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SOCIAL PROBLEMS



96/97

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Twenty-Fourth Edition

Printed in the United States of America



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To the Reader

In publishing ANNUAL EDITIONS we recognize the enormous role played by the magazines, newspapers, and journals of the *public press* in providing current, first-rate educational information in a broad spectrum of interest areas. Within the articles, the best scientists, practitioners, researchers, and commentators draw issues into new perspective as accepted theories and viewpoints are called into account by new events, recent discoveries change old facts, and fresh debate breaks out over important controversies.

Many of the articles resulting from this enormous editorial effort are appropriate for students, researchers, and professionals seeking accurate, current material to help bridge the gap between principles and theories and the real world. These articles, however, become more useful for study when those of lasting value are carefully collected, organized, indexed, and reproduced in a low-cost format, which provides easy and permanent access when the material is needed.

That is the role played by *Annual Editions*. Under the direction of each volume's *Editor*, who is an expert in the subject area, and with the guidance of an *Advisory Board*, we seek each year to provide in each ANNUAL EDITION a current, well-balanced, carefully selected collection of the best of the public press for your study and enjoyment.

We think you'll find this volume useful, and we hope you'll take a moment to let us know what you think.

Welcome to *Annual Editions: Social Problems 96/97*. When Democrat Bill Clinton was elected president in 1992, he expressed great optimism for social reform, based on what appeared to be an end to political gridlock. However, his campaign promises to eliminate welfare as we know it, to "reinvent" government, and to provide health care for every American have been much more difficult to achieve than he envisioned. During the first two years of Clinton's presidency, both houses of Congress comprised a Democratic majority, which many believed should have enabled him to make major changes. However, significant numbers in his own party did not share his vision of what the future could and should be. At the conclusion of 1994, Congress shifted to a Republican majority with its "Contract with America," which ended the president's chances to achieve his campaign promises. To complicate matters, the specter of domestic terrorism turned into a reality with the April 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. This edition of *Annual Editions: Social Problems 96/97* has been revised to reflect the significant events, concerns, and problems emerging or highlighted during the past year.

As in the past, hundreds of articles have been reviewed in preparing this edition. In some cases it was very difficult to select which, among the numbers of very good articles, would be included in this edition. In other cases, we have had to search for quality materials for inclusion. I wish to thank those individuals who took the time to seek out and send in materials for consideration. Your efforts made my task much easier. The criteria used in selecting materials to include in the book are timeliness, quality, content, relatedness to the other articles, and readability. Some articles were very good, but the technical nature of the materials made them of little use to most readers. A superabundance of articles dealing with welfare reform, poverty, family and parenting issues, crime, drugs, terrorism, and the quality of life were discovered. What we were not able to find were articles that were current and readable in the areas of aging, sex (other than AIDS and related issues), religion, and global concerns. As a result, some areas may not be covered as well as they should be, and your help in locating quality materials in these areas would be appreciated. To make room for newer materials, some excellent articles that had become dated had to be deleted. It is hoped that their replacements are of comparable quality.

This edition begins with two articles examining various theories of social problems. Following this introductory section are seven units. Unit 1 clusters articles concerning the basic unit of society—the family—including the changes it is experiencing and the implications of these changes for the individual and society. Unit 2 looks at the causes and impact of crime, delinquency, and violence on the American society, and what, if anything, can be done to control them. This unit has been expanded to include materials on terrorism and the significance it can and is having locally and internationally. Unit 3 examines problems associated with access to and quality of health care. Unit 4 discusses issues, trends, and public policies impacting on poverty and inequality. Unit 5 explores the implications of mass immigration on the American society, the desirability of cultural pluralism, and the advisability of affirmative action. Unit 6 looks at some of the major problems facing cities and their ability to provide their residents with a high "quality" of life. Unit 7, the final unit, examines global issues that transcend national geographic boundaries.

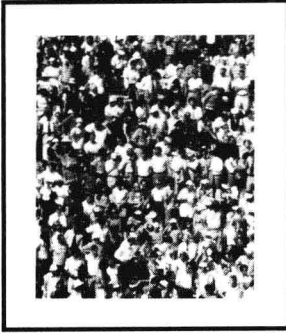
To assist the reader in identifying topics or issues covered in the articles, the *topic guide* lists various topics in alphabetical order and the articles in which they are discussed. A reader doing research on a specific topic is advised to check this guide first.

Most of the authors of the articles express serious concern about the troubled state of America's cities, families, economy, and deteriorating position as a world power, as well as concern about the condition of Earth's environment, but they have not given up. They also suggest strategies to help the family, reduce crime, make cities safer, improve the environment, and so forth.

If you have suggestions for articles or topics to be included in future editions of this series, please write and share them. You are also invited to use the postage-paid form provided on the last page of this book for rating the articles. Your ideas and input would be appreciated.

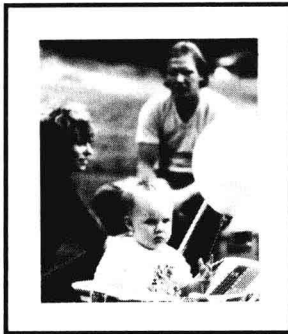


Harold A. Widdison
Editor



Introduction

Two introductory articles summarize the three major theoretical approaches to studying social problems: symbolic interactionism, functionalism, and conflict.

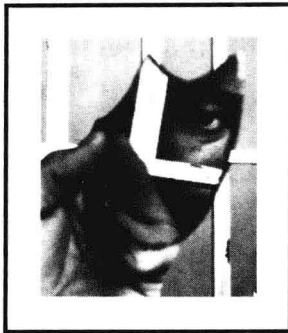


Unit 1

Parenting and Family Issues

Four selections examine how the socially stabilizing force of the family has been assaulted by the dynamics of economic pressure, and unemployment.

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Topic Guide	2
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1. Social Problems: Definitions, Theories, and Analysis , Harold A. Widdison and H. Richard Delaney, <i>Dushkin Publishing Group/Brown & Benchmark</i> , 1995.	5
This article, written specifically for <i>Annual Editions: Social Problems</i> , explores the complexities associated with defining, studying, and attempting to resolve "social" problems. The three major theoretical approaches— symbolic interactionism , functionalism , and conflict —are summarized.	
2. How Social Problems Are Born , Nathan Glazer, <i>The Public Interest</i> , Spring 1994.	14
Nathan Glazer examines various strategies, techniques, and processes through which some social concerns become defined as "social problems" while others do not.	
Overview	20
3. Fount of Virtue, Spring of Wealth: How the Strong Family Sustains a Prosperous Society , Charmaine Crouse Yost, <i>The World & I</i> , August 1994.	22
Cross-cultural anthropological studies reveal that strong, stable families reduce the incidence of violence, poverty, drug abuse, sickness, mental illness, and dropping out of school.	
4. Honor Thy Children , <i>U.S. News & World Report</i> , February 27, 1995.	35
Nearly two of every five children in America do not live with their fathers. Now, there is a growing movement to try and repair the damage and reconnect dads to their children.	
5. Growing Up against the Odds , Robert Royal, <i>The World & I</i> , July 1995.	39
This article documents that there is a direct link between the breakup of the traditional family and the increase of every type of social pathology .	
6. Why Leave Children with Bad Parents? Michele Ingrassia and John McCormick, <i>Newsweek</i> , April 25, 1994.	43
Under the pressure to preserve families, social service agencies bend over backwards to return abused children to their parents . As a result, thousands of abused kids' lives are placed in jeopardy each year.	



Unit 2

Crime, Terrorism, and Violence

Six articles discuss the extent and significance of crime and delinquency in today's society.

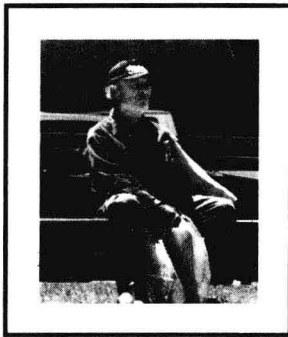


Unit 3

Health and Health Care Issues

Seven articles address society's aging, health, and health care issues.

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| Overview | 48 |
| 7. Getting Serious about Crime , George Lardner, <i>Washington Post National Weekly Edition</i> , November 29–December 5, 1993. | 50 |
| People demand that something be done when crime hits close to home. But what is being done is not working. George Lardner argues that for <i>the justice system</i> to be effective, arrests must be coupled with <i>immediate and severe punishment</i> . | |
| 8. Ethics, Neurochemistry, and Violence Control , Stephen G. Post, <i>The World & I</i> , August 1994. | 52 |
| The allure of a quick fix for violence has encouraged the search for a <i>genetic link to violence</i> that can be chemically controlled. Stephen Post challenges this genetic perspective—claiming that violence is a complex interaction among social, psychological, societal, and biological factors. | |
| 9. Terrorism in America , Orrin Hatch and Doug Bandow, <i>The World & I</i> , August 1995. | 58 |
| Senator Orrin Hatch, Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, debate the <i>necessity of new legislation to combat terrorism</i> . Action and overreaction hang in the balance. | |
| 10. Enemies of the State , Jill Smolowe, <i>Time</i> , May 8, 1995. | 64 |
| <i>Secretive, paranoid, and obsessed</i> , American patriots warn the American government to keep its hands off their <i>lands, wallets, and guns</i> —or else. | |
| 11. Forgiving the Unforgivable , Jean Callahan, <i>New Age Journal</i> , September/October 1993. | 69 |
| Survivors of crime and abuse are learning an <i>unlikely method of freeing themselves from their anguish</i> —forgiveness. They have discovered that it is a difficult but necessary process if victims are to be able to move on with their lives. | |
| 12. Fearsome Security: The Role of Nuclear Weapons , Michael M. May, <i>The Brookings Review</i> , Summer 1995. | 74 |
| Michael May argues that nuclear deterrence is a <i>fact of modern life</i> and that peacetime is the right time to maintain the deterrence and to formulate strategies on how to deal with it. | |
| Overview | 78 |
| 13. The Cruellest Choice , Sharman Stein, <i>Chicago Tribune</i> , December 11, 1994. | 80 |
| What role should parents and physicians play in deciding if, or how long, <i>severely premature babies</i> should be treated? Medicine is increasingly effective in treating premature babies, but the economic and social costs are horrific. | |
| 14. A New Look at Health Care Reform , Murray Weidenbaum, <i>Vital Speeches of the Day</i> , April 1, 1995. | 85 |
| Murray Weidenbaum believes that any attempt to reform health care requires developing a <i>sensible and sensitive</i> means of balancing the demand for health care with the ability to supply it. <i>Difficult choices</i> must be made among imperfect alternatives. | |

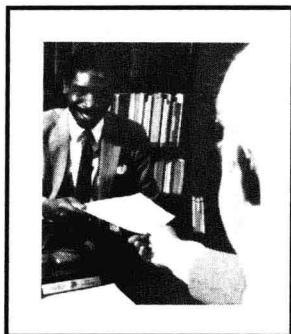


Unit 4

Poverty and Inequality

Seven selections examine how inequality affects society and the institutions of education, women's rights, the economy, and welfare.

15. **A Doctor's Dilemma**, James N. Dillard, *Newsweek*, June 12, 1995. 89
Being a "**good Samaritan**" can destroy medical careers. Because the law makes no distinction between an act of compassion and malpractice, medical doctors have become extremely hesitant about stopping to help accident victims.
16. **The Pension Time Bomb**, Gareth G. Cook, *The Washington Monthly*, January/February 1995. 91
Few people would argue that **many years of employment** should be rewarded. However, the propensity of state, local, and federal governments to underfund pension funds is a time bomb just waiting to go off.
17. **Breathing Fire on Tobacco**, Dan Zegart, *The Nation*, August 28-September 4, 1995. 95
In early 1995 the largest **product liability suit** in American history was filed against **American Tobacco**. Representing over 90 million current and former smokers, this class-action suit could win damages of over \$40 billion.
18. **Confronting the AIDS Pandemic**, Daniel J. M. Tarantola and Jonathan M. Mann, *The World & I*, January 1993. 99
AIDS has become pandemic. By the year 2000, as many as 110 million people worldwide may be HIV positive and could drain as much as \$500 billion from the world's economy. The urgency for a solution necessitates a coordinated worldwide effort.
19. **Mental Illness Is Still a Myth**, Thomas Szasz, *Society*, May/June 1994. 104
Psychiatrist Thomas Szasz, author of the classic book *The Myth of Mental Illness*, argues that **psychiatry is a branch of the law** or of secular religion, but it is not a science.
- Overview** 110
20. **Old Traps, New Twists**, Kent Weaver, *The Brookings Review*, Summer 1994. 112
Attempts to reform welfare fail because they are unable to avoid one or more of the six "welfare traps." Kent Weaver identifies and discusses these traps and assesses the possibility of meaningful reform.
21. **Gap in Wealth in U.S. Called Widest in West**, Keith Bradsher, *New York Times*, April 17, 1995. 116
New studies examine the **economic inequality** that has been rising in the United States since the 1970s. Of most industrial nations, the United States has become the most economically stratified.



Unit 5

Cultural Pluralism and Affirmative Action

Five selections discuss various aspects of cultural pluralism: that it has been minimized, that diverse differences promote unity, and that diversity is the sign of social maturity.

22. **Does Welfare Bring More Babies?** Charles Murray, *The American Enterprise*, January/February 1994. 118
Does welfare contribute significantly to illegitimacy? Through detailed statistical analysis using data on African Americans, Charles Murray concludes that it does not.
23. **Taking Over**, Eliza Newlin Carney, *National Journal*, June 10, 1995. 124
Will block grants to the states solve the welfare mess? Eliza Carney argues that block grants not only will not work, but will probably make the mess even worse.
24. **It's Not Working: Why Many Single Mothers Can't Work Their Way Out of Poverty**, Chris Tilly and Randy Albelda, *Dollars and Sense*, November/December 1994. 129
The authors show how and why many ***single mothers*** cannot work their way out of poverty no matter how hard they try. It appears that supplemental support is essential. Seven types of needed reform are suggested.
25. **Aid to Dependent Corporations: Exposing Federal Handouts to the Wealthy**, Chuck Collins, *Dollars and Sense*, May/June 1995. 132
It is not just the poor who are receiving handouts from the government. Many major corporations receive handouts or what Chuck Collins calls "***wealthfare***."
26. **Inequality: For Richer, for Poorer**, *The Economist*, November 5, 1994. 135
Income inequalities in America and Britain are greater than at any time in the past 50 years. The social consequences of this change are explored.
- Overview 138
27. **Reclaiming the Vision: What Should We Do after Affirmative Action?** Constance Horner, *The Brookings Review*, Summer 1995. 140
Constance Horner accepts the fact that ***affirmative action programs*** will be modified significantly and suggests six approaches that would help align minority interests with ascendant and long-standing American values.
28. **Enough**, Richard D. Lamm, *Across the Board*, March 1995. 145
Richard Lamm argues that we have an ***immigration policy*** that has no definable objective but is working against our national interests. Four reasons why our immigration policy should be reevaluated are discussed.
29. **What to Do about Affirmative Action**, Arch Puddington, *Commentary*, June 1995. 148
Current ***affirmative action programs*** were based on legislative action designed to ***stop blatant discrimination***, not to create quotas. The original intent of affirmative action legislation does not reflect current practice.



Unit 6

Cities, Urban Growth, and the Quality of Life

Nine articles examine the current state of cities in the United States and various other countries.

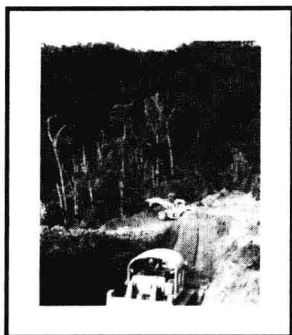
30. **A Twofer's Lament**, Yolanda Cruz, *The New Republic*, October 17, 1994. 156
Yolanda Cruz relates from her own experience how affirmative action can **damage self-esteem**. She reflects on the difference between opportunity and privilege.
31. **Crisis of Community: Make America Work for Americans**, William Raspberry, *Vital Speeches of the Day*, June 1, 1995. 158
William Raspberry believes that the **struggle for group advantage** has virtually destroyed a sense of community in the United States of America.
- Overview 162
- A. **CITIES**
32. **Can We Stop the Decline of Our Cities?** Stephen Moore and Dean Stansel, *USA Today Magazine (Society for the Advancement of Education)*, March 1994. 164
Investing massive amounts of federal money in major U.S. cities has not stemmed urban decline. The authors suggest that the federal aid approach can never meet its urban objectives **until city government abandons its self-serving agenda** in favor of a "people-first" commitment.
33. **Can We Save the Inner City?** David Moberg, *In These Times*, February 7, 1994. 169
In spite of three decades of intermittent federal action on poverty and civil rights, **poor urban neighborhoods have progressively deteriorated**. Academics, private foundations, and the federal government continue to debate the best way to save these neighborhoods.
- B. **QUALITY OF LIFE**
34. **The Projects Come Down**, Rob Gurwitt, *Governing*, August 1995. 173
Because **centralized public housing projects** have not worked, cities are now experimenting with decentralized programs with considerable success.
35. **Jumping Off the Fast Track**, Bonnie Miller Rubin, *Chicago Tribune*, January 22, 1995. 177
Career success was once a major component of **the American dream**. But with foreign competition, computers, and corporate restructuring, the dream is increasingly a nightmare.

C. EDUCATION

36. **The Dismal State of Public Education**, Allyson Tucker, *The World & I*, October 1994. **182**
Despite escalating spending on public education, school performance and student achievement have not improved. Allyson Tucker recommends deregulation, decentralization, and school choice.
37. **Off Course**, Karen Lehrman, *Mother Jones*, September/October 1993. **187**
What is or should be the role for any academic program? Karen Lehrman looks at *women's studies programs* across the nation and concludes that many emphasize subjectivity over objectivity, feelings over facts, and instinct over logic.
38. **Truth and Consequences: Teen Sex**, Douglas J. Besharov and Karen N. Gardiner, *The American Enterprise*, January/February 1993. **193**
For the year 1993, it was expected that there would be *about 1 million teenage pregnancies*. Of these, there would be 406,000 abortions, 134,000 miscarriages, and 490,000 live births, including 313,000 out of wedlock. In addition, 3 million teenagers would suffer from a *sexually transmitted disease*. This article explores the implications of these alarming statistics and discusses what can be done.

D. DRUGS

39. **A Society of Suspects: The War on Drugs and Civil Liberties**, Steven Wisotsky, *USA Today Magazine (Society for the Advancement of Education)*, July 1993. **199**
"A decade after President Reagan launched *the war on drugs*, all we have to show for it are city streets ruled by gangs, a doubled prison population, and a substantial erosion of constitutional protections."
40. **It's Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco, Stupid!** Joseph A. Califano Jr., *Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University*, Annual Report, 1994. **205**
Is *drug abuse* the primary culprit undermining the effectiveness of welfare, health care, and criminal justice systems? Joseph Califano says yes and shows how!



Unit 7

Global Issues

Six articles discuss common human social problems faced by people worldwide. Topics include the environment, drugs, and cultural misunderstanding.

Overview	212
41. The Mirage of Sustainable Development , Thomas J. DiLorenzo, <i>The Futurist</i> , September/October 1993. How do we achieve both economic growth and environmental protection ? Economist Thomas DiLorenzo believes that private property rights will work better than international bureaucracies.	214
42. The Civil Rights Issue of the '90s , Nancie G. Marzulla, <i>The World & I</i> , October 1994. Just how far can state and federal governments go in implementing laws designed to protect the environment, and what rights do private property holders have to use their own lands?	218
43. Global Reach: The Threat of International Drug Trafficking , Rensselaer W. Lee III, <i>Current History</i> , May 1995. The international trade in drugs has become an increasingly important issue in global security. It is a problem, however, that falls outside traditional national security concerns , even though it threatens the political stability of many states.	222
44. The West's Deepening Cultural Crisis , Richard Eckersley, <i>The Futurist</i> , November/December 1993. A striking feature of Western civilization is that, for all our success in reducing the toll of lives taken by disease, we have failed to diminish those exacted by despair.	227
45. A Decade of Discontinuity , Lester R. Brown, <i>World Watch</i> , July/August 1993. With today's rising populations and declining natural resources , "the 1980s may have been the last decade in which humankind could anticipate a future of ever-increasing productivity on all fronts." By any measure, "the boom we have experienced since mid-century is coming to an end."	231
46. Earth Is Running Out of Room , Lester R. Brown, <i>USA Today Magazine (Society for the Advancement of Education)</i> , January 1995. A great number of the planet's leading scientists (including 102 Nobel Prize winners) have noted that the continuation of destructive human activities may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life as we know it .	238
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SOCIAL PROBLEMS 96/97

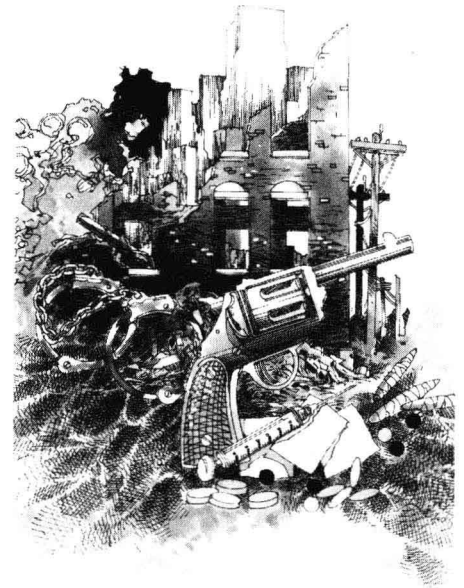
Editor

Harold A. Widdison
Northern Arizona University

Harold A. Widdison, professor of sociology at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, holds degrees in Sociology and Business Administration from Brigham Young University and Case-Western Reserve University. Employed as an education specialist with the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, he was awarded a Sustained Superior Performance Award. As a medical sociologist, Dr. Widdison is actively involved in his community with the local medical center's neonatal committee, a founding member of Compassionate Friends, a member of the board of directors of the Hozhoni Foundation for the mentally handicapped, and a consultant on death, dying, and bereavement.

Twenty-Fourth Edition

Annual Editions
A Library of Information from the Public Press



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Topic Guide

This topic guide suggests how the selections in this book relate to topics of traditional concern to students and professionals involved with the study of social problems. It is useful for locating articles that relate to each other for reading and research. The guide is arranged alphabetically according to topic. Articles may, of course, treat topics that do not appear in the topic guide. In turn, entries in the topic guide do not necessarily constitute a comprehensive listing of all the contents of each selection.

TOPIC AREA	TREATED IN	TOPIC AREA	TREATED IN
Abortion	38. Truth and Consequences: Teen Sex	Drugs (cont.)	39. Society of Suspects 40. It's Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco, Stupid! 43. Global Reach
Abuse	6. Why Leave Children with Bad Parents? 11. Forgiving the Unforgivable	Economy	5. Growing Up against the Odds 29. What to Do about Affirmative Action 30. Twofer's Lament 36. Dismal State of Public Education 37. Off Course
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AIDS	18. Confronting the AIDS Pandemic 38. Truth and Consequences: Teen Sex	Energy	46. Decade of Discontinuity
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Cities	32. Can We Stop the Decline of Our Cities? 33. Can We Save the Inner City?	Family	3. Fount of Virtue, Spring of Wealth 5. Growing Up against the Odds 6. Why Leave Children with Bad Parents? 8. Ethics, Neurochemistry, and Violence Control 20. Old Traps, New Twists 35. Jumping Off the Fast Track
Civil Liberties	40. Society of Suspects 42. Civil Rights Issue of the '90s	Fathering	4. Honor Thy Children 5. Growing Up against the Odds
Crime and Delinquency	5. Growing Up against the Odds 7. Getting Serious about Crime 11. Forgiving the Unforgivable 33. Can We Save the Inner City? 34. Projects Come Down 39. Society of Suspects 40. It's Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco, Stupid! 43. Global Reach	Feminism	37. Off Course
Disabilities	13. Cruellest Choices	Foreign Policy	18. Confronting the AIDS Pandemic 43. Global Reach
Divorce	4. Honor Thy Children 5. Growing Up against the Odds	Gangs	34. Projects Come Down
Drinking	2. How Social Problems Are Born 40. It's Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco, Stupid!	Guns	1. Social Problems 2. How Social Problems Are Born 10. Enemies of the State 33. Cruellest Choice 14. New Look at Health Care Reform 17. Breathing Free on Tobacco 18. Confronting the AIDS Pandemic 35. Jumping Off the Fast Track 38. Truth and Consequences: Teen Sex 40. It's Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco, Stupid! 46. Earth Is Running Out of Room
Drugs	2. How Social Problems Are Born 5. Growing Up against the Odds 8. Ethics, Neurochemistry, and Violence Control 33. Can We Save the Inner City? 34. Projects Come Down		

TOPIC AREA	TREATED IN	TOPIC AREA	TREATED IN
Homelessness	33. Can We Save the Inner City?	Psychiatry	19. Mental Illness Is Still a Myth
Homicide and Murder	7. Getting Serious about Crime 33. Can We Save the Inner City?	Public Housing	34. Projects Come Down
Housing	33. Can We Save the Inner City? 34. Projects Come Down	Race and Ethnic Issues	28. Enough 29. What to Do about Affirmative Action 30. Twofer's Lament 31. Crisis of Community
Illegitimacy	22. Does Welfare Bring More Babies? 38. Truth and Consequences: Teen Sex	Retirement	16. Pension Time Bomb
Immigration	28. Enough	Sex	38. Truth and Consequences: Teen Sex
Industrialization	44. West's Deepening Cultural Crisis	Single Parents	22. Does Welfare Bring More Babies? 23. Taking Over 24. It's Not Working 26. Inequality: For Richer, for Poorer
Law	9. Terrorism in America 15. Doctor's Dilemma 19. Mental Illness Is Still a Myth 23. Taking Over 27. Reclaiming the Vision 40. It's Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco, Stupid!	Social Control	8. Ethics, Neurochemistry, and Violence Control 43. Global Reach
Medicine	14. New Look at Health Care Reform 15. Doctor's Dilemma	Stress	35. Jumping Off the Fast Track
Mental Health	3. Fount of Virtue, Spring of Wealth 8. Ethics, Neurochemistry, and Violence Control 11. Forgiving the Unforgivable 19. Mental Illness is Still a Myth	Suicide	5. Growing Up against the Odds
Militia	10. Enemies of the State	Taxes	14. New Look at Health Care Reform 21. Gap in Wealth in U.S. 25. Aid to Dependent Corporations 32. Can We Stop the Decline of Our Cities?
Multicultural/ Cultural Pluralism	31. Crisis of Community 33. Can We Save the Inner City?	Terrorism	9. Terrorism in America
Nuclear Weapons	12. Fearsome Security	Unions	32. Can We Stop the Decline of Our Cities?
Parenting	4. Honor Thy Children 13. Cruellest Choice	Victims	11. Forgiving the Unforgivable 15. Doctor's Dilemma
Pensions	16. Pension Time Bomb	Violence	3. Fount of Virtue, Spring of Wealth 6. Why Leave Children with Bad Parents? 7. Getting Serious about Crime 8. Ethics, Neurochemistry, and Violence Control 9. Terrorism in America 10. Enemies of the State 33. Can We Save the Inner City?
Physicians	15. Doctor's Dilemma	War	12. Fearsome Security
Pollution	41. Mirage of Sustainable Development 45. Decade of Discontinuity	Welfare	5. Growing Up against the Odds 16. Pension Time Bomb 20. Old Traps, New Twists 23. Taking Over 24. It's Not Working 38. Truth and Consequences: Teen Sex
Population	18. Confronting the AIDS Pandemic 28. Enough 46. Earth Is Running Out of Room		
Poverty	21. Gap in Wealth in U.S. 23. Taking Over 24. It's Not Working 26. Inequality: For Richer, for Poorer 33. Can We Save the Inner City? 34. Projects Come Down 40. It's Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco, Stupid!		

Introduction



Before initiating any analysis of social problems, it is always useful to agree on what it is that is being talked about. Things that are symbolic or seem to represent a serious social problem to one group might be seen by others as a symptom of a much larger problem, or even as no problem at all.

Two articles are included in this section that explore the complexities of social problems. While some individuals take a very simplistic black-and-white approach in defining social problems and, in turn, what must be done to eliminate them, sociologists realize how complex and intertwined social problems are in all aspects of social life. But even sociologists do not agree as to the best approach to take in the study of social issues.

Harold Widdison and H. Richard Delaney, in the first article, introduce the reader to sociology's three dominant theoretical positions and give examples of how those espousing each theory would look at specific issues. The three theories—symbolic interactionism, functionalism, and conflict—represent three radically different approaches to the study of social problems and their implications for individuals and societies. The perceived etiology of problems and their possible resolutions reflect the specific orientations of those studying them. As you peruse the subsequent articles, try to determine which of the three theoretical positions the various authors seem to be utilizing. Widdison and Delaney conclude

this article by suggesting several approaches students may wish to consider in defining conditions as “social” problems and how they can and should be analyzed.

The second article explores how social problems are born, that is, why some issues, actions, or behaviors become defined as significant social problems while others do not. Nathan Glazer believes that the logic underlying the symbolic language is the critical factor in determining if an individual concern will eventually evolve into a societal-level social problem.

The introduction of this book of readings with a discussion of this type is desirable in order to help readers understand the social and sociological aspects of problems and issues plaguing modern society. The other articles included in this edition range from living in single-parent families to the pending destruction of the world's environment. The reader should ask why the issue addressed in each article is a social problem. Is it a case of rights in conflict, a case of conflicting values, or a consequence of conflicting harms? To find out, the reader might first skim over each article to get a general idea of where the author is coming from—that is, the author's theoretical position—and then reread the article to see just what the author indicates is the cause of the problem and what can or should be done to resolve or eliminate it.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS:

Definitions, Theories, and Analysis

Harold A. Widdison and H. Richard Delaney

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

When asked, "What are the major social problems facing humanity today?" college students' responses tend to mirror those highlighted by the mass media—particularly AIDS, child abuse, poverty, war, famine, racism, sexism, crime, riots, the state of the economy, the environment, abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, and affirmative action. These are all valid subjects for study in a social problems class, but some give rise to very great differences of opinion and even controversy. Dr. Jack Kevorkian in Michigan and his killing machine is one example that comes to mind. To some he evokes images of Nazi Germany with its policy of murdering the infirm and helpless. Others see Kevorkian's work as a merciful alternative to the slow and agonizing death of individuals with terminal illnesses. In the latter light, Kevorkian is not symbolic of a potentially devastating social issue, but of a solution to an escalating social problem.

The same controversy exists at the other end of life—specifically, what obligations do pregnant women have to themselves as opposed to the unborn? Some individuals see abortion as a solution to the problems of population, child abuse, disruption of careers, dangers to the physical and emotional health of women, as well as the prevention of the birth of damaged fetuses, and they regard it as a right to self-determination. Others look at abortion as attacking the sanctity of life, abrogating the rights of a whole category of people, and violating every sense of moral and ethical responsibility.

Affirmative action is another issue that can be viewed as both a problem and a solution. As a solution, affirmative action attempts to reverse the effects of hundreds of years of discrimination. Doors that have been closed to specific categories of people for many generations are, it is hoped, forced open; individuals, regardless of race, ethnicity, and gender, are able to get into professional schools, and secure good jobs, with the assurance of promotion. On the other hand, affirmative action

forces employers, recruiting officers, and housing officials to give certain categories of individuals a preferred status. While affirmative action is promoted by some as a necessary policy to compensate for centuries of exclusion and discrimination, others claim that it is discrimination simply disguised under a new label but with different groups being discriminated against. If race, sex, age, ethnicity, or any other characteristic other than merit is used as the primary criterion for selection or promotion, then discrimination is occurring. Discrimination hurts both sides. William Wilson, an African American social scientist, argues that it is very damaging to the self-esteem of black individuals to know that the primary reason they were hired was to fill quotas.

Both sides to the debate of whether these issues themselves reflect a social problem or are solutions to a larger societal problem have valid facts and use societal-level values to support their claims. Robin William Jr. in 1970 identified a list of 15 dominant value orientations that represent the concept of the good life to many Americans:

1. Achievement and success as major personal goals.
2. Activity and work favored above leisure and laziness.
3. Moral orientation—that is, absolute judgments of good/bad, right/wrong.
4. Humanitarian motives as shown in charity and crisis aid.
5. Efficiency and practicality: a preference for the quickest and shortest way to achieve a goal at the least cost.
6. Process and progress: a belief that technology can solve all problems and that the future will be better than the past.
7. Material comfort as the "American dream."
8. Equality as an abstract ideal.
9. Freedom as a person's right against the state.
10. External conformity: the ideal of going along, joining, and not rocking the boat.
11. Science and rationality as the means of mastering the environment and securing more material comforts.
12. Nationalism: a belief that American values and institutions represent the best on earth.
13. Democracy based on personal equality and freedom.
14. Individualism, emphasizing personal rights and responsibilities.

INTRODUCTION

15. Racism and group-superiority themes that periodically lead to prejudice and discrimination against those who are racially, religiously, and culturally different from the white northern Europeans who first settled the continent.

This list combines some political, economic, and personal traits that actually conflict with one another. This coexistence of opposing values helps explain why individuals hold contradictory views of the same behavior and why some issues generate such intensity of feelings. It is the intent of this article and the readings included in this book to attempt to help students see the complex nature of a social problem and the impact that various values, beliefs, and actions can have on them.

In the next segment of this article, the authors will look at specific examples of values in conflict and the problems created by this conflict. Subsequently the authors will look at the three major theoretical positions that sociologists use to study social problems. The article will conclude with an examination of various strategies and techniques used to identify, understand, and resolve various types of social problems and their implications for those involved.

As noted above, contemporary American society is typified by values that both complement and contradict each other. For example, the capitalistic free enterprise system of the United States stresses rugged individualism, self-actualization, individual rights, and self expression. This economic philosophy meshes well with Christian theology, particularly that typified by many Protestant denominations. This fact was the basis of German sociologist Max Weber's "The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism" (1864). He showed that the concepts of grace (salvation is a gift—not something you can earn), predestination (the fact that some people have this gift while others do not), and a desire to know if the individual has grace gave rise to a new idea of what constitutes success. Whereas, with the communitarian emphasis of Catholicism where material success was seen as leading to selfishness and spiritual condemnation, Protestantism viewed material success as a sign of grace. In addition, it was each individual's efforts that resulted in both the economic success and the spiritual salvation of the individual. This religious philosophy also implied that the poor are poor because they lack the proper motivation, values, and beliefs (what is known as the "culture of poverty") and are therefore reaping the results of their own inadequacies. Attempts to reduce poverty have frequently included taking children from "impoverished" cultural environments and placing them in "enriched" environments to minimize the potentially negative effects parents and a bad environment could have on their children. These enrichment programs attempt to produce attitudes and behaviors that assure success in the world but, in the process, cut children off from their parents. Children are forced to abandon the culture of their parents if they are to "succeed." Examples of this practice include the nurseries of the kibbutz in Israel and the Head Start programs in America. This practice is seen by some social scientists as a type of "cultural genocide." Entire cultures were targeted (sometimes explicitly, although often not intentionally) for extinction in this way.

This fact upsets a number of social scientists. They feel it is desirable to establish a pluralistic society where ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity exist and flourish. To them attempts to "Americanize" everyone are indicative of racism, bigotry, and prejudice. Others point to the lack of strong ethnic or racial identities as the unifying strength of the American system. When immigrants came to America, they put ethnic differences behind them, they learned the English language and democratic values, and they were assimilated into American life. In nations where immigrants have maintained their ethnic identities and held to unique cultural beliefs, their first loyalty is to their ethnic group. Examples of the destructive impact of strong ethnic loyalties can be seen in the conflict and fragmentation now occurring in the former Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia.

James Q. Wilson (1994:54–55) noted in this regard:

We have always been a nation of immigrants, but now the level of immigration has reached the point where we have become acutely conscious, to a degree not seen, I think, since the turn of the century, that we are a nation of many cultures. I believe that the vast majority of those who have come to this country came because they, too, want to share in the American Dream. But their presence here, and the unavoidable tensions that attend upon even well-intentioned efforts at mutual coexistence, makes some people—and alas, especially some intellectuals in our universities—question the American Dream, challenge the legitimacy of Western standards of life and politics, and demand that everybody be defined in terms of his or her group membership. The motto of this nation—*E pluribus unum*, out of the many, one—is in danger of being rewritten to read, *Ex uno plures*—out of the one, many."

THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS: SYMBOLIC INTERACTION, FUNCTIONALISM, CONFLICT

In their attempts to understand social phenomena, researchers look for recurring patterns, relationships between observable acts, and unifying themes. The particular way in which researchers look at the world reflects not only their personal views and experiences, but their professional perspective as well. Sociologists focus on interactions between individuals, between individuals and groups, between groups, and between groups and the larger society in which they are located. They try to identify those things that facilitate or hinder interaction, and the consequences of each. But not all sociologists agree as to the most effective/appropriate approach to take, and they tend to divide into three major theoretical camps: symbolic interactionism, functionalism, and conflict theory. These three approaches are not mutually exclusive, but they do represent radically different perspectives of the nature of social reality and how it should be studied.

Symbolic Interaction

This theoretical perspective argues that no social condition, however unbearable it may seem to some, is inherently or objectively a social problem until a significant number of politically powerful people agree that it is contrary to the public