poverty Amid Affluence | 151 |
| 7 | Racism, Prejudice, and Discrimination | 182 |
| 8 | Sex and Gender | 211 |
| 9 | An Aging Society | 239 |
| 10 | The Changing Family | 275 |
| 11 | Problems of Education | 307 |
| 12 | Problems of Work and the Economy | 339 |
| 13 | Population and Immigration | 364 |
| 14 | Technology and the Environment | 395 |
| 15 | Summing Up the Sociological Imagination: War and Global Insecurity | 425 |

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

| | | | |
|---|------|--|-----------|
| Special Features | xiii | Medical Technologies | 43 |
| Preface | xiv | Prescription Drugs | 43 |
| | | Demographic Factors | 43 |
| | | Cultural Factors | 44 |
| 1 Sociological Perspectives on Social Problems | 1 | OBESITY 45 • SMOKING 46 • RISKY BEHAVIORS AND COSTLY PROCEDURES 48 | |
| The Sociological Imagination | 2 | Ethical Issues | 48 |
| What Is a Social Problem? | 4 | End-of-Life Issues | 48 |
| Sociological Perspectives on Social Problems | 7 | Privacy and Patients' Rights | 50 |
| The Functionalist Perspective | 8 | Explanations of Health Care Problems | 50 |
| CRIMINAL DEVIANCE: A FUNCTIONALIST VIEW 10 • SOCIAL PROBLEMS AS SOCIAL PATHOLOGY 10 • SOCIAL-DISORGANIZATION THEORY 11 • MODERN FUNCTIONALISM: BUILDING INSTITUTIONS 11 | | Class and Class Conflict | 51 |
| The Conflict Perspective | 12 | Institutions and Health Care | 52 |
| DEVIANCE: A MARXIAN CONFLICT VIEW 12 • VALUE CONFLICT THEORY 13 • THE IDEA OF A "CULTURAL WAR" IN THE UNITED STATES 13 | | Health and Social Interaction | 52 |
| The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective | 15 | Social Policy | 54 |
| LABELING: AN INTERACTIONIST VIEW OF DEVIANCE 15 • THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS 16 | | The Single-Payer Nations | 54 |
| The Natural History of Social Problems | 17 | Health Care Reform in the United States: The Affordable Care Act (ACA) | 55 |
| Themes of This Text | 18 | Future Prospects | 57 |
| Using an Empirical Approach | 18 | Going Beyond Left and Right | 57 |
| Linking Individual Experience with Social Structure | | Summary 58 | |
| Recognizing That Social Inequality Contributes to Social Problems | | 3 Problems of Mental Illness and Treatment | 59 |
| Using a Comparative Perspective | | Mental Illness as a Social Problem | 61 |
| Social Policy | 21 | Sociological Perspectives on Mental Illness | 63 |
| Social Policy Debates | 22 | Suicide and Mental Illness | 63 |
| Future Prospects | 23 | The Social Construction of Mental Illness | 65 |
| Going Beyond Left And Right | 25 | The Medical Model | 65 |
| Summary 27 | | Mental Illness as Deviance | 66 |
| | 25 | Problems in Living | 67 |
| | 26 | The Social Construction Process | 68 |
| | 26 | Classification of Mental Disorders | 68 |
| | | Diagnosis or Label? | 69 |
| | | Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Resulting from War and Terrorism | 70 |
| | 28 | Inequality, Conflict, and Mental Illness | 72 |
| | 29 | Incidence Versus Prevalence of Mental Disorders | 72 |
| | 33 | Social Class and Mental Disorder | 73 |
| | 34 | Race and Ethnicity | 74 |
| | 35 | Sex | 75 |
| | 36 | Age | 77 |
| | 39 | Methods of Treatment | 78 |
| | 40 | Medical Approaches to Treatment | 78 |
| | 41 | HISTORY OF MEDICAL APPROACHES 78 • COMMON MEDICAL APPROACHES TODAY 78 | |
| | 42 | Nonmedical Forms of Treatment | 79 |
| | 43 | PSYCHOTHERAPY 79 • OTHER APPROACHES 79 | |
| 2 Problems of Health and Health Care | | | |
| Health Care as a Global Social Problem | | | |
| The Scope of Health Care Problems in America | | | |
| Unequal Access to Health Care | | | |
| Profile of the Uninsured | | | |
| Inequalities of Race and Ethnicity | | | |
| Inequalities of Social Class | | | |
| The High Cost of Health Care | | | |
| Hospitals | | | |
| Physicians | | | |
| Malpractice | | | |

| | | | |
|--|-----------|---|------------|
| Institutional Problems of Providing Treatment and Care | 81 | Drug Law Reform | 115 |
| Mental Hospitals | 81 | Future Prospects | 116 |
| Community Psychology | 83 | Going Beyond Left and Right | 117 |
| Deinstitutionalization and Homelessness | 84 | Summary 118 | |
| Social Policy | 85 | 5 Crime and Violence | 119 |
| Future Prospects | 86 | The Nature of Crime and Crime Statistics | 122 |
| Going Beyond Left and Right | 87 | Police Discretion | 122 |
| Summary 87 | | Problems of Accuracy | 123 |
| 4 Alcohol and Other Drugs | 89 | Types Of Crimes and Criminals | 124 |
| The Nature of the Problem | 91 | Violent Personal Crimes | 124 |
| Subjective and Objective Dimensions | 91 | Occasional Property Crimes | 126 |
| Abuse and Addiction | 92 | Occupational (White-Collar) Crimes | 127 |
| Alcohol Use, Abuse, and Alcoholism | 94 | Corporate Crimes | 128 |
| Perceptions of Alcohol Use, Abuse, and Alcoholism | 95 | Organized Crime | 130 |
| Alcohol Abusers and Alcoholics | 96 | Public-Order Crimes | 131 |
| GENETICS 96 • SEX 97 • AGE 98 | | Hate Crimes | 132 |
| Alcohol-Related Social Problems | 99 | Gender-Based Violence | 133 |
| Health | 99 | Biological Explanations of Crime | 136 |
| Drinking and Driving | 100 | Biology, Violence, and Criminality | 136 |
| Crime | 100 | Sex Differences and Crime | 137 |
| Effects of Alcoholism on the Family | 102 | Sociological Explanations of Crime | 137 |
| Consequences for Adults | 102 | Conflict Approaches | 138 |
| Consequences for Children | 102 | INEQUALITY AND CRIME 138 • CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH 138 • RACE, ETHNICITY, AND CRIME 138 | |
| Treatment of Alcoholism | 104 | The Functionalist View and Anomie Theory | 139 |
| Rehabilitation | 104 | Interactionist Approaches | 141 |
| Alcoholics Anonymous | 104 | DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION 141 • DELINQUENT SUBCULTURES AND CONFLICTING VALUES 141 | |
| Antabuse | 105 | Controlling Crime | 142 |
| Other Programs | 106 | Retribution-Deterrence | 143 |
| Illegal Drug Use and Abuse | 106 | Rehabilitation | 144 |
| Marijuana | 107 | Prevention | 146 |
| Abuse of Prescription Drugs | 107 | Social Policy | 147 |
| Hallucinogens | 107 | Gun Control | 147 |
| Cocaine | 107 | Future Prospects | 148 |
| Inhalants | 109 | Going Beyond Left and Right | 149 |
| MDMA | 109 | Summary 149 | |
| Methamphetamine | 110 | 6 Poverty amid Affluence | 151 |
| Crack Cocaine | 110 | Social Inequality: The Haves and the Have-Nots | 154 |
| Heroin | 110 | Those Who Are Rich | 155 |
| Patterns, Problems, and Treatment | 111 | Are Rich People a Social Problem? | 156 |
| Patterns of Drug Use | 111 | Those Who Are Poor | 157 |
| WHO USES DRUGS? 111 • | | The Poverty Line | 158 |
| HOW DOES DRUG USE SPREAD? 111 | | Who Is Living in Poverty, and Why? | 159 |
| Problems Associated with Drug Abuse | 113 | SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES 160 • CHILDREN 160 • MINORITY GROUPS 162 • THOSE WITH DISABILITIES 163 | |
| CRIME 113 • DRUG USE AND AIDS 113 | | | |
| Treatment of Drug Abuse | 114 | | |
| THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITIES 114 • | | | |
| METHADONE MAINTENANCE 114 | | | |
| Social Policy | 115 | | |
| Law Enforcement | 115 | | |

| | | | |
|---|-----|--|-----|
| Event Poverty | 163 | 8 Sex and Gender | 211 |
| A SEVERE RECESSION 164 • IMMIGRATION 164 • | | Is It Sex or Gender? | 213 |
| LOW WAGES 165 • UNEMPLOYMENT OR LIMITED PART-TIME | | Gender Is Socially Constructed | 214 |
| WORK 165 | | Sex Differences | 214 |
| Poverty and Social Class | 166 | Incongruence between Sex and Gender | 215 |
| Consequences of Poverty | 167 | The Social Evaluation of Sex and Gender | 216 |
| How Poverty Can Affect Children | 167 | Traditional Gender Roles | 216 |
| INADEQUATE HEALTH AND NUTRITION 170 • | | The Roots of Sexism and Inequality | 217 |
| LOWER-QUALITY HOME ENVIRONMENT 170 • | | Power, Male Hegemony, and Patriarchy | 217 |
| PARENTAL STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS 170 • | | Stereotyping | 218 |
| FEWER RESOURCES FOR LEARNING 170 • HOUSING | | Examples of Sexism and Inequality Today | 218 |
| PROBLEMS 171 • POOR-QUALITY NEIGHBORHOODS 171 | | Female Genital Mutilation | 219 |
| Consequences of Poverty for Adults | 172 | Sexist Standards of Beauty | 221 |
| Why Does Poverty Persist? | 173 | Women in the Labor Force | 221 |
| Individualistic Explanations | 173 | HISTORY OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT 223 • HOW DO WOMEN | |
| Structural Explanations | 173 | WORKERS FARE? 224 • WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR THESE GENDER | |
| Cultural Explanations | 174 | DIFFERENCES? 225 | |
| Social Policy | 175 | Rape, Sexual Assault, and Harassment | 226 |
| Reform of "Welfare as We Know It" | 177 | THE COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT 228 • "DATE-RAPE" | |
| Future Prospects | 179 | DRUGS 229 | |
| Going Beyond Left and Right | 180 | Sources of Sexism | 229 |
| Summary 181 | | Socialization | 229 |
| 7 Racism, Prejudice, and | | FAMILY MEMBERS 230 • TOYS 230 • SCHOOLS 231 • | |
| Discrimination | 182 | PEERS 232 • MASS MEDIA 232 | |
| A More Diverse Nation | 184 | Organized Religion | 233 |
| The Continuing Struggle for Minority | | The Government and Legal System | 233 |
| Civil Rights | 185 | Social Policy | 234 |
| The Social Construction of Minorities | 186 | The Women's Movement | 234 |
| Defining Racism, Prejudice, and Discrimination | 188 | Changes in Men's Roles | 235 |
| Origins of Prejudice and Discrimination | 190 | Future Prospects | 236 |
| Prejudice and Bigotry in the Individual | 191 | Going Beyond Left and Right | 237 |
| FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION 191 • | | Summary 237 | |
| PROJECTION 191 | | 9 An Aging Society | 239 |
| Prejudice and Bigotry in Social Structures | 192 | Aging as a Social Problem | 240 |
| POLITICAL DOMINANCE AND ECONOMIC | | Sociological Perspectives on Aging | 241 |
| EXPLOITATION 192 • LAWS AND POLICIES 192 • | | Changing Demographics around the World | 243 |
| SOCIAL NORMS 192 • STEREOTYPES 193 | | Developed versus Less Developed Countries | 243 |
| Institutional Discrimination | 195 | Reasons for the Rapid Growth in the Elderly | |
| Education | 197 | Population | 248 |
| Housing | 199 | Aging and Modernization | 250 |
| Employment and Income | 200 | The Elderly Population in the United States | 251 |
| Justice | 202 | Who Are Included in the Elderly Population? | 251 |
| RACIAL INEQUALITIES IN CAPITAL PUNISHMENT 203 • | | Consequences of the Growth in the Elderly | |
| FELONY DISENFRANCHISEMENT 204 | | Population | 254 |
| Some Consequences of Prejudice | | Ageism | 254 |
| and Discrimination | 204 | Dimensions of the Aging Process | 256 |
| Social Policy | 206 | Physiological Aspects of Aging | 256 |
| Affirmative action | 206 | CHRONOLOGICAL AGING 256 • PRIMARY | |
| HISTORY OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION 206 • | | AND SECONDARY AGING 256 | |
| TESTING AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN THE COURTS 207 | | Psychological Dimensions of Aging | 257 |
| Future Prospects | 208 | Social and Cultural Dimensions of Aging: | |
| Going Beyond Left and Right | 209 | Aged People as a Minority Group | 257 |
| Summary 210 | | | |

| | | | |
|---|------------|---|------------|
| The Economics of Aging | 258 | Social Policy | 303 |
| Income and Assets: How Those Who Are Elderly Fare | 258 | Future Prospects | 305 |
| Economic Discrimination | 259 | Going Beyond Left and Right | 305 |
| Multiple Jeopardy | 259 | Summary 306 | |
| Retirement | 259 | | |
| Family Relationships | 261 | 11 Problems of Education | 307 |
| Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Couples | 262 | History of American Education | 309 |
| Widowhood | 264 | Education as a Social Problem | 309 |
| Grief and Bereavement | 265 | Sociological Perspectives on Education | 311 |
| Health and Health Care among the Elderly | 265 | Functionalist Approaches | 312 |
| Health Problems | 265 | Conflict Approaches | 313 |
| Severe Memory Loss | 266 | Interactionist Approaches | 315 |
| Medicare | 267 | Educational Attainment and Achievement | 315 |
| Long-Term Care | 268 | Blacks | 318 |
| FORMAL CARE 268 • INFORMAL CARE 268 | | Hispanics | 319 |
| Death with Dignity | 269 | Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders | 320 |
| Social Policy | 271 | American Indians and Alaska Natives | 320 |
| The History behind Social Security | 271 | Can We Find Any Common Themes? | 321 |
| How Social Security Works | 271 | How U.S. Students Measure Up in International Comparisons | 323 |
| Future Prospects | 272 | EDUCATION IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES 323 • | |
| Going Beyond Left and Right | 272 | EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING NATIONS 324 | |
| Summary 274 | | Current Social Problems in Education | 325 |
| | | Preschool and Early Childhood Education | 325 |
| 10 The Changing Family | 275 | Bilingual/Bicultural Education | 329 |
| What Is a Family? | 276 | School Violence | 330 |
| Functions of Families | 278 | School Choice | 331 |
| Perspectives on Family Change | 279 | CHARTER SCHOOLS 331 • SCHOOL VOUCHERS 332 • | |
| Conservative Perspective | 279 | HOMESCHOOLING 332 | |
| Liberal Perspective | 280 | Sex and Gender Influences in Schooling | 333 |
| Feminist Perspective | 281 | Access to Higher Education | 334 |
| Changing Norms of Marriage and Intimate Relationships | 282 | Social Policy | 336 |
| The Declining Rates of Marriage | 282 | K–12 Race to the Top | 336 |
| The Rise in Cohabitation | 284 | Future Prospects | 337 |
| COHABITATION AND MARRIAGE 284 • COHABITATION AND CHILDREN 286 | | Going Beyond Left and Right | 337 |
| Same-Sex Marriage | 286 | Summary 338 | |
| The Division of Household Labor | 288 | | |
| Parenting Contexts | 289 | 12 Problems of Work and the Economy | 339 |
| Teen Parents | 290 | Americans' Views on the Economy | 340 |
| Single Parents | 291 | Principles Underlying Key Trends in the American Free-Enterprise System | 343 |
| Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Families | 292 | Global Markets and Corporate Power | 345 |
| Grandparents Raising Grandchildren | 293 | Multinational Corporations | 345 |
| Family Problems and Challenges | 294 | Global Factories | 346 |
| Violence | 294 | 24/7 Economy | 346 |
| INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE 294 • CHILD ABUSE 296 • | | Outsourcing | 347 |
| WHAT EXPLAINS VIOLENCE? 297 | | Global Sweatshops | 347 |
| Divorce | 299 | Effects on American Workers | 350 |
| FREQUENCY OF DIVORCE 300 • THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON ADULTS 300 • THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN 301 • STEPFAMILIES 302 | | From Manufacturing to Services | 350 |
| | | Contingent Nonstandard Work | 351 |

| | | | |
|---|-----|--|-----|
| Women in the Labor Force | 352 | 14 Technology and the Environment | 395 |
| CATCH 22: INFLEXIBLE FULL-TIME WORK OR PART-TIME PENALTY 353 • SOLUTIONS IN OTHER COUNTRIES 354 | | The Nature of Technology | 396 |
| Problems with Work | 354 | Technological Dualism | 397 |
| Unemployment | 354 | The Digital Divide | 397 |
| Insecurity about the Decline of “Good Jobs” | 355 | Controlling Technology | 398 |
| Job Discrimination | 357 | Autonomous Technology | 398 |
| Occupational Safety and Health | 357 | Automation | 399 |
| Consumers, Credit, and Debt | 359 | Whistleblowers | 399 |
| Advertising and the Consumer Society | 359 | Identity Theft and Identity Fraud | 400 |
| Personal Bankruptcy | 360 | Bureaucracy and Morality | 401 |
| Social Policy | 361 | Technology and Social Institutions | 403 |
| Minimum Wage | 361 | Technology and the Natural Environment | 405 |
| Future Prospects | 362 | Environmental Stress | 405 |
| Going Beyond Left and Right | 362 | Origins of the Problem | 406 |
| Summary 363 | | Climate Change and Global Warming | 407 |
| 13 Population and Immigration | 364 | WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE? 407 • AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH 409 • CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE 409 | |
| The World’s Population | 365 | Air Pollution | 413 |
| Measures of Population Growth | 367 | EFFECTS ON HUMAN HEALTH 414 • ECONOMIC EFFECTS 414 | |
| Uneven Population Growth: Developed and Less Developed Countries | 368 | Water Pollution | 414 |
| The Demographic Transition | 372 | Solid-Waste Disposal | 416 |
| Rising Expectations in the Developing World | 373 | TOXIC WASTES 418 • RADIOACTIVE WASTES 418 • ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE 419 | |
| Literacy Rates | 373 | The United States and the World Environment | 420 |
| Energy Consumption | 374 | Social Policy | 420 |
| Food and Hunger | 376 | Future Prospects | 423 |
| Government Involvement in Population Control | 378 | Going Beyond Left and Right | 423 |
| China’s One-Child Policy | 379 | Summary 423 | |
| Japan’s Quest for Growth | 380 | 15 Summing Up the Sociological Imagination: War and Global Insecurity | 425 |
| Family Planning and Population Growth in the United States | 381 | War and Its Effects | 426 |
| Immigration | 382 | Direct Effects of War | 427 |
| Immigration to the United States: A Brief History | 383 | PHYSICAL INJURIES 427 • MENTAL HEALTH AND PTSD 427 • MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA 428 | |
| THE EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD (TO 1790) 383 • OLD NORTHWEST EUROPEAN MIGRATION (1820–1885) 383 • THE INTERMEDIATE MIGRATION FROM SOUTHERN AND EASTERN EUROPE (1885–1945) 384 • THE POST-WORLD WAR II REFUGEE PERIOD (TO 1968) 384 • THE NEW IMMIGRATION (1968 AND BEYOND) 384 | | Indirect Effects of War | 428 |
| Recent Trends in Immigration to the United States | 385 | INDIRECT EFFECTS ON MILITARY PERSONNEL AND VETERANS 429 • INDIRECT EFFECTS ON CIVILIANS 429 | |
| Urban Concentration of Immigrants | 385 | Weapons of Mass Destruction | 430 |
| Undocumented Illegal Immigrants | 387 | Nuclear Weapons | 430 |
| Modes of Entry into the United States | 387 | Biological Weapons | 431 |
| Illegal Immigration and the Economy | 388 | Terrorism, Global and Domestic | 432 |
| Increased Deportations | 389 | Modern Terrorist Groups | 433 |
| Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival | 389 | Measuring Terrorism | 434 |
| Public Attitudes toward Illegal Immigration | 389 | Terrorism, Religion, and ISIS/ISIL | 436 |
| Social Policy | 390 | Terrorism’s Impact on Society | 438 |
| Immigrants or Refugees? | 391 | Social, Economic, and Political Impacts | 438 |
| Future Prospects | 393 | What Do Americans Believe about Terrorism? | 439 |
| Going Beyond Left And Right | 393 | | |
| Summary 394 | | | |

| | | | |
|--|-----|-----------------------------|-----|
| Sociological Theories about War and Terrorism | 440 | Going Beyond Left and Right | 447 |
| Functionalism | 440 | Summary 448 | |
| Conflict Perspective | 441 | Glossary | 449 |
| INSTITUTIONAL FORCES WITHIN NATIONS 442 • | | References | 453 |
| THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT OF WAR AND PEACE 442 | | Credits | 482 |
| Symbolic Interactionism | 444 | Name Index | 493 |
| Social Policy | 445 | Subject Index | 499 |
| Dealing with Terrorism | 445 | | |
| Future Prospects | 447 | | |

Special Features

A CLOSER LOOK

| | |
|---|-----|
| Disparities in Hispanic Health Care | 38 |
| 9/11 and Schoolchildren | 71 |
| Myths about Poverty in the United States | 176 |
| Driving while Black | 196 |
| A Son or a Daughter? | 231 |
| What a Difference Location Can Make | 303 |
| Disney: The Happiest Place on Earth? | 348 |
| Who's Using the Water? Social Class and Water Usage in California | 412 |
| The Story Behind the Bomb | 431 |

A PERSONAL VIEW

| | |
|---|-----|
| Running Away to My Future | 3 |
| My Experience with Obesity | 53 |
| My Brain Works Differently | 66 |
| "My Dad Is an Alcoholic" | 103 |
| "All I Want Is a Fish" | 172 |
| Everyday Racism | 205 |
| What Does It Take to Be a "Good Father"? | 236 |
| Celebrating My Grandmother's 105th Birthday | 249 |
| "Children? No Thanks." | 290 |
| Learning to Speak SAE | 314 |
| Unemployment Up Close and Personal | 356 |
| Immigrants' Stories | 386 |

A GLOBAL VIEW

| | |
|--|-----|
| World Population: 7.3 Billion and Counting | 24 |
| Fistulas | 32 |
| Anu and Reeta | 135 |
| Adeola's Story | 153 |
| Female Genital Mutilation | 219 |
| HIV Is Not Just a Young Person's Disease | 242 |
| Raising My Children in France | 328 |
| Malala's Story | 375 |
| Is it Too Late to Prevent Climate Change? | 421 |

SLIDE SHOW

| | |
|---|-----|
| Where People Stand on Social Issues | 6 |
| Health Care Needs in Less Developed Countries | 30 |
| Treating Mental Illness | 80 |
| Legalizing Marijuana | 108 |
| Examples of Corporate Crime | 129 |
| Growing Up Poor | 169 |
| Ethnic and Racial Stereotypes | 194 |
| Beauty Ideals for Women | 222 |
| Family Experiences of Older People | 263 |
| What Is a Family? | 277 |
| Education for Girls | 326 |
| A Chinese Sweatshop | 349 |
| Overpopulation | 366 |
| Some Effects of Climate Change | 411 |
| Victims of Terrorism | 437 |

Preface

This fifteenth edition of *Social Problems* appears as you are witnessing enormous turmoil in the Middle East, environmental devastation associated with climate change, continued acts of racism and sexism, growing income inequality, and terrorist acts at home and abroad. In Congress and elsewhere, Republicans warn of an impending debt crisis if public budgets are not cut, while Democrats fear that drastic cuts in spending will curtail the economic recovery and unfairly penalize those in the greatest need of social programs. During the life of this edition, the United States will have a presidential election and a new round of congressional and Senate elections in the states. For many voters these elections will represent a referendum on the Obama administration's wide-reaching healthcare reforms and its policies toward the environment, education, and international affairs to name only a few of the major social policy areas that a national election will test. Does that mean we can expect enormous progress toward solving domestic and global social problems? Not likely, because the problems discussed in this text have been with us for generations and do not admit of easy solutions. But no doubt there will be changes in policy based on trends that we can already determine.

Fortunately, for every major social problem there are groups of people dedicated to seeking a solution. Some of them are experts on particular social problems, like the members of the medical profession who each day confront the tragedies of infectious disease, or the teachers who work hard to educate all students, or the scientists who work to better understand climate change and how worst case scenarios can be avoided. Others are nonprofessionals, often citizens who have decided to devote themselves to doing something about a particular situation or problem. Among these activists are people who have experienced the condition they seek to improve—women who have suffered sexual assault, people who know what it is to be homeless, drug and alcohol abusers who want to help themselves and others, and neighbors confronted with the dumping of toxic wastes. Such groups may include elected officials and other political leaders who are expected to formulate sound social policies to address social problems. This book is written in an effort to make their work more effective and in the hope that some readers will be moved to take up their causes. We dedicate it to the citizens of the world who devote some of their precious time on earth to helping others.

Organization of the Book

The overarching goal of this text is to impart a sociological imagination—what students may initially see as individual issues are actually rooted in the social arrangements of society. Many personal troubles are really social problems, and these require social solutions to be resolved. This fifteenth edition uses four main themes to guide students as they learn to apply the sociological imagination. These themes include (1) using an empirical approach; (2) linking individual experience with social structure; (3) recognizing that social inequality contributes to social problems; and (4) using a comparative approach. Each of these themes are discussed in the opening chapter, revisited throughout the text, and then highlighted again in the concluding chapter.

The first few chapters of this book focus on seemingly individual behaviors, such as health care, drug use and crime. However, students will learn that these issues also have social roots. The social institutions and other factors that affect these behaviors are noted and described, and individual personal experience are clearly linked to structural factors. The middle chapters focus on inequality and discrimination, discussing such topics as poverty, racism, sexism, and ageism. Every attempt has been made to indicate the effects of discrimination on individuals, as well as to deal with the concept of institutionalized inequalities. Later chapters discuss problems that are common to many societies, such as those related to family life and work. The final chapters—on population and immigration, environmental pollution, and war and terrorism—focus on matters of great global significance. An attempt has been made throughout the text to identify how the different problems overlap and are interrelated.

Pedagogical Devices

Social Problems has been designed to be as helpful as possible to both students and teachers. Each problem is discussed in a well-organized and clear manner with personal vignettes and current examples. The treatment of each problem is analytical as well as descriptive and includes the most up-to-date examples and research findings available.

Each chapter begins with learning objectives and a personal opening vignette designed to grab student interest. Important terms within the chapter are boldfaced and listed at the end of the chapter, and their definitions are

included in the glossary at the end of the book. In addition, boxed discussions in each chapter deal with current controversies or interesting solutions. In boxes, *A Personal View*, topics are first-person accounts, and include such topics as personal experiences with racism, illegal immigration, sex trafficking, poverty, fatherhood, and unemployment. Boxes entitled *A Closer Look* examine a problem that has been in the recent public spotlight, such as racial profiling, the outsourcing of jobs, or poverty, and show how controversies over the problem are addressed by research. Many chapters also include a box, entitled *A Global View*, that discusses a particular social problem from a global perspective, such as maternal and child health, female genital mutilation, or education in less developed countries.

In keeping with the book's effort to explore different solutions to social problems, there is a section at the end of each chapter called *Going Beyond Left and Right*. Its purpose is to help students think critically about the partisan debates over the problems discussed in the chapter they have just read.

Changes in the Fifteenth Edition

REVEL™

Educational technology designed for the way today's students read, think, and learn

When students are engaged deeply, they learn more effectively and perform better in their courses. This simple fact inspired the creation of REVEL: an immersive learning experience designed for the way today's students read, think, and learn. Built in collaboration with educators and students nationwide, REVEL is the newest, fully digital way to deliver respected Pearson content.

REVEL enlivens course content with media interactives and assessments—integrated directly within the authors' narrative—that provide opportunities for students to read about and practice course material in tandem. This immersive educational technology boosts student engagement, which leads to better understanding of concepts and improved performance throughout the course.

Learn more about REVEL

www.pearsonhighered.com/revel/

The fifteenth edition of *Social Problems* has taken on a new co-author, Karen Seccombe, who brings a fresh perspective to an already solid text. Each chapter has been extensively

revised with chapter objectives and current examples that resonate with students, such as the legalization of same-sex marriage, sexual assault among college students, excessive police force against unarmed Blacks, climate change, and terrorism. Throughout the text, greater emphasis is given to signature concepts such as gender, race, class, human rights, and globalization, reflecting the addition of new co-author Karen Seccombe.

The reception given to previous editions of *Social Problems* by both colleagues and students has been encouraging, and many of their suggestions and criticisms have been incorporated in this most recent revision. This fifteenth edition is both comprehensive and up-to-date. Our aim has been to retain the book's emphasis on the sociological analysis of social problems, as well as the policies designed to alleviate or eliminate them. Although policies change continually, we have attempted to update the discussions of policy to reflect the most recent thinking about solutions to social problems, using the most current data available.

- **Chapter 1**, Sociological Perspectives on Social Problems, introduces four main themes that run throughout the text to enhance students' sociological imagination: (1) Using an Empirical Approach; (2) Linking Individual Experience with Social Structure; (3) Recognizing That Social Inequality Contributes to Social Problems; and (4) Using a Comparative Approach. Our primary goal is to encourage students to think sociologically about the complex world around them, rather than to simply memorize a collection of random facts.
- **Chapter 2**, Problems of Health and Health Care, has been significantly expanded to examine the inequities and high cost of health care, which are important concerns that led to the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). This historical legislation is discussed in depth. This chapter also contains expanded coverage of international health issues. New material has been added on the cultural and demographic factors affecting health and health care, such as obesity, smoking, and an aging population.
- **Chapter 3**, Problems with Mental Illness and Treatment, covers important issues related to mental illness and its treatment. This chapter is unique among social problem texts. This edition contains expanded coverage of suicide in the United States and worldwide. The chapter also contains new information on PTSD of military personnel, homelessness among those with mental illness, and current issues surrounding deinstitutionalization.
- **Chapter 4**, Alcohol and Other Drugs, contains several new features. First, it more thoroughly discusses alcohol and drug use among groups within the population. It also provides a detailed description of each

of the more well-used substances. It elaborates on the social problems associated with alcohol and drug use, such as health issues, crime, and the consequences of driving while impaired. The chapter also contains a new section on the effects of alcohol on families, including codependency, enabling behaviors, and roles that children often adopt to cope with their parents alcohol use.

- **Chapter 5**, Crime and Violence, contains the most up-to-date statistics from the FBI and other national data sources. It also has expanded coverage of hate crimes and contains a new section on gender-based violence. Included is a policy discussion of gun control.
- **Chapter 6**, Poverty Amid Affluence, expands the discussion of the causes and consequences of poverty for both children and adults. Issues related to nutrition and food insecurity, inadequate housing, and health and well-being have added. The chapter now contains a more thorough discussion of welfare programs.
- **Chapter 7**, Race and Racism, provides recent data to demonstrate the changing racial composition of the United States. Recent research findings and current examples show that racism continues to persist. Content on institutional discrimination includes new information on education, income, housing, and the criminal justice system, including the death penalty.
- **Chapter 8**, Sex and Gender, focuses on sexism, male hegemony, and inequality internationally and in the United States. New to this edition is extensive coverage of female genital mutilation, sexist standards of beauty for women, sexual assault, and women's labor force experiences. A policy discussion of the Women's Movement has also been included.
- **Chapter 9**, An Aging Society, examines the structural and individual-level changes that accompany an aging population. Along with the most up-to-date statistics, the chapter contains new coverage of family issues, same-sex elders, long-term care, and death with dignity. This chapter also contains important international data on aging.
- **Chapter 10**, Changing Families, has been significantly revamped to identify the changing norms in marriage and intimate relationships, such as delayed marriage, the rise in cohabitation, the legalization of same-sex marriage, and the division of household labor. Also new to the text is a comparison of conservative, liberal, and feminist reactions to these changes. The chapter also reviews two critical issues in considerable depth: violence (among intimates and child abuse), and divorce.
- **Chapter 11**, Problems of Education, contains new data throughout, and a heightened discussion of differences in education across racial and ethnic groups and the unique barriers that groups face. The chapter also contains new international comparisons in educational achievement. Current challenges in providing high quality education to all students receive greater focus, including early childhood education.
- **Chapter 12**, Problems of Work and the Economy, contains several new or heightened discussions, including Americans' views of the economy and recession, global markets and sweatshops, and the effects of the changing economy on American workers, such as the growth in contingent jobs, the erosion of the purchasing power of the minimum wage, and the movement to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.
- **Chapter 13**, Population and Immigration, contains recent data on worldwide population trends. The chapter contains new information on rising expectations around the world and the realities of factors such as literacy, energy use, and food distribution and hunger. New information has been added on government population control efforts, comparing and contrasting China with Japan. Coverage of immigration has been expanded significantly, including a policy discussion of child immigrants from Central America fleeing gang violence.
- **Chapter 14**, Technology and the Environment, has been substantially updated. There is expanded coverage of environmental stress, including climate change, air pollution, water pollution, solid waste, and toxic wastes. Environmental racism is discussed. The latest scientific evidence is presented in a clear fashion, readily accessible to students.
- **Chapter 15**, Summing Up the Sociological Imagination: War and Global Insecurity, reviews the four themes of the text in the context of war and terrorism. This chapter has been revised given the state of the world in late 2015 as the book goes to press. Well-known recent terrorist attacks in the United States and abroad are discussed, and students are introduced to the major current terrorist groups. These issues are used to highlight the importance of the sociological imagination. While war is experienced on a personal level, it is also a social problem requiring large-scale social solutions.

Throughout the text, statistical material, figures, and tables have been updated, content is current, and recent research has been cited throughout. The *Social Policy* sections incorporate recent cutting-edge programs and proposals. Timely feature boxes have been included designed to enhance student interest.

Supplements

Instructors and students who use this textbook have access to a number of materials designed to complement the classroom lectures and activities and to enhance the students' learning experience. The following supplements can be downloaded by adopters from the Pearson Instructor Resource Center at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc.

Instructor's Manual Each chapter in the instructor's manual includes the following resources: learning objectives, lecture outline and suggestions, discussion questions, and class exercises. The instructor's manual is available for download at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc.

Test Bank The test bank includes multiple-choice and essay questions that focus on basic comprehension, and understanding and applying concepts. It is available for download at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc and in MyTest for generating tests electronically.

MyTest This computerized software allows instructors to create their own personalized exams, to edit any or all of the existing test questions, and to add new questions. Other special features of this program include random generation of test questions, creation of alternate versions of the same test, scrambling question sequence, and test preview before printing. For easy access, this software is available for download at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc.

PowerPoint Presentations The PowerPoint presentations are informed by instructional and design theory. The Lecture PowerPoint slides follow the chapter outline and learning objectives. Images from the textbook are also integrated within the slides. The PowerPoints are uniquely designed to present concepts in a clear and succinct manner. They are available for download at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc.

Acknowledgments

Revising and updating a social problems textbook is a formidable task, and new author Karen Seccombe learned a great deal in the process. Social Problems is a broad field with many critical issues that change rapidly. This edition has benefited from the reviews of many sociologists, all of whom have contributed useful comments and suggestions:

Donna Abrams, Georgia Gwinnette College
 Tammie Foltz, Des Moines Area Community College
 Laura Hansen, Western New England University
 Kendra Murphey, University of Memphis
 Ken Rudolph, Asheville-Buncombe Technical
 Community College
 Patricia Sawyer, University of Bridgeport
 Aleesa Young, Asheville-Buncombe Technical
 Community College

Many thanks are due to the keen publishing specialists who contributed their talents and energy to this edition. Mary Gawlik worked tirelessly as the developmental editor to ensure that this text was organized and expressed ideas with fluidity. The staff at Pearson—Rob DeGeorge, Program Manager, Lynne Breitfeller, Project Manager, Laura Hernandez, Editorial Assistant.

Finally, because a book is never a solo venture, it's important to acknowledge the assistance of Portland State University, and my friends and colleagues who offered support along the way, including those in the community of Friday Harbor, Washington. In particular, Richard, Natalie, Olivia, Bart, and Stella Meenan—my pack—have my eternal gratitude.

About the Author of Social Problems, Fifteenth Edition

Karen Seccombe is a Professor at Portland State University, in Portland, Oregon. A proud community college graduate, she received the mentoring and support to continue her education in sociology and social work. She earned her PhD at Washington State University, in Pullman. Karen is the author of several books, including, *So You Think I Drive a Cadillac?*; *Families and Their Social Worlds*; *Exploring Marriages and Families*; *Families in Poverty*; and *Just Don't Get Sick*. Her work focuses on the health and well-being of poor and vulnerable families. She is a Fellow in the

National Council on Family Relationships, and is active in the American Sociological Association and in the Pacific Sociological Association. She is a Fulbright Scholar, and taught in Hangzhou, China. Karen is married to Richard Meenan, a health economist, and has two children, Natalie and Olivia, and two Australian Shepherds, Bart and Stella. She enjoys hiking, cycling, and relaxing with her pack in the San Juan islands off the coast of Washington. She enjoys hearing from students and faculty, so please send any comments her way: seccombe@pdx.edu

Chapter 1

Sociological Perspectives on Social Problems



Learning Objectives

- 1.1 Explain the sociological imagination.
- 1.2 Discuss the definition of a social problem.
- 1.3 Compare and contrast the three main sociological perspectives on social problems.
- 1.4 Describe the process that reveals the natural history of social problems.
- 1.5 Review the four themes of the text.
- 1.6 Assess the social policy debates between conservatives and liberals.

Eleven-year-old Meghan sat wide-eyed in front of the television with her parents, watching the devastation in Nepal unfold after the 2015 major earthquake that rocked the region. She learned that thousands of people had been killed, and many more were injured, homeless, hungry, and without fresh water. She felt sad that so many people were suffering, and she wanted to help. "But what can one person do?", she thought. Almost embarrassed by the size of the contribution she had in mind, she turned to her mother and said, "Can we send my allowance to them?" Natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, droughts, and heat waves are usually not what we think of when someone is talking about "social problems." Yet natural disasters like these can be caused or exacerbated by broader structural problems in society. Poverty, social inequality, political corruption, racism, or environmental degradation can be a factor in natural disasters and can contribute to the untold suffering of millions in the aftermath. For example, patterns and the speed of emergency food and water distribution, medical supplies, and tents for makeshift housing are often related to these types of social problems. Yet, as big as these problems are, it is a combination of big and small efforts that can make a profound difference in the world, be it the devastating earthquake in Nepal, or the unforgiving drought in California.

Record droughts in California, the Ebola outbreaks in western Africa, unarmed blacks being killed by police officers, sexual assaults on college campuses, Islamic terrorists, record social inequality, continued discrimination, and millions of Americans without health insurance. In such difficult times, Americans may rightly wonder whether we are capable of successfully addressing our most severe problems, let alone the world's. This question is one that will arise in specific ways in this book's chapters, but you will also see that there is little to be gained by giving in to failure. The history of efforts to address issues of environmental degradation, health problems, crime, racism and sexism, terrorism, poverty, and access to health care presents many bright spots and evidence that the more everyone understands the problems and the more citizens become engaged in seeking solutions, the more successfully society will address social problems.

The United States and other Western nations are experiencing more conflict about how to address social problems than was true in the decades after World War II. For a few decades after the devastation and collective sacrifices of World War II, there was far more consensus that government should play an important role in providing a "social safety net" for society's members who lacked the means to provide an adequate level of living for themselves and their children. Today, there is widespread debate about public versus private responsibility for addressing issues such as poverty, ill health, and environmental degradation. The ongoing "culture wars," as today's political ideological divisions and debates are often called, make it far more difficult for people to arrive at a broad consensus about which social policies and programs are most effective for dealing with major social problems. No doubt there will be many instances in which readers of this text will want to argue strongly for one set of policies versus another, and doing so is perfectly legitimate and desirable. This text utilizes a social-scientific approach to these problems, which can lead to progress in understanding their causes and arriving at policies to address them. As part of this strategy, every chapter in this book ends with a discussion of how social policies at different levels of government and in the private sector can address specific social problems.

The Sociological Imagination

1.1 Explain the sociological imagination.

We live in a world of more than 7.3 billion people, and we share a society with hundreds of millions. Despite the hugeness of humanity, most people think of themselves as unique individuals and as having distinctive experiences like no other. However, many of their personal experiences are not unique or exceptional. Instead, they are patterned and are shaped by **social structure**, which is the organized arrangements of relationships and institutions that together form the basis of society. For example, how has your sex influenced your life experience? Has being male or being female

social structure

The organized arrangements of relationships and institutions that together form the basis of society.

influenced your choice of a college major or your hobbies, interests, and relationships? Has your sex influenced your willingness to take drugs, commit crime, or enlist in the army and go to war? Has it influenced whether you have been sexually assaulted or battered by a partner? Perhaps another way of framing this question is how would your life be different if you were the “opposite sex”? In other words, there is a relatively organized set of arrangements associated with your sex.

Taking another example, how has your family affected you? You may have grown up with one parent, two parents, or with no parents at all. How did your family arrangement affect your financial well-being, your social capital, and overall opportunities? If your mother used drugs or alcohol, if your father was in jail, or if an uncle sexually abused you, how do you think those experiences may have affected your life? Families are a primary social institution in all societies and have a profound influence

A Personal View

Running Away to My Future

Jody is a vibrant 27-year-old single mother who has a bright future ahead of her after a rocky start in life. She was awarded a \$7,500 annual scholarship that will help her to attend a four-year university next fall. The scholarship award committee noted “her steadfast determination and her potential to make a difference.” These words are an apt description.

Jody was born to a single-mother who was poor and addicted to drugs. As a young child, Jody bounced from one home to another, often sleeping on the couch of her mother’s latest boyfriend. Nourishing food was scarce, and Jody often went to school hungry. Her mother failed to fill out the forms for the school lunch program, but the school staff could see that Jody was hungry in the morning and let her eat breakfast with the other students who needed it. After school, Jody usually went home to an empty house, left on her own to do homework and make dinner.

Jody loved school, and diligently did her homework every day. School was her refuge. Because she excelled at school, was rarely absent or tardy, and completed her homework, the school assumed that Jody’s home life was fine.

As the years went by, Jody did her best to hide the consequences of her family’s poverty. She shopped for clothes at the Goodwill when she had a little extra money, and hunted for stylish clothes that would not reveal her secret. But one night her mother’s latest live-in boyfriend crawled into bed with Jody, who was by then a budding 16-year-old girl, and tried to sexually assault her. Jody screamed, hit him, and ran out of the room, stumbling over her passed-out mother in the living room. Jody vowed to never go back home as long as he was living there. When she confronted her mother the next day, her mother insisted that the boyfriend was staying, and it was Jody who could leave.

Jody took some of her mother’s drug money, which amounted to a few hundred dollars, a few clothes, and ran away. With her money, she bought a sleeping bag and supplies to camp out under a bridge with other homeless people. She got a job at a fast-food restaurant making minimum wage. All the while, she continued to go to school, cleaning herself

up and washing her hair in the restroom at work. Despite her hardship, she graduated from high school with a B average.

Community college was her next step, but by this time, the stress of homelessness, a dead-end job, and schoolwork were taking their toll. She suffered from depression, which caused her to make a number of risky choices. She became pregnant. The father did not stick around, and the thought of raising a child in her circumstances depressed her even more. Jody decided to give the baby up for adoption. She cried for weeks before and after her decision, but knew in her heart it was the right thing to do. However, by this time, Jody was severely depressed, had dropped out of school, lost her job, and was begging on the street. She lived this way for several years, begging and earning just enough to buy food. Begging meant giving up her pride, but she said that part of living in poverty is blocking out how others might judge you.

By the time Jody was 22, she became pregnant a second time. However, on this occasion, she was determined to keep her baby and do whatever it would take to provide a good home. She sought out social service agencies and asked them for help. A counselor located low-income housing, arranged for medical care so Jody could get the depression medicine she needed, set her up with a part-time job, and helped her enroll back into community college. Jody began to flourish. She loved being a mother and felt that her son gave her life true meaning. She graduated from her community college with honors, and at the advice of the college’s financial aid office, applied and received a scholarship to complete her degree. As she says it, “When I left home at 16, I had no idea that I was running away to my future. With the help that others have offered, I can do this.”

Critical Thinking

Using a sociological imagination, how were Jody’s choices and constraints shaped by larger social forces? Why do most people consider poverty a social problem rather than simply a personal experience of a few people like Jody?

on personal experiences. The box A Personal View—Running Away to My Future offers an example of the ways in which early family life can shape adulthood.

Using a sociological imagination reveals general patterns in what otherwise might be thought of as simple random events. C. Wright Mills stressed the importance of understanding the relationship between individuals and the society in which they live (Mills, 1959). Problems such as poverty, divorce, substance abuse, crime, and child abuse are more than just personal troubles experienced by a few people. They are issues that affect large numbers of people and originate in society's institutional arrangements. In other words, individual experiences are linked to the social structure.

Peter Berger elaborated on these ideas in his 1963 book *Invitation to Sociology*. Although we like to think of ourselves as individuals, much of our behavior (and others' behavior toward us) is actually patterned on the basis of what social categories we fall into, such as age, income, race, ethnicity, sex, and physical appearance. For example, men and women behave differently for reasons that often have nothing to do with biology. Many of these patterns are socially produced. In other words, boys and girls, men and women, are each taught and encouraged to think of themselves differently from one another and to behave in different ways. Society lends a hand in shaping people's lives. Why are over 85 percent of students in bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) programs female (National League for Nursing, 2015)? This demographic fact is obviously not the result of some biological imperative, some quirk of the occupation itself, or some random event. Rather, society even has a hand in shaping something as seemingly personal and individual as the choice of a college major.

Émile Durkheim (1897) conducted an early study on the subject of suicide, documenting how social structure affects human behavior. At first glance, what could be more private and individualized than the reasons that surround a person's decision to take his or her own life? The loss of a loving relationship, job troubles, financial worries, and low self-esteem are just a few of the many reasons that a person may have for suicide. Yet looking through official records and death certificates, Durkheim noted that suicide was not a completely random event and that there were several important patterns worthy of attention. He found that men were more likely to kill themselves than were women. He noted that Protestants were more likely to take their lives than were Catholics and Jews. He found that wealthy people were more likely to commit suicide than were the poor. Finally, it appeared that unmarried people were more likely to kill themselves than were married people.

Although his study was conducted over 100 years ago, recent research indicates that these patterns persist. Suicide today is a major social problem, with about 40,000 individuals taking their lives each year. It is the tenth leading cause of death for all Americans, and the second leading cause for youths ages 15 to 24 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014).

The sociological imagination draws attention to the fact that seemingly private issues are often public ones (Mills, 1959). Moreover, when these issues affect the quality of life for a large number of people, they are called social problems.

What is a Social Problem?

1.2 Discuss the definition of a social problem.

When enough people in a society agree that a condition exists that threatens the quality of their lives and their most cherished values, *and* they agree that something should be done to remedy that condition, sociologists say that the society has defined that condition as a **social problem**. In other words, the society's members have reached a consensus that a condition that affects some people is a problem for the entire society, not just for those who are directly affected. Figure 1–1 illustrates trends in the issues considered to be the five top social problems between 2001 and 2014: the economy, unemployment, the government, health care, and immigration (Saul, 2015).

What Do You Think?

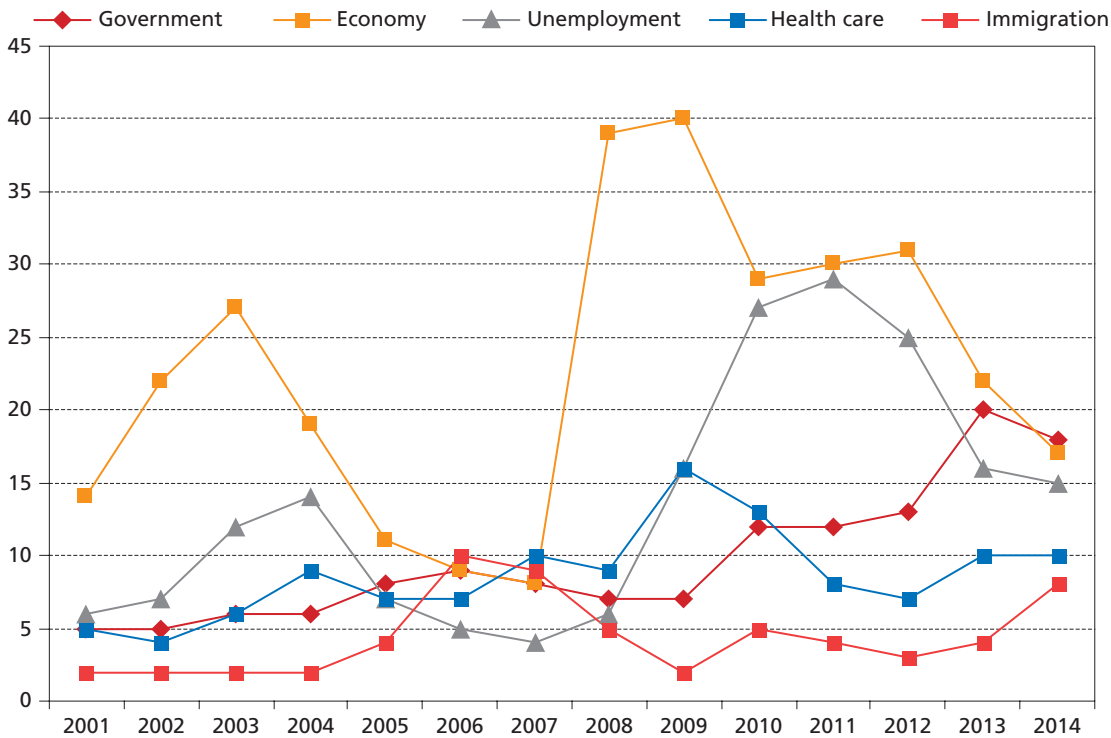
Evaluate your social class standing when you were a child. For example, did your parent(s) go to college? Did your parent(s) have a steady job? What type of house did you grow up in? Now describe how this social class standing has influenced your lifestyle and choices today.

social problem

Widespread agreement that a condition threatens the quality of life and cherished values and that something should be done to remedy that condition.

Figure 1-1 Most Important Problems Facing the United States by Percentage, 2001–2014

SOURCE: Saul, 2015.



You will see, however, that for every social problem, arguments arise about the nature of the problem, its severity, and the best remedies—laws, social programs, or other policies—to address it. There must be enough consensus among people in a society that a problem exists for action to take place, but consensus on a problem does not indicate consensus on the solution. For example, most Americans are concerned about crime, but what to do about it is wide open to discussion. Some people favor mandatory sentencing for specific crimes, while others feel that a judge or jury should have some discretion. Some people support the death penalty for heinous crimes, while others oppose the death penalty and believe that life in prison without parole is the most appropriate punishment. Moreover, this text will also show that not all people have an equal ability to define social problems and to propose remedies; those with power often have more say in the matter.

Social problems are often closely interrelated. Crime, poverty, lack of medical care, violence, drug abuse, environmental degradation, and many other behaviors or situations that we commonly think of as social problems rarely exist in isolation. And for any one of the problems just named or others we could cite, the causes, responsibilities, and solutions are vigorously debated. Are we responsible, some ask, for the sins of others? For example, are not many people poor because they choose to drop out of school or have a baby before they were financially prepared to do so? Or are many people poor because of the erosion of the purchasing power of the minimum wage and social conditions like racism and sexism? These and similar arguments assert not only the causes of social problems but also what should be done about them. People may agree that certain conditions are social problems. Most members of society agree that these conditions ought to be remedied through intentional action. However, people disagree about, and politicize, what the causes are and what the precise intentional action should be.

For example, many Americans are appalled at the level of gun violence in their nation, but many others are equally appalled at the prospect of more government restrictions on their freedom to buy and use guns as they wish. Clearly, recognition

Slide Show

Where People Stand on Social Issues

Surveys based on representative samples of adults in the United States provide an important gauge of where people stand on social issues. A recent Gallup Poll survey reports

that the top social problems in American society today are considered to be the economy, unemployment, the government, health care, and immigration. This slide show takes a look at these issues, with data provided by the Pew Research Center (June 2014) and Realty Trac (2015).



When housing prices began to tumble in the height of the recession, many people found that they owed more on their house than it was worth. Some people could no longer afford to make the payments and their house went into foreclosure. Although the economy has improved considerably since then, economic issues are still considered the top social problem. In May 2015—just one month—there were over 120,000 new foreclosure filings.



A national sample of adults ranked government third in a list of social problems. The majority of both conservatives and liberals say that they often or always do not trust the federal government, and that they feel angry toward it. The level of agreement is striking, given that these two groups see the role of government very differently.



Immigration is also ranked by Americans as a pressing social problem. However, the exact nature of the problem and what to do about it are not clear-cut. For example, the majority of Americans say that immigration actually strengthens our country through immigrants' hard work and talent. And most Americans believe that immigrants who live in the United States illegally should be eligible for citizenship if certain requirements are met.



Unemployment is more than a personal problem. At the height of the recession, when the national unemployment rate was over 10 percent, the federal government extended the amount of weeks a person could collect unemployment. That policy reflected the idea that unemployment is a social problem, not simply an individual issue.



Many Americans are concerned about health care. They see rapidly escalating costs and worry about a lack of access as fewer employers offer health insurance as a fringe benefit. The Affordable Care Act was created during President Obama's administration to decrease these problems and has met with some success. However, political backlash was swift, and today many people still oppose the Affordable Care Act.

Critical Thinking

Why do you think that these five social problems were rated as the most significant? What changes would you make in this list, and why?

that a social problem exists is far different from arriving at a consensus about a cause and a solution to the problem.

For better or worse, even in mature democracies like those of the United States and Europe, more powerful people have far greater influence in defining social problems than average citizens do. Rupert Murdoch, for example, is an Australian-born businessman who owns television and newspaper companies not only in the United States and Great Britain but also throughout the world. His media empire includes the Fox network and many others that adhere to his personal editorial views, which are strongly opposed to government intervention in the battle against poverty and lack of health care and very much in favor of a strong role for government in combating crime and pursuing the global “war” on terrorism.

The importance of power in the definition of social problems becomes clear if you consider one or two examples. In China, before the Communist revolution of the mid-twentieth century, opium use and addiction were widespread. In Shanghai alone, there were an estimated 400,000 opium addicts in the late 1940s. Everyone knew that the condition existed, and many responsible public figures deplored it, but few outside the revolutionary parties believed society should intervene in any way. After all, many of the country’s richest and most powerful members had made their fortunes in the opium trade. However, the Chinese Communists believed society should take responsibility for eradicating opium addiction, and when they took power, they did so often through drastic and violent means. What had previously been seen as a social condition had been redefined as a social problem that had to be solved.

To take an example from our own society, before 1920, women in the United States did not have the right to vote. Many women objected to this condition, but most men and many women valued the traditional pattern of male dominance and female subservience. To them, there was nothing unusual about women’s status as second-class citizens. It took many years of painstaking organization, persuasion, and demonstration by the leaders of the women’s suffrage movement to convince significant numbers of Americans that women’s lack of voting rights was a problem that society should remedy through revision of its laws. You will see later in the book, especially in Chapter 8, that many of the conditions affecting women’s lives continue to be viewed by some members of society as natural and inevitable and by others as problems that require action by society as a whole.

It is worth noting that the idea that a society should intervene to remedy conditions that affect the lives of its citizens is a fairly recent innovation. Until the eighteenth century, for example, most people worked at exhausting tasks under poor conditions for long hours; they suffered from severe deprivation all their lives, and they often died young, sometimes of terrible diseases. But no one thought of these things as problems to be solved. They were accepted as natural, inevitable conditions of life. It was not until the so-called “enlightenment” of the late eighteenth century that philosophers began to argue that poverty is not inevitable, but a result of an unjust social system. As such, changing the system itself through means such as redistribution of wealth and elimination of inherited social status could alleviate many problems.

Sociological Perspectives on Social Problems

1.3 Compare and contrast the three main sociological perspectives on social problems.

Everyone has opinions about the causes of social problems and what should be done about them. In addition to Sociology, other disciplines in the social sciences are concerned with the analysis of human behavior, and sociologists often draw on the results

Table 1–1 Other Approaches to the Study of Social Problems**History**

History is the study of the past. However, historical data can be used by sociologists to understand present social problems. In studying homelessness, for example, historians would focus on changes in how people obtained shelter in a society and what groups or individuals tended to be without shelter in different historical periods.

Cultural Anthropology

Cultural anthropologists study the social organization and development of smaller, nonindustrial societies, both past and present. Because cultural anthropology is closely related to sociology, many of the same techniques can be used in both fields, and the findings of cultural anthropologists regarding primitive and traditional cultures shed light on related phenomena in more complex, modern societies. An anthropological study of homelessness would look closely at one or a few groups of homeless people. The anthropologist might be interested in how the homeless and others in their communities understand their situation and what might be done about it.

Psychology and Social Psychology

Psychology focuses on human mental and emotional processes, primarily on individual experience. Rooted in biology, it is more experimental than the other social sciences. An understanding of the psychological pressures that underlie individual responses can illuminate social attitudes and behavior. Thus, a psychologist would tend to study the influences of homelessness on the individual's state of mind or, conversely, how the individual's personality and ways of looking at life might have contributed to his or her situation.

Social psychology involves the study of how psychological processes, behavior, and personalities of individuals influence or are influenced by social processes and social settings. It is of particular value for the study of social problems. A social psychologist would be likely to study how life on the streets damages the individual in various ways.

Economics

Economists study the levels of income in a society and the distribution of income among the society's members. To understand how the resources of society—its people and their talents, its land and other natural resources—can be allocated for the maximum benefit of that society, economists also study the relationship between the supply of resources and the demand for them. Confronted with the problem of homelessness, an economist would tend to study how the supply of and demand for different types of housing influence the number of homeless people in a given housing market.

Political Science

Political scientists study the workings of government at every level of society. As Harold Lasswell (1941), a leading American political scientist, put it, "Politics is the study of who gets what, when, and how." A political scientist, therefore, would be likely to see homelessness as a problem that results from the relative powerlessness of the homeless to influence the larger society to respond to their needs. The political scientist would tend to focus on ways in which the homeless could mobilize other political interest groups to urge legislators to deal with the problem.

of their research. The work of historians, for example, is vital to an understanding of the origins of many social problems. Anthropologists look at other societies and offer contrasting views of how humans have learned to cope with various kinds of social problems. Perhaps the greatest overlap is between sociology and political science, both of which are concerned with the development of social policies to curb social problems. Other social-scientific approaches to the study of social problems are described in Table 1–1.

Contemporary sociology is founded on three basic perspectives, or sets of ideas, that offer theories about why societies hang together and how and why they change. These perspectives are not the only sociological approaches to social problems, but they can be extremely powerful tools for understanding them. Each of these perspectives—functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism—gives rise to a number of useful and distinctive approaches to the study of social problems, as identified in Table 1–2. The following sections explore these three approaches, using criminal deviance as an example to show the unique contributions of each perspective.

The Functionalist Perspective

From the day a person is born until the day that person dies, he or she holds a position—a **status**—in a variety of groups and organizations. In a hospital, for example, the patient, the nurse, the doctor, and the orderly are all members of a social group concerned with health care. Each of these individuals has a status that requires the

status

A social position.

Table 1–2 Major Sociological Perspectives on Social Problems

| Perspective | View of Society and Social Problems | Origins of Social Problems | Proposed Solutions |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Functionalist | Views society as a vast organism whose parts are interrelated; social problems are disruptions of this system. Also holds that problems of social institutions produce patterns of deviance and that institutions must address such patterns through strategic social change. | Social expectations fail, creating normlessness, culture conflict, and breakdown. Social problems also result from the impersonal operations of existing institutions, both now and in the past. | Engage in research and active intervention to improve social institutions. Create new organizations to address social problems. |
| Conflict | Views society as marked by conflicts due to inequalities in class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, and other divisions that produce conflicting values. Defines social problems as conditions that do not conform to society's values. | Groups with different values and differing amounts of power meet and compete. | Build stronger social movements among groups with grievances. The conflicting groups may then engage in negotiations and reach mutual accommodations. |
| Symbolic Interactionist | Holds that definitions of deviance or social problems are subjective; separates deviant and nondeviant people not by what they do but by how society reacts to what they do. | Society becomes aware that certain behaviors exist and labels them as social problems. | Resocializes deviants by increasing their contacts with accepted patterns of behavior; makes the social system less rigid. Changes the definition of what is considered deviant. |

performance of a certain set of behaviors, known as a **role**. Taken together, the statuses and roles of the members of this medical team and other teams in hospitals throughout the country make up the social institution known as the health care system. An **institution** is a more or less stable structure of statuses and roles devoted to meeting the basic needs of people in a society. The health care system is an institution; hospitals, insurance companies, and private medical practices are examples of organizations within this institution.

The **functionalist perspective** looks at the way major social institutions like the family, the military, the health care system, and the police and courts actually operate. According to this perspective, the role behavior associated with any given status has evolved as a means of allowing a particular social institution to fulfill its function in society. Thus, the nurse's role requires specific knowledge and behaviors that involve treatment of the patient's immediate needs and administration of care according to the doctor's orders. The patient, in turn, is expected to cooperate in the administration of the treatment. When all members of the group perform their roles correctly, the group is said to be functioning well.

In a well-functioning group, there is general agreement about how roles are to be performed by each member. These expectations are reinforced by the society's basic values, from which are derived rules about how people should and should not behave toward one another in different situations. The Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, the Bill of Rights, and the teachings of all of the world's religions are examples of sets of rules that specify how people should behave in different social roles.

But if a society is made up of groups in which people know their roles and adhere to the underlying values, why does that society have social problems like crime and warfare, and why does it seem so difficult to make social organizations function effectively? From the functionalist perspective, the main reason for the existence of social problems is that societies are always changing and having to adapt to new conditions; failure to adapt successfully leads to social problems.

The French social theorist Émile Durkheim observed that changes in a society can drastically alter the goals and functions of human groups and organizations. As a society undergoes a major change—say, from agricultural to industrial production—the statuses people assume and the roles they play also change, with far-reaching consequences. Thus, for example, the tendency for men and women from rural backgrounds

role

The performance of a certain set of behaviors that go with a status.

institution

A more or less stable structure of statuses and roles devoted to meeting the basic needs of people in a society, for example, the health care system.

functionalist perspective

A way of thinking that considers the way major social institutions such as the family, the military, the health care system, and the police and courts actually operate.