The background is a vibrant, abstract painting. It features a grid of rectangular frames in various colors like red, orange, and blue. Overlaid on these are sweeping, curved brushstrokes in shades of pink, yellow, and blue. In the lower right quadrant, a large, detailed eye with long, dark, spiky eyelashes is visible, looking towards the left. The overall style is expressive and colorful.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY

ONLINE

D I A N A

K E N D A L L




Social Problems in a Diverse Society *Online*

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PREFACE

[A social problems course] can provide a mind-opening . . . overview of a field of study, providing a method of perceiving and understanding the social realities we construct, playing a central role in leading students through the cognitive developmental processes that turn unchallenged dualism and other oversimplifications about everyday life into the complex formulations that better represent the social world in which we live.

—Sociologists Michael Brooks and Kendal Broad describe the social problems course in the Instructor's Resource Manual on Social Problems (Brooks and Broad, 1997:1)

This statement sums up the main reasons why I wrote *Social Problems in a Diverse Society Online*. Learning about social problems can be a highly rewarding experience. Although we live in difficult and challenging times, the social problems course provides an excellent avenue for developing patterns of critical thinking and for learning how to use sociological concepts and perspectives to analyze specific social concerns ranging from drug addiction and violence to inequalities of race, class, and gender.

My first and foremost goal in writing this book is to make the study of social problems *interesting* and *relevant* for students. To stimulate interest in reading the chapters and participating in class discussions, I have used lived experiences (personal narratives of *real* people) and statements from a wide variety of analysts to show how social problems impinge on people at the individual, group, and societal levels. Moreover, I have applied sociological imagination and relevant sociological concepts and perspectives to all the topics in a systematic manner.

Social Problems in a Diverse Society Online focuses on the significance of race, class, and gender in understanding social problems in the United States and around the globe. Throughout the text, people—especially people of color and white women—are shown not merely as “victims” of social problems

but as individuals who resist discrimination and inequality and seek to bring about change in families, schools, workplaces, and the larger society. To facilitate the inclusion of previously excluded perspectives, Chapters 2 through 4 examine wealth and poverty, racial and ethnic inequality, and gender inequality, while Online Chapters 5 and 6 look at inequalities based on age and sexual orientation. Thereafter, concepts and perspectives related to race, class, and gender are intertwined in the discussion of specific social problems such as education, health care, and the media.

Social Problems in a Diverse Society Online is balanced in its approach to examining social problems. However, it includes a more comprehensive view of feminist and postmodern perspectives on a vast array of subjects—such as the effect of new technologies and how the media depict social issues—than other social problems textbooks. As a sociologist who specializes in social theory, I was disheartened by the minimal use of sociological theory in most social problems texts. Those that discuss theory typically do so in early chapters but then fail to use these theories as a systematic framework for examining specific social issues in subsequent chapters. Similarly, many texts give the impression that social problems can be solved if people reach a consensus on what should be done,

but *Social Problems in a Diverse Society Online* emphasizes that how people view a social problem is related to how they believe the problem should be reduced or solved. Consider poverty, for example: People who focus on individual causes of poverty typically believe that individual solutions (such as teaching people the work ethic and reforming welfare) are necessary to reduce the problem, whereas those who focus on structural causes of poverty (such as chronic unemployment and inadequate educational opportunities) typically believe that solutions must come from the larger society. Moreover, what some people see as a *problem*, others see as a *solution* for a problem (e.g., the sex industry as a source of income, or abortion to terminate a problematic pregnancy).

Finally, I wrote this book in hopes of providing students and instructors with a text that covers all the major social concerns of our day but does not leave them believing that the text—and perhaps the course—was a “depressing litany of social problems that nobody can do anything about anyway,” as one of my students stated about a different text. I have written this book in hopes of resolving that student’s concern (which no doubt is shared by many other students) because I believe the sociological perspective has much to add to our national and global dialogues on a host of issues such as environmental degradation; domestic and international terrorism; discrimination based on race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, or other attributes; and problems in education. Welcome to an innovative examination of social problems—one of the most stimulating and engrossing fields of study in sociology!

Social Problems in a Diverse Society Online is an exciting alternative version of the Second Edition of *Social Problems in a Diverse Society*. It is printed in black and white and without photos, providing the chapters most frequently used in a social problems class. Six chapters have been moved out of the printed textbook and onto the web, making it less expensive and easier to transport, and exploding the chapter content into a full-color, online experience with hotlinks to relevant websites. A comprehensive, password-protected website (<http://www.abacon.com/kendallonline>) offers these six downloadable chapters, plus additional resources to support the entire book, including more of the popular “Lived Experiences” vignettes, an image gallery, numerous weblinks, video clips, learning exercises, and more.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS TEXT

Social Problems in a Diverse Society Online has been organized with the specific plan of introducing disparities in wealth and poverty, race and ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation early on, so that the concepts and perspectives developed in these chapters may be applied throughout the text. Chapter 1 explains the *sociological perspective* and highlights the issue of violence to draw students into an examination of such debates as whether “guns kill people” or “people kill people.”

Chapter 2 looks at *wealth and poverty* in the United States and around the world. Students will gain new insights on how some people become wealthy and on problems such as homelessness, low-income and poverty-level neighborhoods, and the relationship between teen pregnancies and school dropout rates. The chapter concludes with a thematic question, “Can class-based inequality be reduced?” This question will be asked throughout the text as new topics are discussed. Chapter 3 integrates the previous discussion of class-based inequalities with an examination of *racial and ethnic inequality*. The chapter ends on the optimistic note that perhaps racial and ethnic relations in the future will be better than they have been in the past as the children of today become the leaders of tomorrow. Chapter 4, *gender inequality*, highlights factors such as mainstream gender socialization and social barriers that contribute to the unequal treatment of women in the workplace and family and at school and other social institutions. Ageism and *inequality based on age* are discussed in Online Chapter 5, and *inequality based on sexual orientation* is examined in Online Chapter 6, placing these important topics in a context similar to the studies of prejudice and discrimination rooted in racism and sexism in contemporary societies.

Online Chapter 7 links previous discussions of race, class, and gender to an analysis of *prostitution, pornography, and the sex industry*. The chapter provides up-to-date information on the globalization of prostitution and gives students insights on how sex workers view themselves, why they engage in this line of work, and why some other people view sex workers as a social problem. In Online Chapter 8, *alcohol and other drugs* are discussed in depth, and students are provided with information about the so-called date rape drug and the abuse of prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, and caf-

feine. Chapter 9 discusses *crime and criminal justice* and takes an incisive look at sociological explanations of crime.

Beginning with Chapter 10, a look at *health care and its problems*, we examine some of the major social institutions in our society and note aspects of each that constitute a social problem for large numbers of people. Chapter 11 explores *the changing family*, emphasizing diversity in intimate relationships and families and child-related family issues. Chapter 12 presents contemporary *problems in education*, tracing the problems to such issues as what schools are supposed to accomplish, how they are financed, and why higher education is not widely accessible. Chapter 13 focuses on *problems in politics and the global economy* and provides a variety of perspectives on political power and the role of the military-industrial complex in U.S. politics and the economy. Online Chapter 14, a discussion of *problems in the media*, looks at how the recent concentration in the media industries affects the news and entertainment that people receive. Chapter 15 provides a survey of problems associated with *population and the environmental crisis*, particularly focusing on the causes and consequences of overpopulation and high rates of global migration. Chapter 16, a look at *urban problems*, details the powerful impact of urbanization on both high-income and low-income nations of the world. Chapter 17 discusses *global social problems related to war and terrorism*. After examining such topics as militarism, military technology and war, and domestic and international terrorism, the text concludes on a hopeful note, that large-scale war and terrorism can be averted in the twenty-first century. Online Chapter 18 asks “*Can social problems be solved?*” and includes a review of the sociological theories used to explain social problems, plus an analysis of attempts at problem solving at the microlevel, mid-range, and macrolevel of society.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

A number of special features have been designed to incorporate race, class, and gender into our analysis of social problems and to provide students with new insights on the social problems that they hear about on the evening news. The following sections discuss the text’s distinctive features.

Lived Experiences throughout Each Chapter

These authentic, first-person accounts are used as vignettes—“real words from real people”—to create interest and show how the problems being discussed affect people as they go about their daily lives. Lived experiences provide opportunities for students to examine social life beyond their own experiences (“to live vicariously,” as one student noted) and for instructors to systematically incorporate into lectures and class discussions examples of relevant, contemporary issues that have recently been on the evening news and in newspaper headlines. Some examples of lived experiences include:

- ▲ Lawrence Otis Graham, a Harvard-educated corporate lawyer and author, describes how much trouble he and many other middle- and upper-middle-class African Americans have catching taxis in cities like New York and working in corporate America. (Chapter 3, “Racial and Ethnic Inequality”)
- ▲ Hazel Wolf, age ninety-five, of Seattle, Washington, discusses her trip to Decatur, Alabama, to visit with a group of elementary students who saw her picture in *USA Today* and wrote letters to her. (Online Chapter 5, “Inequality Based on Age”)
- ▲ Nadia, a nineteen-year-old prostitute in New York City, explains how she went from being a minister’s daughter to working in the sex industry. (Online Chapter 7, “Prostitution, Pornography, and the Sex Industry”)
- ▲ Cesilee Hyde, age twenty-three, describes the night her car struck and killed a police officer directing traffic at an accident site and how she was subsequently charged with driving under the influence of alcohol. (Online Chapter 8, “Alcohol and Other Drugs”)
- ▲ Ruben Navarette, Jr., a Harvard graduate, recalls the day when his second-grade teacher divided the class into ability groups and notes how he believes this process has a harmful effect on students, especially Latinos/as, African Americans, and Native Americans who attend racially integrated schools. (Chapter 12, “Problems in Education”)

Interesting and Highly Relevant Boxed Features

Four different boxes—Social Problems and Information Technology, Social Problems in the Media,

Social Problems and Social Policy, and Social Problems in Global Perspective—highlight current hot topics involving various long-term social problems:

- ◆ *Social Problems and Information Technology*: “Cracking Down on Internet Child Pornography” (Online Chapter 7, “Prostitution, Pornography, and the Sex Industry”)
- ◆ *Social Problems in the Media*: “Media Ageism and Reporting on Teenagers” (Online Chapter 5, “Inequality Based on Age”)
- ◆ *Social Problems and Social Policy*: “The Battle over Marijuana: Medicalization or Legalization?” (Online Chapter 8, “Alcohol and Other Drugs”)
- ◆ *Social Problems in Global Perspective*: “Challenges and Opportunities Presented by Worldwide Migration” (Chapter 15, “Population and the Environmental Crisis”)

◆ Built-in Study Features

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

- ◆ *Chapter Outlines*. A concise outline at the beginning of each chapter gives students an overview of major topics.
- ◆ *Key Terms*. Major concepts and key terms are defined and highlighted in bold print within the text. Definitions are provided the first time a concept is introduced; they are also available in the Glossary at the back of the text.
- ◆ *Summary in Question-and-Answer Format*. Each chapter concludes with a concise summary in a convenient question-and-answer format to help students master the key concepts and main ideas in each chapter.

SUPPLEMENTS

- ◆ A variety of supplements are offered, including an Instructor’s Manual and Test Bank, Practice Tests, Computerized Test Bank, and the Allyn and Bacon Interactive Video for Social Problems. Please contact your local Allyn and Bacon representative for more information on any of these items.

- ◆ In addition to the password-protected website accompanying this text, a wealth of online resources are now available to adopters of this book, including a *Companion Website with Online Practice Tests* (<http://www.abacon.com/kendall>) and the *Allyn and Bacon Social Problems Website* (<http://www.abacon.com/socprobs>). The booklet *Social Problems on the Net* provides a guide to this website, in addition to hundreds of additional resources for studying social problems online.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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To each of you reading this preface, I wish you the best in teaching or studying social problems and hope that you will share with me any comments or suggestions you have about the book. The text was written with you in mind, and your suggestions (with appropriate attribution) will be included whenever possible in future editions. Let's hope that our enthusiasm for “taking a new look at social problems” will spread to others so that we together may seek to reduce or solve some of the pressing social problems we encounter during our lifetime.

Diana Kendall, Ph.D.

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In Sum

I do not want to attend another memorial service. I do not want to put up another memorial plaque. [I want each of you to say to yourselves]: "I am an important member of the Columbine family. I value life. I will make wise choices each and every day of my life." Then I told them, "I want you to . . . look at the person next to you and visualize what it would be like if they weren't here on Monday morning. I want to see all your smiling faces here on Monday morning. [On Monday morning, after the students had a successful and safe prom], one of the students came up to me and said, "I think all our smiling faces are here."

▲ —Principal Frank DeAngelis recalling what he told Columbine High School students in Littleton, Colorado, at a pep rally held four days before two students ambushed their classmates and teachers with gunfire and pipe bombs, taking thirteen lives before fatally shooting themselves

(Rimer, 1999:A1)

—Michael Shoels, father of Isaiah, the popular African American youth killed in the Columbine High shootings, explaining why he is speaking out against school violence and has started a nonprofit foundation, called Let's Stomp Out Hate Before It's Too Late, in memory of his son

(Belkin, 1999:63)

All we're doing is what our son asked us to do. Seventy-two hours before my son was slain down like he was some kind of animal . . . out of nowhere Isaiah asked us, "What would you do if someone gunned down all your children? Would you go get guns?" I said, "Is there a reason you ask that?" He said, "Dad, I was just asking a hypothetical." He got real testy. I said: "Son, no, we won't get guns, because we're not vengeful people. If anybody or anything will take one of my children down I will try to beat it down. I will try to strike it down, I'll speak against it the rest of my life."