Brief Contents

Preface xi
Acknowledgments xviii

1 Studying Social Problems in the Twenty-First Century 1

2 Wealth and Poverty: U.S. and Global Economic Inequities 18

3 Racial and Ethnic Inequality 37

4 Gender Inequality 57

5 Inequality Based on Age 78

6 Inequality Based on Sexual Orientation 95

7 Prostitution, Pornography, and Sex Trafficking 113

8 Alcohol and Other Drugs 130

9 Crime and Criminal Justice 151

10 Health Care: Problems of Physical and Mental Illness 173

11 The Changing Family 192

12 Problems in Education 214

13 Problems in Politics and the Global Economy 234

14 Problems in the Media 254

15 Population, Global Inequality, and the Environmental Crisis 269

16 Urban Problems 290

17 Global Social Problems: War and Terrorism 307

18 Can Social Problems Be Solved? 323

Glossary 336
References 341
Name Index 358
Subject Index 360
## Contents

Preface xi
Acknowledgments xviii

1 Studying Social Problems in the Twenty-First Century 1
Using Sociological Insights to Study Social Problems 2
What Is a Social Problem? 2
The Sociological Imagination: Bringing Together the Personal and the Social 4
Box 1.1: Social Problems and Social Policy 5
Do We Have a Problem? Subjective Awareness and Objective Reality 6
Box 1.2: Social Media and Social Problems 6
Using Social Theory to Analyze Social Problems 7
The Functionalist Perspective 7
MANIFEST AND LATENT FUNCTIONS • DYSFUNCTIONS AND SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION • APPLYING THE FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE TO PROBLEMS OF VIOLENCE 8
The Conflict Perspective 9
APPLYING THE CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE TO PROBLEMS OF VIOLENCE 10
The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective 10
LABELING THEORY AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY • APPLYING SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST PERSPECTIVES TO PROBLEMS OF VIOLENCE 11
Using Social Research Methods to Study Social Problems 12
Field Research 12
Survey Research 12
Secondary Analysis of Existing Data 13
Is There a Solution to a Problem Such as Gun Violence? 13
Functionalist/Conservative Solutions 14
Conflict/Liberal Solutions 14
Symbolic Interactionist Solutions 15
Critique of Our Efforts to Find Solutions 15
Summary 16 • Key Terms 16 • Questions for Critical Thinking 17

2 Wealth and Poverty: U.S. and Global Economic Inequities 18
Wealth and Poverty in Global Perspective 19
Box 2.1: Social Problems in Global Perspective 21
Analyzing U.S. Class Inequality 22
Wealth Versus Income Inequality 23
Divisions in the U.S. Class Structure 24
Poverty in the United States 25
The Poverty Line 25
Box 2.2: Social Problems and Statistics 25
Who Are the Poor? 26
AGE, GENDER, HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION, AND POVERTY • RACE, ETHNICITY, AND POVERTY 27
Consequences of Poverty 28
HEALTH AND NUTRITION • HOUSING • EDUCATION 29
Social Welfare in the United States 30
Box 2.3: Social Media and Social Problems 31
Explanations for Poverty 31
Is There a Solution to Poverty? 32
Functionalist/Conservative Solutions to the Problem of Poverty 32
Conflict/Liberal Solutions to the Problem of Poverty 33
Symbolic Interactionist Solutions to the Problem of Poverty 33
Summary 34 • Key Terms 36 • Questions for Critical Thinking 36

3 Racial and Ethnic Inequality 37
Racial and Ethnic Inequality as a Social Problem 38
What Are Race and Ethnicity? 38
“Official” Racial and Ethnic Classifications 40
Dominant and Subordinate Groups 40
Racism, Prejudice, and Discrimination 40
Box 3.1: Social Problems in Global Perspective 41
Perspectives on Racial and Ethnic Inequality 42
Social-Psychological Perspective 43
Symbolic Interactionist Perspective 43
Box 3.2: Social Media and Social Problems 43
Functionalist Perspective 44
Conflict Perspective 44
Native Americans (American Indians) and Alaska Natives 45
Colonized Migration and Genocide 45
Forced Migration and Americanization 46
Contemporary Native Americans and Alaska Natives 46
African Americans 47
Slavery and the Racial Division of Labor 47
Segregation and Lynching 47
Protests and Civil Disobedience 48
Contemporary African Americans 48
Latinos/as (Hispanic Americans) 48
Internal Colonialism and Loss of Land 48
Migration 49
Contemporary Latinos/as 49

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Social Problems and Statistics</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Who Are the Poor?</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AGE, GENDER, HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION, AND POVERTY</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RACE, ETHNICITY, AND POVERTY</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consequences of Poverty</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HEALTH AND NUTRITION</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HOUSING</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Social Welfare in the United States</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanations for Poverty</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is There a Solution to Poverty?</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Functionalist/Conservative Solutions to the Problem of Poverty</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflict/Liberal Solutions to the Problem of Poverty</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Symbolic Interactionist Solutions to the Problem of Poverty</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Perspectives on Racial and Ethnic Inequality</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social-Psychological Perspective</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Symbolic Interactionist Perspective</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Native Americans (American Indians) and Alaska Natives</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colonized Migration and Genocide</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forced Migration and Americanization</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contemporary Native Americans and Alaska Natives</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slavery and the Racial Division of Labor</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Segregation and Lynching</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protests and Civil Disobedience</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contemporary African Americans</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Latinos/as (Hispanic Americans)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal Colonialism and Loss of Land</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contemporary Latinos/as</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Inequality Based on Age 78

Ageism as a Social Problem 79
Age-Based Stereotypes 79

Social Inequality and the Life Course 80
Childhood 80
Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood 80

Is There a Solution to Age-Based Inequality? 92

Summary 75 • Key Terms 76 • Questions for Critical Thinking 77
Box 6.2: Social Problems in Global Perspective
Perspectives on Sexual Orientation

Prostitution, Pornography, and Sex Trafficking

7

Sociological Perspectives on Prostitution

Pornography

Is There a Solution to Problems Associated with

Drug Use and Abuse

Alcohol Use and Abuse

8

Alcohol and Other Drugs

Drug Use and Abuse

Alcohol Consumption, Personal Health, and Family Problems

Is There a Solution to Inequality Based on Sexual Orientation?

7

Box 7.1: Social Problems in Global Perspective

Health and Safety Aspects of Prostitution

Prostitution in the United States

Box 7.2: Social Media and Social Problems

Prostitution and Age, Class, and Race

Sociological Perspectives on Prostitution

Pornography

Is There a Solution to Problems Associated with

Prostitution, Pornography, and the Sex Industry?

Drug Addiction

Alcohol Use and Abuse

Alcohol Consumption and Class, Gender, Age, and Race

8

Violent Crime

Property Crime

Workplace and Occupational (White-Collar) Crime

9

Crime as a Social Problem

Defining Crime and Delinquency

Juvenile Delinquency

154

157

158

152

153

153

154

157

158

152

153

153

154

157

158

152

153

153

154

157

158
Contents

Are U.S. Families in Decline? 195
Changing Views on Marriage and Families 196
Diversity in Intimate Relationships and Families 197
Singlehood 198
Postponing Marriage 198
Cohabitation and Domestic Partnerships 198
Same-Sex Marriages 199
Family Life and Employment in Two-Parent and One-Parent Households 199
Two-Parent Households with Dual or Single Incomes 199
One-Parent Households 200
Child-Related Family Issues 201
Reproductive Freedom, Contraception, and Abortion 201
Infertility and Reproductive Technologies 203
Box 11.2: Social Media and Social Problems 204
Adoption 204
Teen Pregnancies and Unmarried Young Motherhood 205
Divorce and Remarriage 206
Domestic Violence 207
Child Maltreatment 207
Intimate Partner Violence 208
Social Responses to Intimate Partner Violence 209
Sociological Explanations and Solutions 209
Functionalist Perspectives 209
Conflict/Liberal Solutions 210
Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives 210
Symbolic Interactionist Solutions 211
Summary 212 • Key Terms 212 • Questions for Critical Thinking 213

10 Health Care: Problems of Physical and Mental Illness 173

Health Care as a Social Problem 174
Acute and Chronic Diseases and Disability 176
The HIV/AIDS Crisis: A Case Study of an Epidemic 176
Box 10.1: Social Problems in Global Perspective 178
Mental Illness as a Social Problem 179
Race, Class, Gender, and Mental Disorders 180
Paying for Health Care in the United States 181
The Affordable Care Act 181
Box 10.2: Social Problems and Social Policy 183
Health Care Organization, Rising Costs, and Unequal Access 183
Private Health Insurance 184
Public Health Insurance 184
Medicaid 185
The Uninsured 185
Race, Class, Gender, and Health Care 186
Sociological Explanations and Solutions 187
The Functionalist Perspective 187
The Conflict Perspective 188
The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective 188
Summary 189 • Key Terms 191 • Questions for Critical Thinking 191

11 The Changing Family 192

The Nature of Families 193
Changing Family Structure and Patterns 193
Box 11.1: Social Problems in Global Perspective 194
Are U.S. Families in Decline? 195
Changing Views on Marriage and Families 196
Diversity in Intimate Relationships and Families 197
Singlehood 198
Postponing Marriage 198
Cohabitation and Domestic Partnerships 198
Same-Sex Marriages 199
Family Life and Employment in Two-Parent and One-Parent Households 199
Two-Parent Households with Dual or Single Incomes 199
One-Parent Households 200
Child-Related Family Issues 201
Reproductive Freedom, Contraception, and Abortion 201
Infertility and Reproductive Technologies 203
Box 11.2: Social Media and Social Problems 204
Adoption 204
Teen Pregnancies and Unmarried Young Motherhood 205
Divorce and Remarriage 206
Domestic Violence 207
Child Maltreatment 207
Intimate Partner Violence 208
Social Responses to Intimate Partner Violence 209
Sociological Explanations and Solutions 209
Functionalist Perspectives 209
Conflict/Liberal Solutions 210
Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives 210
Symbolic Interactionist Solutions 211
Summary 212 • Key Terms 212 • Questions for Critical Thinking 213

12 Problems in Education 214

Sociological Perspectives on Education 215
Functionalist Perspectives 215
SOCIALIZATION 216 • TRANSMISSION OF CULTURE 216 • SOCIAL CONTROL 216 • SOCIAL PLACEMENT 216 • CHANGE AND INNOVATION 216
Conflict Perspectives 217
Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives 218
Problems in U.S. Education 219
Functional Illiteracy 219
Immigration and Diversity in Schools in the Trump Era 219
Educational Opportunities and Inequalities Based on Race and Class 220
Box 12.1: Social Problems in Global Perspective 221
School Safety and Violence 223
Problems in School Financing 224
Voucher Programs 225
## 14 Problems in the Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems in the Media</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Importance of the Media in Contemporary Life</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Political Economy of Media Industries</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Ownership, Control, and Concentration</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems Associated with Convergence</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 14.2: Social Problems in Global Perspective</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Media Issues</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential Effects of Aggression and Violence in the Media</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Stereotyping of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Religion</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and Ethnic Stereotyping</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Stereotyping</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociological Perspectives on Media-Related Problems</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Functionalist Perspective</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Conflict Perspective</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are There Solutions to Media-Related Problems?</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Terms</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions for Critical Thinking</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 15 Population, Global Inequality, and the Environmental Crisis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems in the Media</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global Overpopulation</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertility</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortality</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 15.1: Social Problems and Statistics</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Effects of Population Composition and Growth</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Malthusian Perspective</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Marxist Perspective</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Neo-Malthusian Perspective</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Transition Theory</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Perspectives on Population Change</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Hunger and Malnutrition</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Green Revolution</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Biotechnological Revolution</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling Fertility</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Planning</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero Population Growth</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration and Its Consequences</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration in the United States</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGAL IMMIGRATION</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSEQUENCES OF IMMIGRATION</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Outside of the United States</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 15.2: Social Problems in Global Perspective</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population and the Environment</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Growth and Environmental Degradation</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Pollution and Climate Change</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPLETION OF THE OZONE LAYER</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLIMATE CHANGE</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Contents

Problems with Water, Soil, and Forests
- Water shortages and pollution 283 • Soil depletion and desertification 284

Solid, Toxic, and Nuclear Wastes
- Solid waste 284 • Toxic waste 285 • Nuclear waste 285 • Technological disasters 285

Sociological Perspectives and Solutions for Population and Environmental Problems
- The functionalist perspective 286
- The conflict perspective 286
- The symbolic interactionist perspective 287

**Summary 288 • Key Terms 289 • Questions for Critical Thinking 289**

### 16 Urban Problems

Changes in U.S. Cities
- Early urban growth and social problems 291
- Contemporary urban growth 291

Urban Problems in the United States
- Fiscal crises in cities 293
- Housing problems 295
  - The shortage of affordable housing 295
  - The housing meltdown of the twenty-first century 296
  - Homelessness 297

**Box 16.1: Social Media and Social Problems 297**

- Racial and ethnic segregation 299

**Box 16.2: Critical Thinking and You 300**

Problems in Global Cities

Sociological Perspectives and Solutions to Urban Problems
- The functionalist perspective 303
- The conflict perspective 303
- The symbolic interactionist perspective 304

**Summary 305 • Key Terms 306 • Questions for Critical Thinking 306**

### 17 Global Social Problems: War and Terrorism

War as a Social Problem
- The nature of war 308
- The persistence of war 309

The Consequences of War
- Casualties and civilian deaths 309
- Nuclear war and weapons of mass destruction 310

**Box 17.1: Social Media and Social Problems 311**

- Disability and trauma 312
- Patriotism 312

Military Technology and War

**Box 17.2: Social Problems and Statistics 314**

Global Terrorism 314

Terrorism in the United States 315

**Box 17.3: Social Problems in Global Perspective 316**

Biological and Psychological Perspectives on War and Terrorism
- Biological perspectives 317
- Psychological perspectives 318

Sociological Perspectives on War and Terrorism
- The functionalist perspective 319
- The conflict perspective 319
- The symbolic interactionist perspective 320

Solutions to War and Terrorism 320

**Summary 321 • Key Terms 322 • Questions for Critical Thinking 322**

### 18 Can Social Problems Be Solved? 323

The problem with tackling social problems 324

Ideal versus practical solutions 324

Defining the problem versus fixing it 325

Social change and reducing social problems 325

Microlevel attempts to solve social problems 326

- Seeking individual solutions to personal problems 326
- Limitations of the microlevel solutions approach 326

Midrange attempts to solve social problems 327

- Groups that help people cope with their problems 327
- Grassroots groups that work for community-based change 327
- Limitations of the midrange solutions approach 328

**Box 18.1: Social Media and Social Problems 329**

- Working through special-interest groups for political change 330
- Working through national and international social movements to reduce problems 330
- Limitations of the macrolevel solutions approach 331

**Box 18.2: Sociology and Social Problems 332**

Final review of social theories and social problems 332

- The functionalist perspective 332
- The conflict perspective 333
- The symbolic interactionist perspective 333

**Summary 334 • Key Terms 335 • Questions for Critical Thinking 335**

Glossary 336

References 341

Name index 358

Subject index 360
Preface

We are living in difficult times: Our social problems are many in number, diverse in their causes and consequences, and often global in their reach. The United States and other countries continue to struggle with social problems that have been present for generations: racial, ethnic, and gender inequality; alcohol and drug abuse; disparities in wealth and income; crime; and the challenges of educating, housing, and providing medical care for a growing population. Since I wrote the previous edition of this textbook, many national and global problems have intensified or become more complex. National and international economic structures continue in a state of upheaval, and political leaders frequently appear unable, or unwilling, to create social policies or laws that will benefit larger segments of the population. The richest individuals have accumulated even greater wealth while a significant portion of middle- and lower-income families have seen employment opportunities dry up and household incomes diminish. Housing has become more expensive, and home ownership is no longer a realistic aspiration for many people. In the United States, political battles are being fought over immigration and the costs of health care and education. We seem to be living in a state of endless war. The two dominant political parties seem to be unable to work together for the common good.

We are constantly bombarded with data, news, and political spin. At the same time, a debate rages over what news is real and what cannot be trusted. In addition, the media do not report comprehensively on all important issues. Some social problems are discussed at length in the media, while others are barely mentioned. Some media sources frame their presentations of the news based on their own political and ideological slants. This kind of slanted media representation, coupled with the unprecedented reliance for news on social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter, produces a sense of “media overload” in many people. Sometimes it is easy to become discouraged, thinking that social problems can’t be reduced or solved.

However, studying social problems helps us think about ways in which social change might occur because it provides us with new insights on problems in our nation and world. Although we live in challenging times, this social problems course provides us with an excellent opportunity to develop our critical thinking skills and to learn how to use sociological perspectives to analyze concerns ranging from terrorism and war to inequalities rooted in factors such as race, ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, age, and sexual orientation.

My first and foremost goal in writing this book is to make the study of social problems interesting and relevant to you, the student. To stimulate your interest in reading the chapters and participating in class discussions, I have used lived experiences (personal narratives of real people) and statements from a wide variety of analysts to show how social problems affect people at the individual, group, and societal levels. Moreover, I have applied the sociological imagination and relevant sociological perspectives to all the topics in a systematic manner. I think that one of the most important contributions of this new edition is that I have thoroughly revised and updated information throughout the book. In this age of instant communications, it is very important to have the latest data available at the time the text is being written, and I have worked toward this goal throughout all eighteen chapters.

Like previous editions of Social Problems in a Diverse Society, the seventh edition focuses on the significance of social inequality and race, class, and gender as key factors in our understanding of problems in the United States and worldwide. Throughout this text, all people—but particularly people of color and white women—are shown not merely as “victims” of social problems but as individuals who resist discrimination and inequality and seek to bring about change in families, schools, workplaces, and the larger society. To place specific social problems within a larger social inequality framework, Chapters 2 through 6 conduct a systematic evaluation of wealth and poverty, racial and ethnic inequality, gender inequality, and inequalities based on age and sexual orientation. Thereafter, concepts and perspectives related to race, class, and gender are intertwined in the discussion of specific social problems in institutions such as education and health care.

Social Problems in a Diverse Society is balanced in its approach to examining social problems. It includes a comprehensive view of current feminist and other contemporary perspectives on a vast array of subjects—including the effect of new technologies on social life and how the media depict social issues. As a sociologist who specializes in social theory, I have been disheartened by the minimal use of sociological theory to analyze social problems in many texts. Similarly, some texts give the impression that social problems can be solved if people reach a consensus on what should be done, but Social Problems in a Diverse Society, Seventh Edition, emphasizes that the way people view a social problem is related to how they believe the problem should be reduced or solved. Consider poverty, for example: People who focus on individual causes of poverty typically believe that
individual solutions (such as teaching people to have a good work ethic and reforming welfare) are necessary to reduce the problem, whereas those who focus on structural causes of poverty (such as chronic unemployment and inadequate educational opportunities) typically believe that solutions must come from the larger society. Moreover, what some people perceive as a problem is viewed by others as a solution for a problem (e.g., the sex industry as a source of income, or abortion to terminate a problematic pregnancy). In the final chapter (Chapter 18), I ask students to more fully explore the question, “Can social problems be solved?”

Finally, I wrote Social Problems in a Diverse Society, Seventh Edition, to provide students and instructors with a text that covers all the major social concerns of our day but does not leave them believing that the text—and perhaps the course—is a “depressing litany of social problems that nobody can do anything about anyway,” as one of my students stated about a different text. Each chapter concludes with perspectives from the three major sociological theories on how to solve or reduce that social problem. I believe the sociological perspective has much to add to our national and global dialogues on a host of issues, such as immigration; environmental degradation; terrorism and war; discrimination based on race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, or other attributes; and problems in health care and education. Welcome to an innovative examination of social problems—one of the most stimulating and engrossing fields of study in sociology!

New to This Edition

Social Problems in a Diverse Society, Seventh Edition, builds on the successful features of the previous edition but adds several new elements to support student learning and engagement, including organization by learning objectives, a focus on the impact of social media on social problems, and exciting new content.

Learning Objectives

Learning objectives at the beginning of each major section guide students through their reading of the chapter. The end-of-chapter summary and questions for consideration are also organized by learning objective.

Learning Objectives

5.1 Define agism and explain how it perpetuates stereotypes of older people.

5.2 Explain how age contributes to social inequality throughout all stages in the life course.

5.3 Discuss reasons why people associate death with the process of aging, and outline four frameworks for explaining how people cope with the process of dying.

5.4 Describe how age stratification is related to workplace discrimination, retirement, and health care issues.

5.5 Discuss the victimization of older people in regard to crime and elder abuse.

5.6 Describe some of the family problems associated with growing older.

5.7 Analyze how each of the major sociological perspectives explains issues related to the aging process and to age-related social inequality in society.

5.8 Discuss possible solutions to the problem of age-based inequality.

Social Media and Social Problems

Box 5.3: Social Media and Social Problems

Social Media: A Toxic Mirror for Looking at Teen Body Image

Journalist Rachel Simmons (2016) describes social media as a “basic mirror” for many teens. Although most criticisms of social media focus on cyberbullying, other problems are often overlooked, including the impact of social media on one’s body image. Simmons (2016) lists ten ways to keep social media healthy for many teens. However, in addition to positive comments, social media can also pose a challenge. When teens are judged by the standards of others, they may develop a negative self-image or lack body confidence. Simmons (2016) points out that social media may indeed become a “basic mirror,” but it may also function as a “toxic mirror” in which teens may deny negative comments or ignore feedback from friends and others so that they can compare themselves to others. People who receive “likes” or positive comments may gain a feeling of self-worth; those who receive negative comments or are ignored by all may develop a negative self-image and lack body confidence.

However, this is not the end of the problem. When teens themselves are not to blame, they may develop a negative self-image or lack body confidence. Simmons (2016) points out that social media may indeed become a “basic mirror,” but it may also function as a “toxic mirror” in which teens may deny negative comments or ignore feedback from friends and others so that they can compare themselves to others. People who receive “likes” or positive comments may gain a feeling of self-worth; those who receive negative comments or are ignored by all may develop a negative self-image and lack body confidence.

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Updated Content in Every Chapter

Every chapter of Social Problems in a Diverse Society, Seventh Edition, has been updated to reflect the significant changes that have occurred in our society and around the world since the last edition. Here’s what’s new or substantially revised in the seventh edition:

Chapter 1
- New Social Media and Social Problems box: “Cyberbullying, Facebook Depression, and Sexting”

Chapter 2
- New Social Media and Social Problems box: “The Ups and Downs of Twitter as a Tool for Dealing with the Problem of Hunger”

Chapter 3
- New Social Media and Social Problems box: “Speed! And Social Movements about Racial Justice” looks at using social media to communicate about racial justice
- Updated content on the racial categories used by the 2010 U.S. Census
- New discussion of Islamophobia
- New discussion of the proposed wall between the United States and Mexico
- New Figure 3.1 on U.S. population by race and Hispanic origin
- New Figure 3.2 on median household income by race and Hispanic origin

Chapter 4
- New coverage of gendered behavior and harassment in school
- New coverage of gender distinctions in sports
- Revised Social Problems and Social Policy box: “Title IX and Gender Equity in Sports”
- New section “Traditional Media, Social Media, and Gender Socialization and Inequality”
- New Social Media and Social Problems box: “Social Media and Gender Matters”
- New Figure 4.1, Women in the U.S. Labor Force, 1970 to 2015

Chapter 5
- Substantially revised coverage on later maturity and old age
- New Figure 5.1, U.S. Population Pyramid by Age and Sex, 2015
- New Figure 5.2, Percentage Distribution of 10 Leading Causes of Death in People Ages 25–44 and Ages 65 and Over, 2014

Chapter 6
- New Social Media and Social Problems box: “Weighing in on the Transgender Bathroom ‘Crisis’ on Social Media”
- Updated coverage of LGBTQ persons in the military, same-sex marriage, and the American Psychological Association’s 2017 statement on sexual orientation
- New Map 6.1: States That Prohibit Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Chapter 7
- New Social Problems in Global Perspective box: “Criminal Gangs and a Thriving International Sex Trafficking Industry in Europe”
- New Social Media and Social Problems box: “Selling Sex and Getting Arrested Online and through Social Media”
- Updated Figure 7.2: Net Porn Stats, 2013

Chapter 8
xv Preface

• New Social Media and Social Problems box: “Can Social Media Help Prevent Opioid Abuse, or Does It Perpetuate Stigma?”
• New Table 8.1: Fatalities, by Role, in Crashes Involving at Least One Driver with a BAC of .08 g/dL or Higher, 2015

Chapter 9

• New Figure 9.4: Profiles of the U.S. Prison Inmate Population, 2016
• Revised Social Problems in Global Perspective box: “Identity Theft: A Persistent Problem in the Global Village”
• New coverage of the Black Lives Matter movement

Chapter 10

• New coverage of health care debates in Congress
• New Figure 10.1: U.S. National Health Expenditures per Person, 1960–2015
• New Figure 10.2: Comparison of Infant Mortality Rates for Selected Countries, 2016 (estimate)
• New Figure 10.3: New HIV Diagnoses by Race/Ethnicity, 2015
• New Figure 10.4: Top 10 Causes of Death in Low-Income Economies, 2015

Chapter 11

• New Figure 11.1: Living Arrangements of Children: 1960 to Present
• New Figure 11.2: Young Adults (Ages 18 to 34) Living in the Parental Home
• New Figure 11.3: Percentage of Adults Living with a Spouse or Other Arrangements
• New coverage of Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage

Chapter 12

• New coverage of sexual assaults in schools
• New Social Problems and Social Policy box: “What Is It Like to Be a Hungry and Homeless College Student in a World Full of Rules?”
• Extensive updating of affirmative action section
• New Figure 12.1: Population Age 25 and Older by Educational Attainment: 1940–2016
• New Figure 12.2: Average Earnings by Educational Attainment: 1975–2015

Chapter 13

• New Social Media and Social Problems box: “Winning the Presidential Election with Facebook and Twitter: Problem or Solution?”
• New Social Problems and Social Policy box: “Is It Time to Do Away with the Electoral College?”
• New coverage of side gigs
• Extensive revisions to sections on unemployment and outsourcing of jobs
• New coverage of UN goals to reduce economic inequality
• New coverage of Citizens United and Super PACs

Chapter 14

• Table 14.2 Selected Media Conglomerates and Their Brands
• New Social Media and Social Problems box: “Is It Real or Is It Fake? Media’s Role in Disseminating True and False Information”
• New Social Problems in Global Perspective box: “North Korea: Does Strict Control of Media Equal Strict Control of All the People?”
• Updated coverage of the effects of watching violence
• Updated coverage of racial, ethnic, and gender stereotyping

Chapter 15

• New coverage of e-waste
• New coverage of ecological footprint
• New coverage of changes to immigration policies in the United States, DACA, and the proposed wall between the United States and Mexico
• New coverage of the refugee crisis
• Enhanced coverage of climate change—effects, carbon tax, climate change deniers
• Revised environmental racism section now covers the Flint, Michigan, water crisis
• New Social Problems and Statistics box: “Immigration: Problem or Solution?”
• New Figure 15.1: U.S. Population by Nativity: 2014 to 2060
• New Table 15.1: Types of Ecosystem Services Provided by the Natural World
• New Social Problems in Global Perspective box: “Coping with a Refugee Crisis”

Chapter 16
• Updated coverage of the economic status of U.S. cities since the Great Recession
• New research on why some cities thrive while others wither
• New coverage of the affordable housing crisis in the United States
• Updated statistics on homelessness
• New Table 16.1: Populations of the World’s Ten Largest Urban Agglomerations, 2010 and 2050 (in millions, estimated)

Chapter 17
• New Table 17.1: U.S. Armed Forces Personnel Casualties and Wounded in Wars
• New coverage of increase in civilian casualties in wars since 1917
• Updated coverage of biological and chemical weapons
• Updated coverage of drones
• Updated coverage of cyberattacks, including the hacking of the Democratic Party in 2016
• Updated coverage of terrorist attacks
• New coverage of the draft and all-volunteer force in the United States
• New coverage of autonomous weapons
• New Social Problems and Statistics box: “Who Serves in the U.S. Military?”
• New Social Problems in Global Perspective box: “Anti-Muslim Political Speech and Hate Crimes”
• Enhanced coverage of psychological and sociological perspectives on terrorism

Chapter 18
• New coverage of the effects of Superstorm Sandy, recent protest events, and recent acts of terrorism
• New Social Media and Social Problems box: “Facebook Brings People Together for the Women’s March…But Does It Build a New Social Movement?”
• Revised Sociology and Social Problems box: “Applying Sociology to the Ordinary and the Extraordinary in Everyday Life”

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Special Features
A number of special features have been designed to incorporate race, class, and gender into our analysis of social problems and to provide fresh insights on the social problems that we hear about in the news.

Lived Experiences Introduce Chapters
In many chapters, authentic, first-person accounts are used as chapter-opening vignettes—“real words from real people”—to create interest and show how the problems being discussed affect people as they go about their daily lives. Lived experiences provide opportunities for instructors to systematically incorporate into lectures and class discussions examples of relevant, contemporary issues that have recently been on the evening news and in newspaper headlines, and for you to examine social life beyond your own experiences (“to live vicariously,” as one student noted). For example, Chapter 7 relates the experience of a survivor of sex trafficking, and Chapter 8 describes how one person started a substance use disorder recovery group after her daughter became addicted to heroin.

Relevant and Engaging Topics Inform Boxed Features
In addition to the new Social Media and Social Problems boxes, four other types of boxes—Social Problems and Social Policy, Social Problems in Global Perspective, Social Problems and Statistics, and Critical Thinking and You—highlight important aspects of current social problems:
• Social Problems and Social Policy: These features examine efforts to solve social problems through legislation, regulation, or other means. For example, in Chapter 13, we explore the question, “Is It Time to Do Away with the Electoral College?”
Organization of This Text

Social Problems in a Diverse Society, Seventh Edition, has been organized with the specific plan of introducing disparities in wealth and poverty, race and ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation early on, so that the concepts and perspectives developed in these chapters may be applied throughout the text. Chapter 1 explains the sociological perspective and highlights the issue of violence to draw students into an examination of such debates as whether “guns kill people” or “people kill people.” Chapter 2 looks at wealth and poverty in the United States and around the world. The chapter provides new insights on wealth compared with income inequality and on problems such as homelessness, low-income and poverty-level neighborhoods, and the relationship between “cheap labor” and the global economy. Chapter 3 integrates the previous discussion of class-based inequalities with an examination of racial and ethnic inequality. Chapter 4 discusses gender inequality and highlights factors such as mainstream gender socialization and social barriers that contribute to the unequal treatment of women in the workplace and family and at school and other social institutions. Ageism and inequality based on age are discussed in Chapter 5. Inequality based on sexual orientation is examined in Chapter 6, which includes a discussion of how LGBTQ people are portrayed in the media. Chapter 7 links previous discussions of race, class, and gender to an analysis of prostitution, pornography, and the sex industry. In Chapter 8, alcohol and other drugs are discussed in depth, including coverage of the trend toward legalizing marijuana and the opioid crisis. Chapter 9 discusses crime and criminal justice and takes an incisive look at sociological explanations of crime.

Built-in Study Features

These pedagogical aids promote students’ mastery of sociological concepts and perspectives.

• Chapter Summary in Question-and-Answer Format. Each chapter concludes with a concise summary in a convenient question-and-answer format to help students master the key concepts and main ideas in each chapter.

• Key Terms. Major concepts and key terms are defined and highlighted in bold print within the text. Definitions are provided the first time a concept is introduced; they are also listed at the end of each chapter and in the glossary at the back of the text.
they are financed, and why higher education is not widely accessible. Chapter 13 focuses on problems in politics and the global economy and provides a variety of perspectives on political power and the role of the military-industrial complex in U.S. politics and the economy. Chapter 14, a discussion of problems in the media, looks at how newer social media and concentration in existing mainstream media affect the news and entertainment that people receive. Chapter 15 provides a survey of problems associated with population and the environmental crisis, particularly focusing on the causes and consequences of overpopulation and high rates of global migration. Chapter 16, a look at urban problems, details the powerful impact of urbanization on both high-income and low-income nations. Chapter 17 discusses global social problems related to war and terrorism, including militarism, military technology, war in historical context, and current issues of war and terrorism. Chapter 18 asks, “Can social problems be solved?” and includes a review of the sociological theories used to explain social problems, plus an analysis of attempts at problem solving at the microlevel, midrange, and macrolevel of society.

Supplements

Instructor’s Manual and Test Bank  Each chapter in the Instructor’s Manual offers a variety of the following types of resources: Chapter Summary, New to This Chapter, Chapter Outline, Learning Objectives, Critical Thinking Questions, Activities for Classroom Participation, Key Terms, Weblinks, Suggested Readings, and Suggested Films/Videos. Designed to make your lectures more effective and to save preparation time, this extensive resource gathers useful activities and strategies for teaching your course. Also included in this manual is a Test Bank offering multiple-choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, and/or essay questions for each chapter. The Instructor’s Manual with Test Bank is available to adopters at www.pearsonhighered.com.

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 via www.pearsonhighered.com.

PowerPoint Presentations  The PowerPoint presentations for Social Problems in a Diverse Society, Seventh Edition, are informed by instructional and design theory. The Lecture PowerPoint slides follow the chapter outline and feature images from the textbook integrated with the text. The PowerPoints are uniquely designed to present concepts in a clear and succinct manner. They are available to adopters at www.pearsonhighered.com.
I wish to thank personally the many people who have made this Seventh Edition a reality. First, I offer my profound thanks to the following reviewers who provided valuable comments and suggestions on how to make this text outstanding. Whenever possible, I have incorporated their suggestions into the text. The reviewers are:

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Margaret Preble, Thomas Nelson Community College
Dale Spady, Northern Michigan University
John Stratton, University of Iowa

To each of you reading this preface, I wish you the best in teaching or studying social problems, and I hope that you will share with me any comments or suggestions you have about *Social Problems in a Diverse Society*, Seventh Edition. The text was written with you in mind. Let’s hope that our enthusiasm for “taking a new look at social problems” will spread to others so that together we may seek to reduce or solve some of the pressing social problems we encounter during our lifetime.

_Diana Kendall_
Social Problems

In a Diverse Society