

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

SEVENTH EDITION



 Pearson

JOHN J. MACIONIS

Social Problems



Most of the readers of this book are among the world's privileged people—those who have enough to eat, a comfortable place to sleep, and who have the special opportunity to study the human condition. I offer this book in the hope that it will stimulate thinking about those who are in need and the state of our world and spark action toward making our world a better place.

Jan J. Macionis

Social Problems

SEVENTH EDITION

John J. Macionis
Kenyon College



330 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10013

Editor: Billy J. Greico
Development Editor: Barbara Reilly
Marketing Manager: Jeremy Intal
Program Manager: Erin Bosco
Project Coordination, Text Design, and Electronic
Page Makeup: Integra-Chicago

Cover Designer: Ort Design
Cover Illustration/Photo: freshidea/Fotolia
Manufacturing Buyer: Mary Ann Gloriande
Printer/Binder: LSC/Menasha
Cover Printer: Phoenix Color/Hagerstown

Copyright © 2018 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. For information regarding permissions, request forms and the appropriate contacts within the Pearson Education Global Rights & Permissions Department, please visit www.pearsoned.com/permissions/.

Acknowledgments of third-party content appear on page[s] 547–548, which constitute an extension of this copyright page.

PEARSON, ALWAYS LEARNING, and REVEL are exclusive trademarks in the United States 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

Macionis, John J.

Social Problems /John J. Macionis. — Seventh edition.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-13-463252-0 — ISBN 0-13-463252-4

1. Social problems. 2. Social problems—United States. I. Title.

HN16.M24 2016

306.0973—dc23

2016037460

1 17



Student Edition

ISBN-10: 0-13-463252-4

ISBN-13: 978-0-13-463252-0

A la Carte Edition

ISBN-10: 0-13-391249-3

ISBN-13: 978-0-13-391249-4

Brief Contents

PART I Sociology's Basic Approach

- 1** Sociology: Studying Social Problems 2

PART II Problems of Social Inequality

- 2** Economic Inequality 32
- 3** Racial and Ethnic Inequality 66
- 4** Gender Inequality 100
- 5** Aging and Inequality 132

PART III Problems of Deviance, Conformity, and Well-Being

- 6** Crime, Violence, and Criminal Justice 160
- 7** Sexuality 198
- 8** Alcohol and Other Drugs 230
- 9** Physical and Mental Health 262

PART IV Problems of Social Institutions

- 10** Economy and Politics 292
- 11** Work and the Workplace 318
- 12** Family Life 348
- 13** Education 374
- 14** Urban Life 402

PART V Global Problems

- 15** Population and Global Inequality 428
- 16** Technology and the Environment 456
- 17** War and Terrorism 480

Contents

Preface xvii

About the Author xxi

PART I Sociology's Basic Approach

1 Sociology: Studying Social Problems 2

Constructing the Problem	4
Seeing Patterns: The Sociological Imagination	5
Social Problems: The Basics	6
Social Problems over Time	6
The Social-Constructionist Approach	7
Claims Making	9
Problems and Social Movements	10
Social Problems: Eight Assertions	11
Social Problems: A Global Perspective	13
Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory	14
The Structural-Functional Approach	14
The Social-Conflict Approach	15
The Feminist Approach	17
The Symbolic-Interaction Approach	17
Finding the Facts: Sociological Research	18
Research Methods	18
Truth, Science, and Politics	20
Truth and Statistics	21
Responding to Social Problems: Social Policy	22
Policy Evaluation	22
Policy and Culture	22
Policy and Politics	22
Politics: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	23
The Political Spectrum	23
Conservatives, Liberals, and Radicals	24
Social Issues	24
Economic Issues	25
Who Thinks What?	25
Going On from Here	26
A Defining Moment: A Call to Action:	
The Message of Martin Luther King Jr.	27
Defining Solutions	28
Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	29
<i>Making the Grade: Visual Summary</i>	30

PART II Problems of Social Inequality

2 Economic Inequality 32

Constructing the Problem	34
Economic Inequality in the United States	35
Inequality of Income and Wealth	35

The Trend toward Increasing Economic Inequality 38
Taxation 39

The Rich and the Poor: A Social Profile	40
The Rich	40
The Poor	41
Who Are the Poor? A Closer Look	43
Working Families: Working Harder	44
The Working Poor	45
The Nonworking Poor	46
The Underclass	46

Problems Linked to Poverty	46
Poor Health	47
Substandard Housing	47
Homelessness	47
Limited Schooling	48
Crime and Punishment	48
Political Alienation	49

Responding to Poverty: The Welfare System	49
A Brief History of Welfare	50
The 1996 Welfare Reform	51

Theories of Poverty	53
Structural-Functional Analysis: Some Poverty Is Inevitable	53
Symbolic-Interaction Analysis: Defining the Problem	55
Social-Conflict Analysis: Poverty Can Be Eliminated	55
Feminist Analysis: Poverty and Patriarchy	57

Politics and Economic Inequality:	
Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	58
Conservatives: Personal Responsibility	59
Liberals: Societal Responsibility	59
The Radical Left: Change the System	60
Going On from Here	61

Defining Solutions	62
Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	63
<i>Making the Grade: Visual Summary</i>	64

3 Racial and Ethnic Inequality 66

Constructing the Problem	68
Race and Ethnicity	69
Race	69
Ethnicity	70
Immigration	70
Minorities	72
White Privilege	74
Patterns of Majority–Minority Interaction	74
Genocide	74
Segregation	75
Assimilation	75

A Defining Moment: Rosa Parks:	
Saying No to Segregation	76
Pluralism	76
The Social Standing of U.S. Minorities	77
Native Americans	77
African Americans	78
Asian Americans	80
Hispanic Americans/Latinos	81
Arab Americans	83
Prejudice	84
Stereotypes	84
Racism	85
Measuring Prejudice: The Social Distance Scale	85
Institutional Racism: The Case of Racial Profiling	86
Causes of Prejudice	87
Multiculturalism	87
Discrimination	87
Institutional Discrimination	88
Prejudice and Discrimination: A Vicious Circle	88
Microaggression	88
Affirmative Action: Reverse Discrimination or Cure for Prejudice?	89
Theories of Racial and Ethnic Inequality	90
Structural-Functional Analysis: The Importance of Culture	90
Symbolic-Interaction Analysis: The Personal Meaning of Race	91
Social-Conflict Analysis: The Structure of Inequality	91
Politics, Race, and Ethnicity: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	93
Conservatives: Culture and Effort Matter	93
Liberals: Society and Government Matter	94
The Radical Left: Fundamental Changes Are Needed	94
Going On from Here	94
Defining Solutions	96
Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	97
Making the Grade: Visual Summary	98
4 Gender Inequality	100
Constructing the Problem	102
What Is Gender?	103
Patriarchy	103
The Problem of Sexism	104
Gender and Social Institutions	105
Gender and the Family	105
Gender and Education	105
Gender and the Mass Media	106
Gender and Politics	107
Gender and Religion	108
Gender and the Military	109
Gender and Work	110
Gender Stratification	111
Income	112
Housework	115
Violence against Women	115
Sexual Harassment	116
Sexuality, Beauty, and Reproduction	117
Women: A Majority Minority?	117
Theories of Gender Inequality	118
Structural-Functional Analysis: Gender and Complementarity	118
Symbolic-Interaction Analysis: Gender in Everyday Life	119
Social-Conflict Analysis: Gender and Inequality	119
Intersection Theory: The Case of Minority Women	120
Feminism	121
Feminist Foundations	121
Types of Feminism	122
A Defining Moment: Elizabeth Cady Stanton: Claiming Women's Right to Equality	122
Politics and Gender: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	125
Conservatives: The Value of Families	125
Liberals: The Pursuit of Equality	125
The Radical Left: Change the System	126
Going On from Here	127
Defining Solutions	128
Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	129
Making the Grade: Visual Summary	130
5 Aging and Inequality	132
Constructing the Problem	134
Growing Old	135
Industrialization and Aging	135
Life Expectancy	137
The Graying of the United States	137
Elders: A Diverse Population	138
Problems of Aging	139
Social Isolation	139
Retirement	139
Ageism	140
Victimization of the Elderly	142
The Growing Need for Caregiving	143
Poverty	143
Age Stratification	144
Housing	144
Medical Care	146
Death and Dying	146
A Defining Moment: A Good Death: Cicely Saunders and the Birth of Hospice	149
Theories of Aging and Inequality	149
Structural-Functional Theory: The Need to Disengage	149
Symbolic-Interaction Theory: Staying Active	150
Social-Conflict Theory: Age and Economic Inequality	151
Feminist Theory: Aging and Gender	151
Intersection Theory: Multiple Disadvantages	152

Politics and Aging: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	152	Social-Conflict Analysis: Crime and Inequality	190
Conservatives: More Family Responsibility	152	Feminist Analysis: Crime and Gender	191
Liberals: More Government Assistance	154	Politics and Crime: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	191
The Radical Left: Capitalism and the Elderly	154	Conservatives: Crime, Violence, and Morality	192
Going On from Here	155	Liberals: Crime, Violence, and Jobs	192
Defining Solutions	156	The Radical Left: Crime and Inequality	192
Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	157	Going On from Here	193
<i>Making the Grade: Visual Summary</i>	158	Defining Solutions	194
		Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	195
		<i>Making the Grade: Visual Summary</i>	196
PART III Problems of Deviance, Conformity, and Well-Being		7 Sexuality	198
6 Crime, Violence, and Criminal Justice	160	Constructing the Problem	200
Constructing the Problem	162	What Is Sex?	201
Understanding Crime	163	Sex: A Biological Issue	201
Norms, Law, and Crime	163	Sex: A Cultural Issue	201
Crime Statistics	163	Sexual Attitudes in the United States	201
Violent Crime: Patterns and Trends	164	The Sexual Revolution	202
Property Crime: Patterns and Trends	166	A Defining Moment: Alfred Kinsey: Talking Openly about Sex	202
“Street Crime”: Who Are the Criminals?	168	The Sexual Counterrevolution	203
Other Dimensions of the Crime Problem	169	The Continuing Sexual Revolution: Older People	203
Juvenile Delinquency	169	Sexual Orientation	204
Hate Crimes	170	Homosexuality	204
White-Collar Crime	170	What Determines Sexual Orientation?	205
Corporate Crime	171	Homosexuality and Public Policy	207
Organized Crime	172	Same-Sex Marriage	208
Victimless Crime	172	The Gay Rights Movement	208
Violence	173	The Transgender Movement	208
Is Violence a Social Problem?	173	Sexual Issues and Controversies	209
A Defining Moment: U.S. Society Discovers Child Abuse	174	Pornography	209
Serious Violence: Mass Murder and Serial Killings	175	Sexual Harassment	211
The Mass Media and Violence	176	Prostitution	212
Poverty and Violence	176	Teenage Pregnancy	215
Youth Gangs and Violence	177	Abortion	217
Drugs and Violence	177	Sexually Transmitted Diseases	218
Guns and Violence	177	Theories of Sexuality	221
The Criminal Justice System	179	Structural-Functional Analysis: Controlling Sexuality	221
Due Process	179	Symbolic-Interaction Analysis: Defining Sexuality	221
Police	180	Social-Conflict Analysis: Feminist Theory and Queer Theory	222
Courts	180	Politics and Sexuality: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	223
Punishment	181	Conservatives: The Value of Traditional Morality	223
Community-Based Corrections	183	Liberals: Sex and Individual Choice	224
Explaining Crime: Biological and Psychological Theories	185	The Radical Left: Go to the Root of the Problem	224
Biological Causes	185	Going On from Here	225
Psychological Causes	186	Defining Solutions	226
Explaining Crime: Sociological Theories	187	Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	227
Structural-Functional Analysis: Why Society Creates Crime	187	<i>Making the Grade: Visual Summary</i>	228
Symbolic-Interaction Analysis: Socially Constructing Reality	189		

8 Alcohol and Other Drugs	230		
Constructing the Problem	232		
What Is a Drug?	233		
Drugs and Culture	233		
Drugs, Race, and Ethnicity	234		
Changing Views of Alcohol	234		
The Extent of Drug Use	235		
Why Do People Use Drugs?	235		
Use and Abuse	236		
Addiction and Dependency	236		
Types of Drugs	236		
Stimulants	236		
Depressants	239		
Hallucinogens	241		
Cannabis	241		
Steroids	242		
Prescription Drugs	242		
Drugs and Other Social Problems	242		
Problems of Family Life	243		
Homelessness	243		
Health Problems	243		
Crime	244		
Global Poverty	245		
Terrorism	245		
Social Policy: Responding to the Drug Problem	245		
Strategies to Control Drugs	245		
The War on Drugs	247		
A Defining Moment: Bill Wilson: Alcoholics Can Learn to Be Sober	247		
A New Initiative: Decriminalization	249		
Theories of Drug-Related Social Problems	253		
Structural-Functional Analysis: Regulating Drug Use	253		
Symbolic-Interaction Analysis: The Meaning of Drug Use	253		
Social-Conflict Analysis: Power and Drug Use	254		
Politics and Drugs: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	254		
Conservatives: Just Say No	254		
Liberals: Reform Society	255		
Radicals: Understanding Drugs from the Margins of Society	255		
Going On from Here	256		
Defining Solutions	258		
Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	259		
Making the Grade: Visual Summary	260		
9 Physical and Mental Health	262		
Constructing the Problem	264		
Health and Illness: A Global Perspective	265		
High-Income Nations	265		
Low-Income Nations	265		
Rich and Poor Compared: The AIDS Epidemic	266		
Health Policy: Paying for Care	267		
Socialist Systems	268		
Capitalist Systems	269		
Health Care in the United States: A System in Crisis?	270		
The Cost Problem	271		
Who Pays?	272		
The Coverage Problem	273		
The 2010 Health Care Law	273		
Health: Class, Ethnicity, and Race	274		
Health: Rural and Urban Places	275		
Health: The Importance of Gender	275		
People with Disabilities	276		
The Nursing Shortage	277		
Mental Health and Illness	278		
Types of Mental Disorders	278		
Mental Illness: A Myth?	278		
Mental Illness: Class, Race, and Gender	279		
Treatment Strategies	280		
A Defining Moment: Dorothea Dix: Mentally Ill People Deserve Our Help	281		
Mental Illness on Campus	282		
Theories of Health and Illness	283		
Structural-Functional Analysis: Health and Social Roles	283		
Symbolic-Interaction Analysis: The Meaning of Health	283		
Social-Conflict Analysis: Health and Inequality	284		
Feminist Analysis: Health and Gender	284		
Politics and Health: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	285		
Conservatives: Free Markets Provide the Best Care	285		
Liberals: Government Must Ensure Universal Care	286		
The Radical Left: Capitalism Is Unhealthy	286		
Going On from Here	287		
Defining Solutions	288		
Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	289		
Making the Grade: Visual Summary	290		
PART IV Problems of Social Institutions			
10 Economy and Politics	292		
Constructing the Problem	294		
Economic Systems: Defining Justice, Defining Problems	295		
The Capitalist Model	295		
The Socialist Model	296		
Mixed Systems	296		
The Economy and Politics	298		
A Defining Moment Store Wars:			
Is Walmart the Problem or the Solution?	299		
Democracy	300		
Authoritarianism and Monarchy	300		
Problems of the U.S. Political Economy	300		
The Power of Corporations	300		
Monopoly and Oligopoly	301		
Conglomerates and Other Linkages	302		

The Power of Money	303
Campaign Financing	303
Voter Apathy	304
Who Votes? Class, Age, Race, Ethnicity, and Gender	306
The Gender Gap: Seeing Problems Differently	306
Voting Laws for Persons Convicted of Serious Crimes	307
Social Movements: How Much Change?	307
Theories of Economic and Political Problems	308
Structural-Functional Analysis: Rule by the Many	308
Social-Conflict Analysis: Rule by the Few	309
Politics and the Economy: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	310
Conservatives: The System Is Working	310
Liberals: The Need for Reform	311
The Radical Left: A Call for Basic Change	311
Going On from Here	312
Defining Solutions	314
Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	315
<i>Making the Grade: Visual Summary</i>	316
11 Work and the Workplace	318
Constructing the Problem	320
Structural Changes in the U.S. Economy	321
The Industrial Revolution	321
The Information Revolution	322
Deindustrialization	323
Globalization	323
Other Problems of the U.S. Workplace	323
The Dual Labor Market	324
Danger to Workers	324
Workplace Alienation	326
McDonaldization and “McJobs”	327
The Temping of the Workplace	327
Unemployment	328
The Problem of “Missing Workers”	329
The “Low-Wage Recovery”	330
Race, Ethnicity, and Gender	330
Workplace Segregation	331
Labor Unions	331
A Defining Moment: Eugene Debs: Standing Up for the Union	333
New Information Technology:	
The Brave New Workplace	335
The Home as Workplace	335
Workplace Isolation	336
Workplace Supervision	337
The “Deskilling” of Workers	337
Theories of Work and Work-Related Problems	337
Structural-Functional Analysis: Finding a New Equilibrium	337
Symbolic-Interaction Analysis: The Meaning of Work	338
Social-Conflict Analysis: Work and Inequality	339
Feminist Analysis: Work and Gender	339

Politics and the Workplace: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	340
Conservatives: Look to the Market	340
Liberals: Look to Government	341
The Radical Left: Basic Change is Needed	342
Going On from Here	342
Defining Solutions	344
Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	345
<i>Making the Grade: Visual Summary</i>	346
12 Family Life	348
Constructing the Problem	350
What Is a Family?	351
Debate over Definitions	351
A Sociological Approach to Family Problems	352
Family Life: Changes and Controversies	352
Living Together: Do We Need to Marry?	352
Postponing Marriage	353
Parenting: Is One Parent Enough?	353
Families, Race, and Poverty	353
Conflict between Work and Family Life	354
Child Care	355
Divorce	356
Child Support	359
Remarriage: Problems of Blended Families	359
A Defining Moment: Same-Sex Marriage: The Massachusetts Decision	360
Gay and Lesbian Families	361
Brave New Families: High-Tech Reproduction	362
Theories of Families and Family Problems	363
Structural-Functional Analysis: Family as Foundation	364
Symbolic-Interaction Analysis: Family and Learning	364
Social-Conflict Analysis: Family and Social Class	364
Feminist Analysis: Family and Gender	365
Politics and Family Life: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	366
Conservatives: Traditional “Family Values”	366
Liberals: Many Types of Families	367
The Radical Left: Replace the Family	367
Going On from Here	368
Defining Solutions	370
Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	371
<i>Making the Grade: Visual Summary</i>	372
13 Education	374
Constructing the Problem	376
Problems of Education: A Global Perspective	377
Low-Income Countries: Too Little Schooling	377
High-Income Countries: Unequal Schooling	378
Education in U.S. History	378
Problems with U.S. Education	380
The Academic Performance of U.S. Schools	380

Academic Performance: Race, Class, and Gender	380	Structural-Functional Analysis: A Theory of Urbanism	417
The Effects of Home and School	381	Symbolic-Interaction Analysis: Experiencing the City	419
Dropping Out	381	Social-Conflict Analysis: Cities and Inequality	420
Functional Illiteracy	382	Politics and Urban Life: Constructing	
School Segregation and Busing	382	Problems and Defining Solutions	421
A Defining Moment: Linda Brown:		Conservatives: The Market and Morality	421
Fighting to Desegregate the Schools	383	Liberals: Government Reform	423
School Funding	384	The Radical Left: The Need for Basic Change	423
Tracking	386	Going On from Here	423
Gender Inequality	386	Defining Solutions	424
Immigration: Increasing Diversity	387	Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	425
Schooling People with Disabilities	388	Making the Grade: Visual Summary	426
Finding Enough Teachers	389		
School Violence	389		
Theories of Education and Education-Related Problems	390		
Structural-Functional Analysis: The Functions of Schooling	390		
Symbolic-Interaction Analysis: Labels in the Schools	391		
Social-Conflict Analysis: Schooling and Inequality	392		
Feminist Analysis: Schooling and Gender	392		
Politics And Education: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	393		
Conservatives: Increase Competition	393		
Liberals: Increase the Investment	395		
The Radical Left: Attack Structural Inequality	396		
Going On from Here	397		
Defining Solutions	398		
Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	399		
Making the Grade: Visual Summary	400		
14 Urban Life	402		
Constructing the Problem	404		
Cities: Then and Now	405		
Colonial Villages: 1565–1800	405		
Westward Expansion: 1800–1860	406		
The Industrial Metropolis: 1860–1950	406		
Postindustrial Cities and Suburbs: 1950–Present	407		
Problems of Today's Cities	407		
Fiscal Problems of the 1970s	407		
The Postindustrial Revival	407		
The Recent Recession and New Fiscal Problems	408		
Urban Sprawl	408		
Edge Cities	409		
Poverty	409		
Housing Problems	411		
A Defining Moment: Jacob Riis:			
Revealing the Misery of the Tenements	412		
Racial Segregation	413		
Homelessness	414		
Snowbelt and Sunbelt Cities	415		
Cities in Poor Countries	415		
Theories of Urbanization and Urban Problems	417		
		PART V Global Problems	
		15 Population and Global Inequality	428
		Constructing the Problem	430
		Global Population Increase	431
		Population by the Numbers	431
		Causes of Population Increase	431
		Measuring Population Increase	433
		The Low-Growth North	435
		The High-Growth South	435
		The Social Standing of Women	435
		Explaining the Population Problem:	
		Malthusian Theory	435
		A Defining Moment: Thomas Robert Malthus:	
		Claiming Population Is a Problem	436
		A More Recent Approach: Demographic	
		Transition Theory	437
		Global Inequality	437
		High-Income Nations	438
		Middle-Income Nations	439
		Low-Income Nations	439
		The World's Poverty Problem	439
		Poverty and Children	441
		Poverty and Women	441
		Slavery	441
		Theories of Global Inequality	442
		Structural-Functional Analysis:	
		The Process of Modernization	442
		Social-Conflict Analysis: The Global	
		Economic System	444
		Politics and Global Inequality: Constructing	
		Problems and Defining Solutions	447
		Conservatives: The Power of the Market	447
		Liberals: Governments Must Act	448
		The Radical Left: End Global Capitalism	448
		Going On from Here	449
		Defining Solutions	452
		Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	453
		Making the Grade: Visual Summary	454

16 Technology and the Environment	456		
Constructing the Problem	458		
Ecology: Studying the Natural Environment	459		
The Role of Sociology	459		
The Global Dimension	459		
Population Increase	459		
Poverty and Affluence	460		
Technology	461		
Cultural Patterns: Growth and Limits	462		
Environmental Problems	463		
Solid Waste: The Disposable Society	463		
A Defining Moment: Rachel Carson:			
Sounding an Environmental Wake-Up Call	464		
Preserving Clean Water	465		
Air Pollution	466		
Acid Rain	467		
The Disappearing Rain Forests	468		
Climate Change	468		
Declining Biodiversity	469		
Theories of the Environment and Environmental Problems	469		
Structural-Functional Analysis: Highlighting Connections	469		
Social-Conflict Analysis: Highlighting Inequality	470		
Politics and the Environment: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	472		
Conservatives: Grounds for Optimism	472		
Liberals: Grounds for Concern	473		
The Radical Left: Grounds for Fundamental Change	473		
Going On from Here	474		
Defining Solutions	476		
Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	477		
<i>Making the Grade: Visual Summary</i>	478		
17 War and Terrorism	480		
Constructing the Problem	482		
War and Peace: Basic Definitions	483		
		The Increasing Destruction of War	483
		The Causes of War	484
		The Economic Costs of Militarism	485
		The Economic Costs of War	485
		The Human Costs of War	486
		Social Class and the Military	487
		Mass Media and War	488
		War in the Nuclear Age	489
		Strategies for Peace	491
		Terrorism	492
		A Defining Moment: Mohandas Gandhi:	
		Sending a Message of Peace	493
		The Extent of Terrorism	493
		The Costs of Terrorism	495
		Terrorism as a Type of War	495
		Strategies for Dealing with Terrorism	495
		Theories of War and Terrorism	497
		Biological Theories of Conflict	497
		Structural-Functional Analysis: The Functions of Conflict	497
		Symbolic-Interaction Analysis: The Meanings of Conflict	498
		Social-Conflict Analysis: Inequality and Conflict	498
		Politics and War: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions	499
		Conservatives: Peace through Strength	499
		Liberals: The Dangers of Militarism	500
		The Radical Left: Peace through Equality	501
		Going On From Here	501
		Defining Solutions	502
		Getting Involved: Applications and Exercises	503
		<i>Making the Grade: Visual Summary</i>	504
		Glossary	506
		References	511
		Credits	547
		Name Index	549
		Subject Index	555

What's New in Social Problems, Seventh Edition

Total updating of all data. There are more than one thousand statistics in *Social Problems*. In the Seventh Edition, each one is new and the latest available.

Total updating of research. More than four hundred new research citations support descriptions and analysis in this revision.

The latest examples and illustrations. The issues discussed in the revised edition are recent and engaging, from the Flint, Michigan, water crisis to #BlackLivesMatter, from the Zika virus to the 2016 presidential election, from the expanding transgender movement to increasing economic inequality.

Important new topics. New discussions in this revised edition include microaggression, white privilege, sexuality issues on campus, and the expanding heroin epidemic.

Revel™

This title is available as part of the Revel program. Revel is the new and powerful digital learning experience.

Compared to a bound book, Revel offers a number of clear advantages.

Interactivity. Bound books encourage passive reading. Revel transforms graphs and maps into interactive

learning exercises that spark curiosity and encourage active engagement.

Accessibility. Bound books come in a single format. Revel allows readers to adjust font size according to their own preferences; alternative text for images and screen reader compatibility are available for students with visual impairments; and full audio presentation is available to those who prefer sound to visual access.

Available on all devices. Revel is available on your desktop or laptop, and can be used on your tablet or smartphone—both iOS and Android devices—through the free Revel app. The Revel app also allows for offline access so you can read even if you don't always have a data connection.

Greater currency. Because electronic delivery allows instant updating, the content of Revel is not static but will be updated by the author over the course of an edition.

Additional content. Revel provides content not available in a bound book, including special graphics, primary readings, engaging videos, thought-provoking journaling exercises, engaging surveys, and interactive assessment with results reported directly to faculty.

Lower cost. Revel is available to students at less than half the cost of a new bound book. Learn more about Revel at <http://www.pearsonhigher-education.com/revel/>.

Boxes

SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN FOCUS

Increasing Economic Inequality: When Does It Become a Problem? 37
Let Them Stay or Make Them Go? The Debate over Unauthorized Immigrants 73
Sex Discrimination in the Workplace: The Hooters Controversy 112
Corporate Welfare: Government Handouts for Big Business 301

Should You Prepare a Premarital Agreement? 392
Increasing Population: A Success Story or the Greatest Crisis? 450
Getting Right with the Environment: How about You? 475
Has Our All-Volunteer Army Turned into a Warrior Caste? 488

SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The Global Village: Problems around the World 13
Sweden Tries to Take Gender Out of the Classroom 105
Female Genital Mutilation: Using Violence to Control Women 116
Will the Golden Years Lose Their Glow? Growing Old in Japan 136
Organized Crime: All Over the World 172

Prostitutes and Johns in Sweden: Who Is Breaking the Law? 213
Children and Sex Tourism 214
The Social Roots of AIDS: Poverty, Culture, and Gender 268
Sweatshop Safety: How Much Is a Life Worth? 445
Turning the Tide: Reclaiming Solid Waste in Egypt 465

DIVERSITY: RACE, CLASS, & GENDER

The United States: A Land of Poor Children 44
Beauty: What's It Really About? 116
Female, Male, or Something Else?
The *Muxes* of Mexico 206
Reality Check: Five False Stereotypes about African American Families 355

The "Savage Inequalities" of Schooling in the United States 385
Women, Power, and Contraception: The Key to Controlling Population 433
Women in the Military: An Equal Right to Kill? 498

SOCIAL POLICY

C. Wright Mills: Turning Personal Troubles into Social Issues 5
An Undeserved Handout? The Truth about "Welfare" 50
Nursing Home Abuse: What Should Be Done? 142
The Death Penalty: Problem or Solution? 185
The Drug Wars: Safer Streets or Police State? 249

Who Favors "Big Government"? Everybody! 312
Low-Wage Jobs: On (Not) Getting By in America 325
More Than Just Talk: The Politics of Bilingual Education 388
When Work Disappears: Can We Rescue the Inner City? 410

PERSONAL STORIES

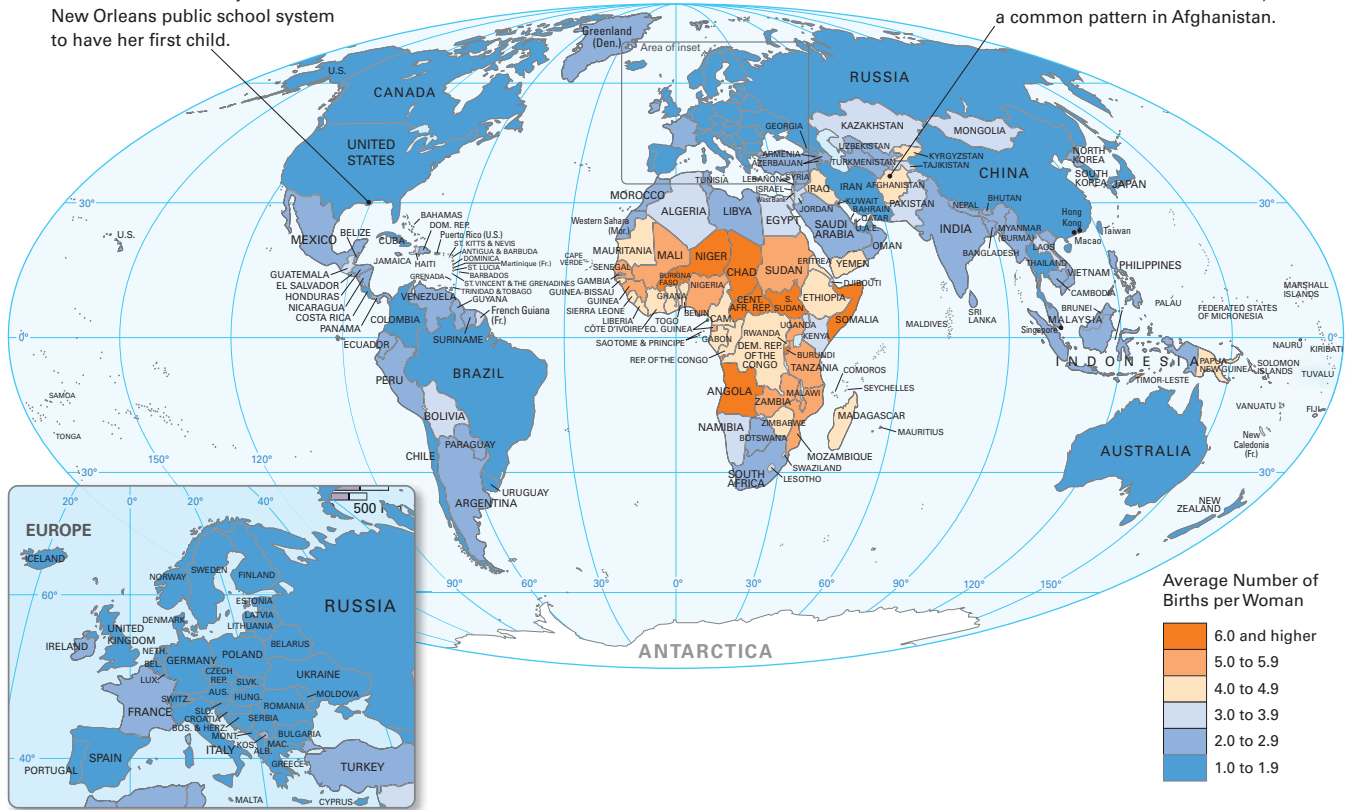
The Reality of Poverty: Living on the Edge 42
After the Children: Getting Back in the Game 114
Is Aging a Disease? 141
Stalking: The Construction of a Problem 166

Dying for Attention: One Student's Story 238
Deinstitutionalization: When Good Intentions Have Bad Results 282
School Choice: One Family's View 395

Maps

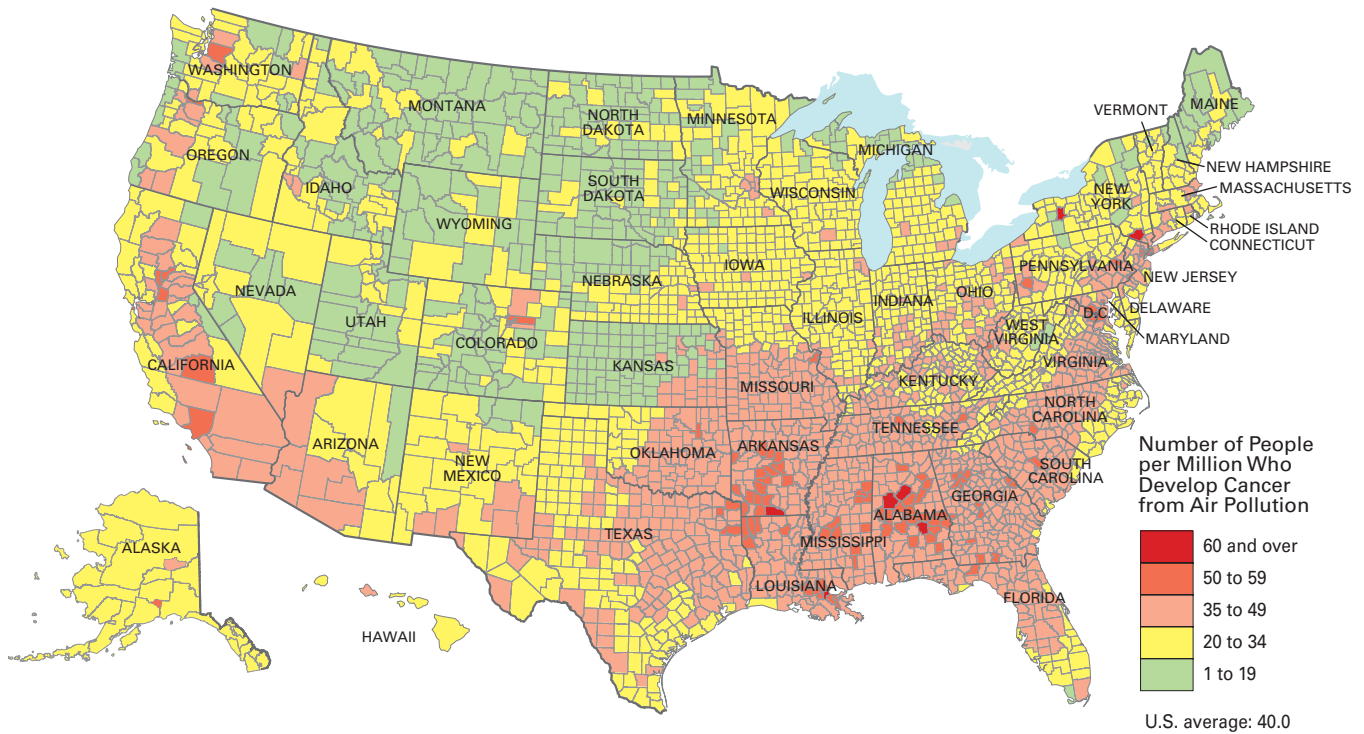
• Cindy Rucker, 29 years old, recently took time off from her job in the New Orleans public school system to have her first child.

• Although she is only 28 years old, Baktizar Kahn has four children, a common pattern in Afghanistan.



GLOBAL MAPS: Window on the World

1-1	Women's Childbearing in Global Perspective	14	13-1	Illiteracy in Global Perspective	378
4-1	Women's Power in Global Perspective	104	14-1	Urbanization in Global Perspective	418
6-1	Capital Punishment in Global Perspective	184	15-1	Population Growth in Global Perspective	434
7-1	HIV Infections in Global Perspective	219	15-2	Economic Development in Global Perspective	440
9-1	Infant Mortality in Global Perspective	266	16-1	Energy Consumption in Global Perspective	461
10-1	Economic Freedom in Global Perspective	297	17-1	Peace in Global Perspective, 2015	484
11-1	Internet Users in Global Perspective	336	17-2	Nuclear Weapons in Global Perspective	490
12-1	Legal Same-Sex Marriage and Registered Partnerships in Global Perspective	361			



NATIONAL MAPS: Seeing Ourselves

2-1	Poverty across the United States, 2014	45	7-1	Teenage Pregnancy Rates across the United States	216
3-1	Language Diversity across the United States	77	8-1	Marijuana Laws across the United States	250
3-2	The Concentration of Hispanics/Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Arab Americans, by County	82	9-1	Life Expectancy across the United States	274
4-1	Women's Political Power across the United States	109	10-1	Voter Turnout across the United States	305
4-2	The Earnings Gender Gap across the United States	113	11-1	"Right to Work" Laws across the United States	335
5-1	The Elderly Population across the United States	138	12-1	Divorce across the United States	357
6-1	The Risk of Violent Crime across the United States	167	13-1	Public School Teachers' Pay across the United States	390
6-2	Who's Packin'? Concealed Weapon Laws across the United States	179	14-1	Foreclosures across the United States	405
6-3	Inmates on Death Row across the United States	186	14-2	Population Change across the United States, 2000-2010	416
			16-1	Risk of Cancer from Air Pollution across the United States	467

Preface

Our nation's Pledge of Allegiance ends with the words "...with liberty and justice for all." This statement reflects our collective hope, but does it describe our reality? Certainly, some categories of the population (the rich, men, white people, heterosexual people) have greater freedom than others (the poor, women, people of color, homosexual and transsexual people). Then, too, a large share of this country's people has serious questions about the extent of social justice. This is an era of political division and widespread frustration. Two-thirds of U.S. adults say that the country is "on the wrong track." Globally, armed conflict and terrorism threaten the planet's peace, and there is increasing concern about the state of the natural environment and the consequences of global warming. Clearly, this is a time when we need to understand more about social problems.

Facts, Theory, and Politics

Sociology offers a path to understanding the problems that we face in today's world. Our discipline also extends an invitation to action—to become involved in the political debates and movements that are reshaping society. As the leading text for this course, *Social Problems, Seventh Edition*, offers a broad investigation of social problems, both domestic and global. This title provides all the *facts*, highlighting historical trends and pointing out what is going on today. In addition, this text uses *sociological theory* to tie facts together to create meaning and understanding.

Just as important, this title stands alone by providing *political analysis*. As a source of both understanding and action, *politics matters*. In the 2016 presidential election, the candidates represented a wide range of political positions, including far left (Sanders), liberal (Clinton), conservative (Cruz), and libertarian (Paul), and whatever label you want to place on Mr. Trump. Each of these positions seeks a distinctive type of society. As citizens, it is our responsibility to learn enough about politics and the issues to decide which visions are worth supporting and then to become involved in the political process.

Social Problems, Seventh Edition, not only urges people to become involved, it explains what politics is all about. From the first chapter to the last, this title explains the attitudes and values that define various positions on the political spectrum. *Social Problems* then applies these political points of view to dozens of issues—from increasing economic inequality to terrorism—so that students

understand today's debates and gain the ability to analyze new issues on their own.

A guiding principle of this text is that *politics involves various points of view*. *Social Problems* presents diverse political viewpoints for four reasons. First, all of them are part of the political debate that goes on across the United States. Second, no one can develop personal political beliefs with any conviction without understanding the arguments of those who disagree. In other words, to be, say, a good liberal, one needs to understand not just progressive politics but also conservative and radical-left positions as well. Third, while anyone is likely to favor one political position over others, all positions offer some element of truth. In politics, reasonable people can and do disagree. Understanding all positions is a major step toward promoting civil and respectful discourse. Fourth, and finally, by being inclusive, *Social Problems* invites all students to share their ideas, which encourages more lively class discussion.

The Social-Constructionist Approach

The most important reason to "put the politics in" when teaching a social problems course is to understand how politics guides the process of defining and responding to social problems. This title differs from all others in that it does not adopt one (implicit or explicit) political point of view by presenting a series of "problems" and identifying a sequence of "solutions" as if everyone agreed about what these are. Rather, all chapters highlight the importance of political attitudes in the selection of some issues and not others issues as "problems," as well as in the favoring of certain polices as "solutions." With this fact in mind, we can understand why people disagree about what the problems and their solutions are. Indeed, one person's "problem" may well be another's "solution." From this insight, true conversation begins.

Another benefit of using a social-constructionist approach is recognizing how our society came to define problems at certain points in time, often as a result of claims made by social movements. For example, the behaviors we now call "child abuse," "sexual harassment," and "environmental racism" may always have been with us, but our society did not always define these as problems. On the contrary, laws were enacted against them only after courageous individuals sparked successful social movements for change.

A Fully Involved Author

John Macionis is personally involved in every element of *Social Problems*. In addition to keeping the manuscript up to date, he selects all the photos and other images, writes all the captions, develops all the testing material, prepares the instructor's manual, and creates all the interactive content in the Revel electronic version. John corresponds regularly with colleagues and students, which makes *Social Problems* an always-evolving project. For the latest in the Macionis texts, visit his personal website: www.TheSociologyPage.com or www.macionis.com. Among other things, you will find there a series of new PowerPoint presentations, based on current research and free for downloading. A full suite of instructor resources is available from Pearson at www.pearsonhighereducation.com.

What's New in the *Seventh Edition*

Here is a brief listing of what's new in this revision:

Social Problems, Seventh Edition, is a thorough revision that provides the latest available data and includes the most recent events and trends. Here are some examples of new material for each chapter:

Chapter 1: Studying Social Problems New discussions include the controversy surrounding concussions and football and the national debate over high levels of immigration. The chapter contains expanded coverage of gun violence. The latest survey data identify the public's view of the most serious social problems. Find expanded discussion of Black Lives Matter, recent terror attacks in the United States and abroad, the spread of the Zika virus, the Flint, Michigan, water crisis, and increasing national attention to economic inequality.

Chapter 2: Economic Inequality For this key chapter, all income and wealth data are new. There is new discussion of how much (or how little) our system of taxation reduces economic inequality; new data point to a longevity gap between rich and poor; the chapter explores earnings of the highest-paid people in business, athletics, and entertainment; and the chapter now includes discussion of the significance of Bernie Sanders's political campaign as well as the importance of the economic inequality issue in the 2016 presidential election. This chapter is supported by fifty new research citations.

Chapter 3: Racial and Ethnic Inequality New to the seventh edition are discussions of white privilege and microaggression. There is new coverage of Filipino Americans, illustrating the variable ways in which people establish a racial and ethnic identity. Eighteen new research citations inform the revised chapter.

Chapter 4: Gender Inequality New discussions focus on gender in the media messages of political campaigns and also the proposed policy of a universal minimum wage to recognize the economic value of housework. Updates include the increasing number of women political leaders holding state and national office, the small share of films that pass the Bechdel test for gender bias, the narrowing gender gap in pay, the trend toward equal pay for women and men in television, and the extent of sexual violence. The revised chapter is informed by twenty-nine new research citations.

Chapter 5: Aging and Inequality The discussion of elder care has been rewritten to reflect the latest research and statistics; the discussion of euthanasia includes recent legal changes. Updates include the latest in life expectancy, the changing living arrangements for the elderly, changes in poverty rates over the life course, and how the gender gap in pay varies at different stages of life. There are nineteen new research citations in this revised chapter.

Chapter 6: Crime, Violence, and Criminal Justice New discussions in this chapter focus on the problem of "missing black men," mass incarceration, and also trend toward the decriminalization of marijuana. Updates reflect the non-gendered definition of rape and the expanded definition of statutory rape now used by the Department of Justice, the narrowing gender gap in arrests, the low level of prosecution for white-collar crime, the increasing number of hate crimes, the high human toll linked to gang-related violence, and the declining use of capital punishment across the country. Forty new research citations inform the revised chapter.

Chapter 7: Sexuality There are new and expanded discussions of sexuality issues on campus, the transgender movement, and the effects of pornography on the individual. Updates include new data on how people identify themselves in terms of sexual orientation, recent changes to marriage laws, changing age at first intercourse, increasing public acceptance of homosexuality, the high level of anti-gay violence, the scope of national and global AIDS, and recent efforts to restrict access to legal abortion. Thirty-two new research citations support this revised chapter.

Chapter 8: Alcohol and Other Drugs The revised chapter has new and expanded discussions of the movement to decriminalize marijuana and of our nation's expanding heroin epidemic. Updates highlight the use of various categories of legal and illegal drugs, patterns of alcohol use on campus, the extent of cigarette smoking in the United States and in nations around the world, and the increasing medication of U.S. children. Forty-two new research citations inform this revised chapter.

Chapter 9: Physical and Mental Health New and expanded discussions focus on the latest assessments of the Affordable Care Act and also the contrasts between rural and urban patterns of health. Updates include the status of AIDS, our nation's ranking in global comparisons of health, and rates of mental illness by gender, race, and ethnicity. Thirty-one new research citations inform the revised chapter.

Chapter 10: Economy and Politics New discussions involve the 2016 presidential campaign, including the increasing importance of "outsider" candidates, the latest patterns involving campaign financing, and the personal wealth of all the candidates. Updates include the latest on public trust of government, some causes of Congressional "gridlock," changing patterns of party affiliation, and rising wages at Walmart. Twenty-six new research citations support the revised chapter.

Chapter 11: Work and the Workplace New and expanded discussions highlight the widespread presence of toxic substances in the workplace, work-related policies advanced during the 2016 presidential campaign, and changing patterns of unemployment. Updates focus on the extent of workplace injuries, the problem of workplace violence, the increasing reliance on part-time and temporary teaching staff in colleges and universities, and the state of labor unions in the United States. Eighteen new research citations support the revised chapter.

Chapter 12: Family Life The 2015 Supreme Court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage is integrated throughout the chapter. The latest statistical data support updated discussion of the extent of marriage, the increasing rate of cohabitation, rising incidence of single-parenting, and the changing rate of divorce. Twenty new research citations inform this revised chapter.

Chapter 13: Education There is expanded discussion of educational achievement according to race, class, and gender, as well as greater coverage of the challenges facing U.S. public education. New discussion highlights the underrepresentation of minority students in the nation's "gifted and talented" programs. Updates highlight the extent of schooling both in the United States and the world as a whole, the problem of school violence, and how gender shapes the teaching profession. Twenty-two new research citations inform the revised chapter.

Chapter 14: Urban Life There is new and expanded discussion of the fiscal crisis in Detroit and other U.S. cities. Updates track urbanization in the United States and the world as a whole, rates of unemployment and poverty for various parts of urban and rural America, the increasing minority population of U.S. cities, and the extent of

homelessness across the country. There are eleven new research citations in this chapter.

Chapter 15: Population and Global Inequality There is new and expanded discussion of economic inequality around the world, including the changing numbers of low-, middle-, and high-income nations. The chapter includes extensive updating of global patterns of fertility, mortality, migration, and longevity, and presents the latest data on the extent of slavery, women's access to contraception, the declining level of severe poverty in the world, and increasing debt carried by low-income nations. Twenty new research citations ensure the revised chapter's currency.

Chapter 16: Technology and Environment The revised chapter has expanded coverage of climate change and includes new discussion of the water quality crisis in Flint, Michigan, that illustrates how race and class shape environmental risks. Updates highlight growing levels of carbon emissions, increasing global population, rising energy consumption, and disappearing rain forests. Fourteen new research citations support the revised chapter.

Chapter 17: War and Terrorism The revised chapter has expanded discussion of ISIS and highlights other recent cases of global conflict. New discussion highlights the "new arms race" involving hypersonic missile warheads and also the disturbing levels of poverty and homelessness among U.S. veterans. Updates provides the latest data on the number of armed conflicts in the world, levels of military spending, the pace of arms control, the number of children engaged in militarism, and the increasing role of women in today's military. Recent cases of terrorism around the world are documented, including their toll in human terms. Eighteen new research citations inform the revised chapter.

Supplements

Instructor's Manual and Test Bank Each chapter in the Instructor's Manual includes the following resources: Chapter Update; Author's Note; Chapter Outline; Learning Objectives; Detailed Teaching Objectives; John's Chapter Close-Up; John's Personal Video Selection; Research for a Cutting-Edge Classroom; Teaching Suggestions, Exercises, and Projects; Web Links; Essay Questions; and Film List. Designed to make your lectures more effective and to save preparation time, this extensive resource gathers together useful activities and strategies for teaching your Social Problems course. Also included in this manual is a test bank of more than 900 multiple-choice and essay questions. The Instructor's Manual and Test Bank is available to adopters for download from the Pearson Instructors Resource Center 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 for download from the Pearson Instructors Resource Center at www.pearsonhighered.com.

PowerPoint Presentations The Lecture PowerPoint slides follow the chapter outline and feature images from the textbook integrated with the text. Additionally, all of the PowerPoints are uniquely designed to present concepts

in a clear and succinct way. They are available to adopters for download from the Pearson Instructors Resource Center at www.pearsonhighered.com.

I dedicate this edition of *Social Problems* to Dr. Donald Ferrell and Dr. Charlotte Brauchle, two very good friends in the process of making change.

As always, please feel free to contact me by email:
Macionis@kenyon.edu

With my best wishes to my colleagues,

John J. Macionis

About the Author

JOHN J. MACIONIS [pronounced ma-SHOW-nis] has been in the classroom teaching sociology for more than forty years. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, John earned a bachelor's degree from Cornell University and a doctorate in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania.

His publications are wide-ranging, focusing on community life in the United States, interpersonal intimacy in families, effective teaching, humor, new information technology, and the importance of global education.

In addition to authoring this best-seller, Macionis has also written *Society: The Basics*, the most popular paperback text in the field, now in its fourteenth edition. The full-length Macionis introductory text is *Sociology*, which is now in its sixteenth edition. He collaborates on international editions of the texts: *Society: The Basics: Canadian Edition*, *Sociology: Canadian Edition*, and *Sociology: A Global Introduction*. All the Macionis texts are available for high school students and in various foreign-language editions.

All the texts are also offered in low-cost electronic editions in the Revel program. These exciting learning materials provide an interactive learning experience. Unlike other authors, John takes personal responsibility for writing all electronic content, just as he authors all the assessment and supplemental materials. John proudly resists the trend toward "outsourcing" such material to non-sociologists.

In addition, Macionis edited the best-selling anthology *Seeing Ourselves: Classic, Contemporary, and Cross-Cultural Readings in Sociology*, also available in a Canadian edition. Macionis and Vincent Parrillo have written the leading urban studies text, *Cities and Urban Life*, currently in a sixth edition.

Follow John on his Facebook author page: John J. Macionis and find the latest information on all the books. You can also access downloadable teaching material at his website: www.macionis.com or www.TheSociologyPage.com. A full suite of instructor resources is found at the Pearson site: www.pearsonhighered.com

John Macionis recently retired from full-time teaching at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, where he was Professor and Distinguished Scholar of Sociology. During his long career as Kenyon, he chaired the Sociology Department, directed the college's multidisciplinary program in humane studies, presided over the campus senate, was president of the college's faculty, and taught sociology to thousands of students. Kenyon recognized his decades of



service by awarding him an honorary doctorate of humane letters in 2013.

In 2002, the American Sociological Association presented Macionis with the Award for Distinguished Contributions to Teaching, citing his innovative use of global material as well as the introduction of new teaching technology in his textbooks.

Professor Macionis has been active in academic programs in other countries, having traveled to some fifty nations. He writes, "I am an ambitious traveler, eager to learn and, through the texts, to share much of what I discover with students, many of whom know little about the rest of the world. For me, traveling and writing are all dimensions of teaching. First, and foremost, I am a teacher—a passion for teaching animates everything I do."

At Kenyon, Macionis taught a number of courses, but his favorite classes were always Introduction to Sociology and Social Problems. He continues to enjoy contact with students across the United States and around the world.

John now lives near New York City. In his free time, he enjoys tennis, swimming, hiking, and playing oldies rock-and-roll. Macionis is an environmental activist in the Lake George region of New York's Adirondack Mountains, working with a number of organizations, including the Lake George Land Conservancy, where he serves as president of the board of trustees.

Chapter 1

Sociology: Studying Social Problems

Learning Objectives

- 1.1 Explain the benefits of learning about sociology and using the sociological imagination.
- 1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.
- 1.3 Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.
- 1.4 Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.
- 1.5 Identify factors that shape how societies devise policy to respond to social problems.
- 1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.



Tracking the Trends

Survey Question: “Do you feel things in this country are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?”



SOURCE: CBS News/New York Times (2016).

Researchers try to gauge the public's confidence in the country by asking general questions such as this one:

“Do you think the country is on the right track or the wrong track?”

In early 2016, 65 percent of U.S. adults said they thought that the country was “on the wrong track,” more than twice the share who thought the country was “going in the right direction.” Back in 2002, just 35 percent of U.S. adults said the country was on the wrong track. In recent years, dissatisfaction with government emerged as the most commonly cited social problem in the United States. Do you think the country can continue without the confidence of a majority of the people?

Constructing the Problem



What turns an issue into a social problem?

Social problems come into being as people define an issue as harmful and in need of change.



Aren't we always dealing with the same problems?

Most of today's problems differ from those that concerned the public several generations ago.



Isn't a social problem any condition that is harmful?

Many conditions harmful to thousands of people are never defined as social problems.

Chapter Overview

This chapter introduces the study of social problems by defining the sociological imagination, explaining sociology's theoretical approaches, and describing sociological methods of research. You will learn how people's political attitudes define the issues they are likely to view as social problems and what policies they are likely to favor as solutions. You will gain the ability to describe the political spectrum and to apply various positions on the political spectrum to social issues. ■

Marcos Jorman was already late as he rushed out the door of his apartment. He ran down the stairs, briefcase in hand, and crashed through the old wooden door of the



apartment building. He looked north up Chestnut Street. What luck! The bus was right there, just half a block away! Catching his breath, Marcos climbed aboard as the bus pulled out into the heavy traffic. He saw Jan, a co-worker, standing in the rear of the bus.

"I just got a text from Sandra," Jan blurted out, looking a little desperate. "She says everyone is getting laid off. *We're all out*. The company is shutting down the whole division and moving operations out of the country." Her head dropped along with her spirit. "What am I going to do? How am I going to manage with my kids?"

Marcos checked his own phone. He, too, had messages—several from co-workers who had already arrived at work and confirmed the bad news. "Oh, man, it's true," he said softly. The two stood without speaking for the rest of the ride.

The day turned out to be one of the toughest in Marcos's entire life. He knew the start-up company was struggling with rising costs and heavy competition. Only two months earlier, new management had come in to "reorganize" and to cut costs. The decision to close operations was the result.

As he entered his workstation, he was handed a short letter spelling out the dismissal. He joined dozens of others at a short meeting with a human relations officer and then went back to pack up his things. He was home again by early afternoon.

Marcos sat in his apartment with a cup of tea looking out the window at nothing in particular. He felt weak, almost ill. He kept telling himself that times are tough. He knew the company was in trouble. But, somehow, he could not shake the idea that the job loss was his own fault, his own personal failure.

This story could be told millions of times because millions of people—including those who worked in construction, sales, communications, management, and teaching—have lost their jobs in recent years.

Seeing Patterns: The Sociological Imagination

1.1 Explain the benefits of learning about sociology and using the sociological imagination.

Living in a society that teaches us to feel personally responsible for whatever happens to us—good or bad—we easily understand Marcos’s reaction to being laid off. We imagine Marcos second-guessing himself: Should he have majored in something else? If only he had taken that other job in Atlanta! If only he had listened to his father and stayed in school. We all tend to personalize our lives and blame ourselves for our troubles.

However, when we apply the **sociological imagination**, a point of view that highlights how society affects the experiences we have and the choices we make, the picture changes. Using the sociological imagination, we see that the operation of U.S. society—in this case, a serious national recession—caused the loss of millions of jobs. This event, which changed the lives of people all over the country, can hardly be said to be simply a matter of bad personal choices.

Sociology is the systematic study of human societies. **Society** refers to people who live within some territory and share many patterns of behavior. As sociologists study society, they pay attention to **culture**, a way of life including widespread values (about what is good and bad), beliefs (about what is true), and behavior (what people do every day).

Cultural patterns in the United States are diverse, but one widely shared value is the importance of individualism, the idea that, for better or worse, people are responsible for their own lives. In the case of Marcos Jorman, it is easy to say, “Well, he lost his job because he decided to take a job with a start-up company in the first place. He really brought this on himself.” In other words, our common sense often defines personal problems—even when the problems affect millions of people—as the result of *personal choice*. Without denying that individuals do make choices, sociologists point to ways in which society

SOCIAL POLICY

C. Wright Mills: Turning Personal Troubles into Social Issues

All of us struggle with our own problems, which might include unemployment, falling into debt, falling out of love, drug or alcohol abuse, poor health, or suffering from violence. We experience these problems; we *feel* them, sometimes on a gut-wrenching level. Our problems are personal. But C. Wright Mills (1959) claimed that the roots of such “personal” problems lie in society itself, often involving the ways our economic and political systems work. After all, the normal operation of our society favors some categories of people over others: the rich over the poor, white people over people of color, middle-aged people over the very young and the very old. When people see their problems as personal, all they can do is try to deal with their troubles as one *individual*. Isolating one life in this way keeps people from seeing the bigger picture of how society operates. In the end, as Mills explained, people feel that “their lives are a series of traps. They sense that within their everyday worlds, they cannot overcome their troubles” (1959:3). Because we live in an individualistic culture, we are quick to conclude that the troubles we experience are simply our own fault.

A more accurate and more effective approach is to understand that it is society that shapes our lives. Using the sociological imagination transforms personal troubles into social issues by showing that these issues affect not only us but also countless people *like* us. This knowledge gives us power because, joining with others, we can improve our lives—and break free of our traps—as we set out to change society.

What Do You Think?

1. Provide three examples of personal problems that Mills would define as social issues.
2. To what extent do you think people in the United States believe that problems such as unemployment result from bad personal choices or even bad luck? Did this change during the recent recession? Explain.
3. Have you ever taken part in a movement seeking change? What was the movement trying to do? What were your reasons for joining?

shapes all our lives. Thinking sociologically, we see that widespread unemployment may be a personal problem (especially to people who lose their jobs), but it is also a *social issue*.

Sociology's key insight is that *many of the personal troubles people face are really social issues with their roots in the operation of the larger society*. As the U.S. sociologist C. Wright Mills (1916–1963) explained, using the sociological imagination helps us “kick it up a level” and see how society shapes our personal lives. The Social Policy box takes a closer look at how sociology can help you do this for yourself.

By helping us to see the world in a new way, the sociological imagination gives us power to bring about change. But a sociological viewpoint can also be disturbing. A course in social problems asks us to face the fact that many people in our communities lose their jobs, become victims of crime, and go to bed hungry through no fault of their own. When the economy turns bad, as it did in 2008, millions of people suddenly find that they are unemployed and many of them still are out of work years later. In this richest of nations, even during “good times,” tens of millions of people (especially women and children) are poor. The study of social problems helps us see these truths more clearly. It also encourages us to play a part in shaping the future of our nation and the world.

Social Problems: The Basics

1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

A **social problem** is a condition that undermines the well-being of some or all members of a society and is usually a matter of public controversy. In this definition, the term “condition” refers to any situation that at least some people define as

troublesome, such as not having a job, having huge college loans, living in fear of crime, being overweight or living in poor health, or worrying about the effects of toxic chemicals in our drinking water.

A condition that “undermines the well-being” hurts people, either by causing them immediate harm or, perhaps, by limiting their choices. For example, poverty not only deprives people of nutritious food and safe housing, but it also takes away their dignity, leaving them passive and powerless.

Because any issue affects various segments of our population differently, a particular social problem is rarely harmful to *everyone*. During the recent recession, some executives earned huge salaries and bonuses, just as some corporations (such as Walmart, which sells at very low prices) actually did pretty well. Even war that brings injury and death to young soldiers brings wealth to the companies that make and sell weapons and confers greater power on the military leaders who head our country's armed forces. As a result, the full consequences of any particular social problem are rarely simple or easy to understand.

Social problems spark public controversy. Sometimes a social problem (such as the Nice terrorist attack in 2016) rocks the whole world. In other cases (such as the spread of the Zika virus in 2016), a small number of government leaders and public health officials take action at the local level, perhaps by stockpiling vaccine and restricting travel to areas where infections have been reported (Tavernise, 2016).

Social Problems over Time

What are our country's most serious social problems? The answer depends on when you ask the question. As shown in Table 1–1, the public's view of problems changes over time. Back in 1935, a survey of U.S. adults identified the ten biggest problems facing the country, which we can compare to a similar survey completed in early 2016 (Gallup, 2016). In the mid-1930s, the Great Depression was the major concern because as much as 25 percent of U.S. adults were out of work. Not surprisingly, unemployment topped the list of problems that year. After years of gridlock in Washington, D.C., dissatisfaction with government topped the list in 2016, but several of the issues cited as serious social problems also reflected our country's struggling economy.

Comparing the two lists in the table, we find three issues on both: the economy, unemployment, and dissatisfaction with government. But the other issues are different, showing that the public's view of social problems changes over time. Sometimes, public opinion can change dramatically even over short periods. In the months after the shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri,

Table 1–1 Serious Social Problems, 1935 and 2016

1935	2016
1. Unemployment and a poor economy	1. Dissatisfaction with government
2. Inefficient government	2. The economy
3. Danger of war	3. Terrorism
4. High taxes	4. Immigration
5. Government overinvolvement	5. Guns/gun control
6. Labor conflict	6. Race relations/racism
7. Poor farm conditions	7. Unemployment
8. Inadequate pensions for the elderly	8. Federal budget deficit
9. High concentration of wealth	9. Poverty/hunger/homelessness
10. Drinking alcohol	10. Gap between the rich and poor

SOURCE: Gallup (1935, 2016).

the share of the people concerned about police violence directed against African Americans spiked. Similarly, in the wake of the killings in San Bernardino, California, at the end of 2015 and the shootings in Orlando, Florida, in 2016, an increasing share of the public identified terrorism and gun control as among the nation's most serious social problems (Gallup, 2016).

The Social-Constructionist Approach

The fact that people at different times define different issues as social problems points to the importance of the **social-constructionist approach**, *the assertion that social problems arise as people define conditions as undesirable and in need of change*. This approach states that social problems have a subjective foundation, reflecting people's judgments about their world. For example, the public has yet to include obesity on the list of serious social problems, even though health officials say that most adults in the United States are overweight. This is true despite the objective fact that illness brought on by obesity costs the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in our country each year, which is many times the number of people who die as a result of terrorist attacks or the number of soldiers who were killed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Figure 1–1 explains the subjective and objective foundations of social problems. Box A includes issues—such as homicide—that are objectively very harmful (more than 14,000 people are murdered each year in the United States) and cause widespread concern (polls show that a majority of U.S. adults worry about gun violence and want the government to reduce crime) (Pew Research Center, 2016). Box B includes issues—such as the use of automobiles—that, objectively speaking, cause even greater harm (more than 32,000 people in the United States die each year in auto accidents), and yet hardly anyone sees these issues as social problems. Of course, one reason people overlook the high death toll on our highways is that we think of automobiles as necessary to our way of life. Box C represents issues—such as school shootings—that, objectively speaking, cause relatively limited harm (only a few dozen people have died from such incidents, which is actually fewer than the number of people who die each year from bee stings), but these issues are widely viewed as serious problems all the same (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2015). Finally, Box D includes the use of cell phones, football, and a host of other activities that are not thought to be harmful and also are not considered a problem.

Issues may move over time from one box to another. In the years after the invention of cell phones in the 1980s, for example, few people worried about their use even by those operating motor vehicles. With little evidence that this practice posed a threat, cell phones fell in Box D. More

recently, however, studies have reported that the use of cell phones by people driving automobiles plays some part in more than 1.5 million accidents a year, claiming several hundred lives. As the number of deaths linked to cell phone use increases, this issue will move toward Box B. By 2016, as a result of increasing public concern, fourteen states (California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia) plus the District of Columbia banned talking on handheld phones while driving; thirty-eight states have outlawed cell phone use by new drivers, and forty-six states have prohibited texting by anyone behind the wheel. Before long public opinion could define cell phone use in cars as a serious problem, moving the issue from Box B to Box A (National Safety Council, 2015; Governors Highway Safety Association, 2016).

Any issue that is not considered a problem now may be viewed quite differently at some point in the future. For example, there are few things as American as football, a game that has gained popularity over recent decades and is now the most popular sport in the country. In recent years, however, an increasing number of players and ex-players have spoken out about possible concussion-related brain injury called chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE). The National Football League has acknowledged that a problem exists and that efforts are being made to more carefully monitor players' well-being. Exactly how widespread CTE is among players remains

		Is it subjectively considered a very serious problem?	
		Yes	No
Does it objectively cause serious harm to thousands of people?	Yes	A Homicide	B Use of automobiles
	No	C School shootings	D Use of cell phones

Figure 1–1 The Objective and Subjective Assessment of Social Issues

This figure shows that some issues (such as homicide) are both objectively harmful and widely seen as problems. But many issues that are objectively harmful (the use of automobiles results in more than 32,000 deaths each year) are not perceived as serious social problems. Likewise, some issues that are viewed as serious social problems (school shootings, for example) actually harm very few people. Many other issues (such as using cell phones or playing football) are not viewed by most people as harmful, although this may change at some point in the future.

an open question. The 2015 film *Concussion* starring Will Smith raised concern about CTE among the general public (Siegel, 2015; Kindelan, 2016). Should this concern over potential injuries increase, football might well move from Box D to Box C or Box B, depending on how many people are found to be harmed.

Another change in public opinion involves government efforts to track people's movement, telephone calls, and internet activity. In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, most people in the United States did not know much about efforts by the National Security Administration and other government agencies to identify suspicious activity on the part of potential terrorists. When asked about government tracking of individuals, most people offered the opinion that this was good and necessary. There was little public awareness of how government can use computer technology to threaten personal privacy (Scherer, 2013). As a result, the government's use of computer technology fell in Box D. In recent years, revelations about the extent of government monitoring of people's movement and communication have convinced an increasing share of the public that this issue poses a real danger to the personal freedom of everyone. For this reason, this issue appears to be moving to Box B. Perhaps, at some point in the future, *most* people will consider government monitoring of the public to be a serious social problem, placing the issue in Box A.

Recognizing that the subjective and objective importance of social issues may differ opens the door for a deeper understanding of social change. Consider this curious pattern: A century ago, it was objectively true that the social standing of women was far below that of men. In 1900, nine out of ten adult men worked for income, and nine out of ten adult women remained in the home doing housework and raising children. Women didn't even have the right to vote.

Although some people condemned what they saw as blatant inequality, most people did not define this situation as a problem. Why not? Most people believed that because women and men have some obvious biological differences, the two sexes must have different abilities. Thinking this way, it seemed natural for men to go out to earn a living while women—who were thought back then to be the “weaker sex”—stayed behind to manage the home. Objectively, gender inequality was huge; subjectively, however, it was rarely defined as a social problem.

Today, women and men are far closer to being socially equal than they were in 1900. Yet awareness of a “gender problem” in the United States has actually become greater. Why? Our cultural standards have changed, to the point that people now see the two sexes as mostly the same, and so we *expect* women and men to be socially equal. As a result, we view even small instances of gender inequality as a problem.

When we investigate social issues, it is important to consider both objective facts and subjective perceptions. Both factors play a part in the social construction of social problems.

What powerful people say about issues can have big consequences for public opinion. In 2016, for the first time, immigration showed up on the public's list of the most serious social problems. To some extent, this concern reflects the fact that thousands of people cross the southern U.S. border illegally each year. But much of the concern reflects fear of immigrants from the Middle East who might engage in terror. During the 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump called for barring all Muslims from entering the country until the government could ensure that no would-be jihadists were admitted.

Does this subjective fear square with the objective facts? The truth is that, since the 9/11 attacks in 2001, some 330 people have been charged with crimes relating to jihadist terrorism, but virtually all of these people have been U.S. citizens or people who have permanent legal residency (green cards). An isolated case of a recent immigrant engaging in deadly jihadist terrorism is Tashfeen Malik (a legal U.S. resident) who, along with her husband Syed Rizwan Farook (a natural-born U.S. citizen), killed fourteen people in a 2015 terror attack in San Bernardino, California.

Almost all terrorism that takes place in the United States is “home grown” and is not the work of immigrants. In addition, the number of people killed by right-wing extremists (who strike out against the power of the U.S. government) is also high. But while fears of jihadist terrorism have figured into national political debate (especially on the part of Republicans), right-wing terrorism is not widely viewed as a social problem.

A far greater threat to the public than any terrorism is gun violence. For years, more than 30,000 deaths due to gun violence (including murder, suicide, and accidents) have occurred annually, which is about 100 deaths *every day*. And for years, few people defined gun violence as a social problem. Only in 2016 was gun violence listed among the most serious social problems for the first time.

The point is that much public concern is directed against immigrants, the vast majority of whom pose very little danger to anyone; far less public concern is directed against right-wing extremists who pose far greater danger. Even more significant, gun violence involving tens of thousands of deaths each year has long been ignored and is only now gaining widespread public attention. Put another way, someone in the United States is 5,000 times more likely to be killed by gun violence than by a jihadist terrorist. Subjective fear does not necessarily reflect objective facts (Kristof, 2015; Bergen, 2016).

Claims Making

One major reason for more attention being directed at gun violence is that President Obama made this a high-priority issue, using his office to rally public support for greater gun control.

Claims making refers to *efforts by individuals, officials, and organizations to convince others that a particular issue or situation should be defined as a social problem*. This process begins by rejecting the *status quo* (Latin words meaning “the situation as it is”) and calling for change. Put another way, claims making creates controversy by defining the existing situation as unacceptable. The process continues as people explain exactly *what* changes are needed and *why* they are needed.

Claims making is illustrated in the history of another issue that has been with us for some thirty-five years. Back in 1981, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention first received reports of a strange disease that was killing people. The victims were mostly homosexual men. The disease came to be known as “acquired immune deficiency syndrome” (AIDS). For several years, even as the numbers of cases in the United States climbed into the thousands, AIDS received limited media coverage and there was little public outcry. By 1985, however, the public as a whole had become concerned about the danger of AIDS, and this disease was defined as a serious social problem.

What made this happen? For any condition to be defined as a social problem, people—usually a small number at first—make claims that the situation is unacceptable and that change is needed. In the case of AIDS, medical officials sounded the alarm, and the gay communities in large cities (notably San Francisco and New York) mobilized to spread information about the dangers posed by this deadly disease.

Claims making is the process of defining certain issues as social problems. Economic inequality has existed in the United States throughout this country’s entire history. Yet only in the past five years has this issue gained widespread public attention. In 2011, the Occupy Wall Street movement advanced the claim that just “1 percent” of the people dominate U.S. society. In the 2016 presidential election, Bernie Sanders built his campaign around the claim that our nation’s level of economic inequality is unjust and should be reduced by government policy.

Of course, public officials and powerful individuals often engage in the “loudest” claims making. But ordinary people can make claims more powerful by joining their voices. In 2016, people in the city of Flint, Michigan, began to come together and speak out about the dirty-looking and unsafe tap water that was coming into their homes from the city water supply. Scientists at a university laboratory were engaged and confirmed the presence of high levels of lead in the city’s water (Smith, 2016).

Social media have greatly increased the potential impact of claims making. Television, radio, newspapers, and computer devices that use the internet all quickly spread information to tens of millions of people and can mobilize individuals to join together in groups actively seeking change. Stories in the mass media about the dangers of tap water in Flint, Michigan, as well as the use of social media, not only elevated this situation into a major problem with criminal charges filed against public officials but alerted people in other cities where similar levels of water contamination may exist. In general, the greater the mass media coverage of a topic and the more media stories argue for change, the more likely the issue in question is to develop into a social problem. In an age when social media connect people as never before, success in claims making can occur quickly. In 2013, shortly after a Florida jury acquitted George Zimmerman in the shooting death of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin, an activist in California posted a statement that “black lives matter.” Another activist transformed these words into the hashtag #blacklivesmatter, and this claim was suddenly spreading across the country, sparking a social movement. In 2015, in response to the deaths of African Americans at the hands of police, the phrase “black lives matter” was tweeted some 9 million times.

