Contemporary Families: An Equity Lens

CONTEMPORARY FAMILIES: AN EQUITY LENS

ELIZABETH B. PEARCE

ALEXIS CASTANEDA-PEREZ; WESLEY SHARP; SHONNA DEMPSEY; RUTA FAIFAISE; NYSSA CRONIN; MICHAELA WILLI-HOOPER; KATIE NIEMEYER; KATHERINE HEMLOCK; JESSICA N. HAMPTON; HANNAH MORELOS; CHRISTOPHER BYERS; CASSIE CRUZE; CARLA MEDEL; AMY HUSKEY; AND CHESSIE ALBERTI

Linn-Benton Community College
Albany, Oregon

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IN GRATITUDE

One of my greatest hopes is to help students understand the complexities of how oppression and privilege affect families in this country. I want students to embrace the goal of working toward equity. Working toward understanding and creating a more equitable world is a team project. Although I've spent a significant chunk of my career teaching these concepts, I am still learning.

The worldwide pandemic has dramatically changed the world of teaching. I am thankful to have the opportunity to write this book and to reach out and touch students in ways other than in the classroom. Writing this book is a step toward living under the roof of hope; during its creation, I have had many mentors, co-thinkers, collaborators and supporters. Thank you all for being a part of this creation.

Michaela Willi-Hooper fosters my creativity in a way that makes this text impactful and innovative. She has provided the students and me with unwavering support, enthusiasm, and resources. Her knowledge of systemic privilege and discrimination is invaluable and her administrative and research skills sustained us. She is central to the success of this project.

Steve Smith and **Katie Winder** have guided me in a way that allows me to see beyond what exists and into what I can do and be. I am forever grateful to have worked with both of them.

Angie Klampe, Rica Amity, and **Jason Kovac** interweave the roles of friend, mentor, and colleague in ways that keep me joyful, challenged, inspired, and focused.

Karelia Stetz-Waters and **Scott McAleer** keep me sane. Our years of friendship on and off-campus have changed my life for the better.

Nana Osei-Kofi's wisdom, scholarship, warmth, collegiality, and guidance influence my continued growth as a social justice educator and author. One memorable appetizer and laughter infused evening with Nana was enough to get me over my writer's block.

Chessie Alberti's enthusiasm, encouragement, knowledge and technical skill have made significant contributions in both the development and the finishing touches of this book.

Open Oregon Educational Resources and **Linn-Benton Community College Library** have provided structural support, funding, and leadership in the fields of Open Educational Resources and Open Pedagogy. **Amy Hofer** is leading us toward more equitable education where more students have the chance to flourish. **Dionna Camp** of **The Center for Accessibility Resources** was instrumental in this project. **The Learning and Innovation Center, and especially the faculty who participated in the January 2020 open pedagogy crowdsourcing** session, contributed to this project.

Three people who have served as Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities Division Dean: **Katie Winder, Ori-**

ana Mulatero Ferraro, and **Meg Roland** helped to plan the project, balance my workload and provide support to carry out a vision of equitable open pedagogy that involved student authors.

My colleagues at Linn-Benton Community College have helped me grow and have influenced the project through our conversations during lunchtime, learning community gatherings, faculty meetings, and walks on the Wellness Trail.

Isabelle Havet, Deron Carter, and **Jane Sandberg** have inspired me to think more deeply, to question more thoroughly, and to be my best self in the classroom and as an author.

Terese Jones, Jeff Flesch, and **Verna Ourada** have provided HDFS discipline specific knowledge and valuable insights into the early drafts of the first chapters and the foundation of this text.

My work during my sabbatical brought me in contact with faculty **Alexis J. Walker**, **Richard Settersten,** and **Becky Warner** at Oregon State University. Their scholarship and teaching has influenced my thinking, teaching, and writing.

Reviewers of individual chapters helped me to see other perspectives and include important sources. Their contributions provided immediate insight but also concepts that influenced other chapters and will be included in future editions. **Andrew Douglas Campbell, Shelly Dermody, Bobbi Hall, Isabelle Havet, Terese Jones, Nana Osei-Kofi, Jane Sandberg, Karelia Stetz-Waters, Lauren Visconti, Mark Weiss,** and **Michaela Willi-Hooper** all reviewed chapters and contributed feedback. **Deron Carter** and his **Winter 2020 Geology 209 Environmental Justice students** read chapters, provided resources, and met with the authors to discuss chapter drafts.

Oregon State University's Difference, Power, and Discrimination (DPD) Academy, led by Nana Osei-Kofi and **Bradley Boovy** provide leadership to the DPD Faculty at LBCC. This ongoing partnership feeds all of our LBCC DPD courses and contributes to the scholarship of this text. LBCC DPD Faculty Learning Community discussions are critical to my ongoing learning in this field and I appreciate my colleagues who continue to learn together.

Jane Waite, Bruce E. Thomson, Christopher Byers, Marcia Walsh, Zakir Khan, Amy Hofer, Margarita Casas, and **Fay Stetz-Waters** all provided stimulating conversation and resources that have impacted this project.

Lauren Antrosiglio, Michaela Willi-Hooper, and **Liz Baker** volunteered time and skills to make edits to the Pressbook that turned it into an eye-pleasing and accurate product both in digital and in downloadable formats.

Learning doesn't just happen when you are at work. **Rica Amity, Angie Klampe, Nadine Wood, Kellie Neet, Deb Savageau,** and **Sarah Davis Farrell** have all spent time in the forest with me, talking, and co-thinking about the topics in this text.

Alexis, Amy, Carla, Cassie, Christopher, Hannah, Jessica, Kate, Katie, Nyssa, Ruta, Shonna, and **Wesley** are my co-authors. They leapt into the unknown with me, entering the liminal space between con-

sumership and authorship of a college textbook. They trusted me to guide an experience in which I was also a neophyte. They dug deep into their own family experiences, even painful, to develop the themes of this text. They took risks. They grew in their scholarship and built the foundation of this book. They played their roles in differing ways: as brainstormers, as organizers, as researchers and as writers. They all will make a difference in the experience of future learners.

Margaret Pearce, Frances Pearce, Beth and **John Volz** provide unwavering support and love from the other side of the United States. The voice of **James Pearce** helps me to write and to edit. I know he would be proud. My daughters **Rachel** and **Sarabeth Pearce-Smith** are some of my favorite conversationalists in general but especially when it comes to talking about privilege and oppression. My Oregon framily is vast and loving; their friendship keeps me whole.

Liz Baker provides a foundation at home that contributes to my thinking, teaching, and writing. She makes me laugh. She volunteered to move the text from Google Drive into the Pressbook format so that students could access it there in the Fall of 2020. She is my partner in life, companionship, and growth.

I move toward the house that shelters students in their learning about equity and social justice, together with you. The support of colleagues, friends, and family is crucial. Families matter and I am grateful to have mine.

–Elizabeth B. Pearce

"The very least you can do in your life is figure out what you hope for. And the most
you can do is live inside that hope.
Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof."
-Barbara Kingsolver

FOREWORD: NANA OSEI-KOFI

What would a nation of greater equitable social, economic, and political conditions mean for families in the United States? How might families be able to live if those who study families, those who create policies that shape the lives of families, and those who work with families, had the opportunity to engage with the content of the book you are currently reading? How can an equity lens contribute to critical thinking about families and the conditions they face? What can a justice-informed perspective reveal about what it means for all families to experience belonging, connection, and love? These are some of the many questions Liz Pearce and her students grapple with through this open educational resource (OER), freely available online.

As a result of an open pedagogy project, the community college students who co-authored this text offer readers content that is well-researched, deeply engaging, and thought-provoking. What they have accomplished through this project would not have been possible without bravery, dedication, and commitment to addressing the complexity of the many issues at hand. They have every reason to be very proud of what they have achieved.

As part of the Preface to this book, Liz Pearce discusses how coming to a deeper understanding of the ways in which power, privilege, and oppression overlap and shape life-conditions was life-altering for her. Hopefully, this book contributes to similar outcomes for students in classrooms across the United States and plays a part in creating a more equitable world for all families.

Nana Osei-Kofi, PhD
Director, Difference, Power, & Discrimination Program
Associate Professor, Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies
Oregon State University

FOREWORD: AMY HOFER AND MICHAELA WILLI-HOOPER

The book you are reading is an open educational resource (OER). That means it's free to read online, or you can purchase a print copy at cost. Other faculty anywhere in the world can make use of the open license on this book to customize it and use it in their own classes, so that their students can also use no-cost or low-cost materials.

It is also the result of an open pedagogy project, meaning that Liz coathored this book with her community college students. Student perspectives and voices make this book valuable and also make the case for why it is important. The student authors' writing on issues that have directly impacted their lives, and their reflections on how they have changed their minds on these issues, are informed by personal experience and grounded in deep learning.

You know what is a really good read? The chapter of this book titled "The Authors." I'm excited for every one of these authors to graduate and bring the care and talent they put into this project to the next stage of their careers.

Amy Hofer

Coordinator, Statewide Open Education Library Services

openoregon.org

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To create this book, Liz facilitated a yearlong community conversation around the question of "what do families need?" This question engaged many people with many perspectives, and a lot of learning happened. Helping students interweave existing knowledge with their own experiences was one of the most rewarding experiences of my career. The team created a work that is multivoiced yet coherent, easy-to-understand while still reflecting the complexities of our world. It reflects families in our communities, meets the learning goals of this course, and saves students money.

I hope the larger OER community will improve this, customize it locally, and share it back. Most of the original content the Linn-Benton Community College team created is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 license. Re-users should refer to the attributions and licenses in each section for more detailed information, and note that some chapters have more restrictive licenses. Because important parts of people's

lived experiences are not Creative Commons-licensed[1] some components are included with permission or under fair use.

    Michaela Willi Hooper, M.S.I.

OER & Textbook Affordability Librarian

Linn-Benton Community College

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1. Myers, C., Cross, W. & Pai, S. (2020, June 18). Fair use and OER: Strange bedfellows or BFFs? Open Textbook Network Summit 2020. https://youtu.be/b_LNgeQCOV0

THE AUTHORS

Elizabeth B. Pearce

Liz Pearce is proud to be a member of an institution that supports the work of this open pedagogy project and open educational resource, which strives to increase equity for students learning about about families in the United States. Creating opportunities and resources for transformative learning is her passion. She is a long-time faculty member at Linn-Benton Community College, teaching Human Development and Family Sciences courses and advising future Human Services and Social Work professionals. In addition she leads and mentors faculty in several areas: equity-based teaching, active learning, technology use, and open pedagogy.

Christopher Byers

Christopher earned an Associate of Science degree in Human Development and Family Sciences, Human Services option in June 2020 from Linn-Benton Community College. HE is now headed to Portland State University for the social work program. Christopher helped start the Human Services Club at LBCC, has been active in Student Government and is currently working on acquiring his Drug and Alcohol Counseling Certificate at Emergence Addiction & Mental Health Services. He expects to graduate with his Bachelors of Social Work degree in 2022 and his Masters of Social Work in 2023.

Alexis Castaneda-Perez

Alexis Castaneda-Perez is a Psychology major at Oregon State University and LBCC. He researched and wrote for the Justice chapter as well as the Food and Water chapter. In addition he assisted with ensuring accessibility, accessing open resources, and creating chapter glossaries. He hopes to eventually become a therapist and help college students. When not at school he enjoys writing music and playing guitar.

Nyssa Cronin

Nyssa Cronin is a proud Linn-Benton Community College and Oregon State University alumni with a Bachelors of Science in Human Development and Family Sciences, emphasizing in Human Services and minoring in

Public Health. Her academic and personal interests have led her to study trauma and how that impacts individual, interpersonal, familial, and community health. No doubt, this led her to understand how systemic structures impact individuals based on their race, class, and gender. As an ally, she believes that education should be free to all; this book marks a step forward in that pursuit.

Cassie Cruze

Cassie is a working single parent in the process of attaining her undergraduate degree in Human Development Family Sciences at Linn-Benton Community College with the hope to see social and personal goals met. She worked on the Justice Chapter of this book. She is employed by the Lebanon Downtown Association; her favorite aspect is creating experiences for individuals and families to have lasting memories. She enjoys working alongside her child as they volunteer for community organizations that serve Linn and Benton counties. She expects to graduate from Linn Benton in 2021.

Shonna Dempsey

Shonna is a 40 year old, first generation college student. She is a full-time mother, part-time employee, and full-time college student. She is currently enrolled at LBCC. She will be graduating with an AS in HDFS in 2021. Shonna worked on the Housing and Routines, Traditions, and Culture chapters, as well as the glossaries. After graduating she plans on transferring to obtain a bachelor's degree in social work or in HDFS. Shonna's dream job is to work with women coming out of addiction and domestic violence or at risk youth.

Ruta Faifaise

Ruta is a dual-enrolled LBCC and OSU student who is majoring in Human Development and Family Sciences. She was awarded the Oscar Humberto Montemayor Award at the 2020 Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration as a student who "embodies Oscar's ethos of selfless service; steady, strong, considerate leadership; and trailblazing spirit and heart."

Jessica N. Hampton

Jessica is finishing up her associate degree in the Human Development and Family Sciences (HDFS) field at Linn-Benton CC, and is heading forward to continue HDFS at OSU to obtain her Bachelor of Science degree. She contributed to the Visual Culture: Art and Beauty chapter, as well as the Health chapter of this text. She is

a feminist, a mother of two, and believes that the beginning of every individuals journey to success starts with receiving the necessary services and support needed to help them flourish.

Katherine Hemlock

Katherine Hemlock is a Human Development Family Sciences student, dual-enrolled at Linn-Benton Community College and Oregon State University. She helped start the Human Services Club at LBCC and also uses her Applied Science Degree in Horticulture to teach a gardening class for Justice Involved Youth. Katherine enjoys writing and art, and contributed to the Housing chapter as well as creating several illustrations. She is a parent of two school-aged sons and two little dogs she trained to chase birds out of her blueberry patch and fruit trees.

Amy Huskey

Amy is a mom who is a volunteer leader at her children's schools and in her community. She is studying Public Health at LBCC.

Carla Medel

Carla Medel is a current Oregon State University student who is dual enrolled at Linn Benton Community College. She is majoring in Psychology and holding minors in Human Development and Family Sciences and Spanish. As a young Latina who is also part of an immigrant family she found it extremely important to include the stories of people and families like hers to this book. Throughout this project she showed continuous motivation and drive to have future students see themselves reflected in academic learning materials as she did not get to experience that in her previous education. She will be graduating with a Bachelor's degree in the spring of 2021 and is looking to further her education with a Masters degree.

Hannah Morelos

Hannah is currently an Human Development and Family Sciences (HDFS) major at LBCC with an emphasis in Human Services and soon plans to transfer to OSU for a Bachelor of Science in HDFS. She contributed to the Art and Beauty chapter along with the Health chapter. Hannah's dream career is to work with troubled adolescents along with making an impact in the systems that affect young individuals.

Katie Niemeyer

Katie Niemeyer is an aspiring artist who wants to see the world change for the better. When she took on this project, she had no idea what was in store for her but this project helped her learn and grow into the person she is today.

Wesley Sharp

Wesley Sharp is currently a Human Services major at Linn-Benton Community College. Wesley's main passion is avocation for socially disadvantaged groups mainly focusing on the LGBT+ community. He contributed to the Love and Nurturance Chapter as well as the Housing chapter. He hopes to eventually run a non profit organization on empowering and elevating queer youth as well as finding them safe and affirming living situations where there are none.

DEDICATION

To all learners who strive to understand their own relationship with privilege and discrimination while doing their best to listen and see the experience of others.

In memory of:
Sandra Angel Nelson
and
Dr. Alexis J. Walker
who worked to make the world more just.

LETTER TO HDFS 201 STUDENTS

Elizabeth B. Pearce

Dear LBCC Students taking HDFS 201 during the 2020-2022 academic years,

You are taking HDFS 201 in remarkable times; an era that has and will change the experience of many students and families in the United States.

This text differs from commercial texts not just in its price (it's free!) but also in its approach. I've taken an approach that closely matches the OSU and LBCC course outcomes for HDFS 201 Contemporary Families in the United States. Emphasis is placed on social institutions, social processes, and providing an historical context for the ways that families experience privilege and oppression in the United States. I included student experiences and perspectives with the aspiration of including topics that are most meaningful to college students and their families.

To learn more about the thirteen students who contributed to the text, see "The Authors" section.

You are the first group of students to read the text in pressbook form! A small group used four of the chapters (in google docs format) Spring term 2020. I hope you will bring both your critical eye and a touch of patience when you read the text.

You will undoubtedly uncover errors. I hope that those are mostly small, but whatever you find, there will be a process for you to give feedback provided by your HDFS 201 faculty. Errors occur in every book. I am in a continual process of improvement; I fit that work around my teaching and other paid work.

More important than the small errors, I hope you will think and question critically the content of the text. Ask yourself as you read:

- What could be added to the content that is important to today's families?
- Are there examples or definitions that could expand and clarify existing content?
- What do you want to know more about?
- Are there features that you have seen in other textbooks that we could add and that would help you learn better?

I am working to access funding to expand the text; your feedback in that process will be valuable. Thank you for taking the time to give your ideas. You an access the spreadsheet to give feedback here.

Wishing you and your families the best during this challenging time.

Elizabeth B. Pearce

Corvallis Oregon

September 14, 2020

PREFACE

Elizabeth B. Pearce

I've changed. Understanding how privilege, power, oppression, and discrimination overlap is life-altering. It humbles me to consider how much privilege I have and to wonder what families in the United States would look like if greater equity existed. Teaching a social justice class has been transformational.

In 2007-2008 I took a sabbatical and was exposed to sociology, family, and social justice course work at Oregon State University. During that time I studied with Dr. Alexis J. Walker, Dr. Richard Settersten, and Dr. Becky Warner. I began to teach Contemporary Families in the United States (HDFS 201), at Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC), which is a Difference, Power, and Discrimination course at both institutions.
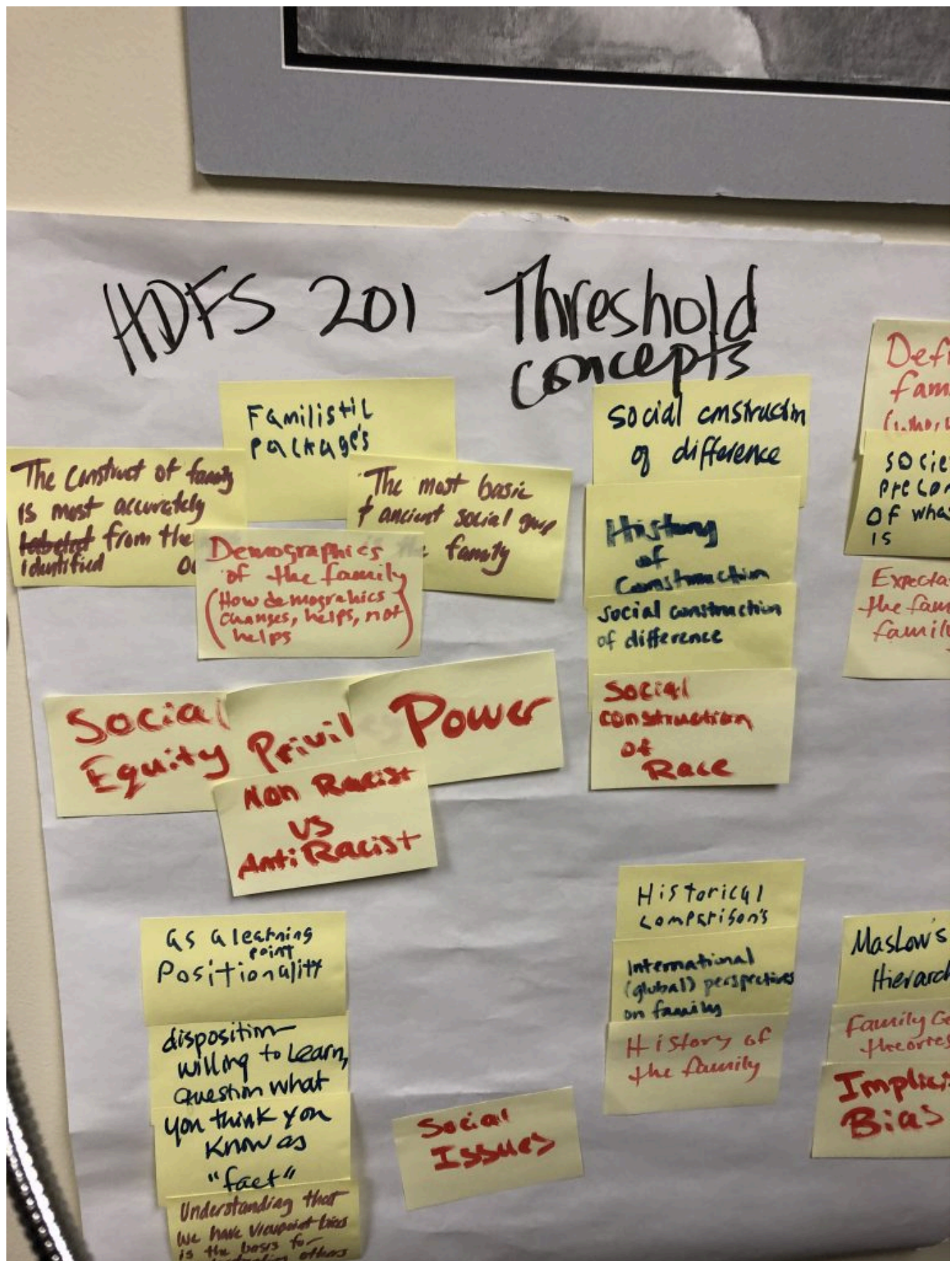
My understanding continued to develop when I participated in the Difference, Power, and Discrimination Academy led by Dr. Nana Osei-Kofi at OSU. With the leadership of Dr. Katie Winder, DPD became institutionalized at LBCC. Colleague Matt Usner and I co-led the first DPD Faculty Learning Community in 2015. Continued learning is a core aspect of social justice learning. Just because I've taught about it for twelve years does not mean that I fully comprehend all of the complexities and depth of these concepts. I count myself among the learners among the community that I lead. Talking DPD teaching and learning alongside Isabelle Havet, Jane Sandberg, Lauren Visconti, Stephen Rust, Deron Carter, Christy Stevens, Verna Ourada, Matt Usner, Paul Hibbard, Joseph Jess, and Arfa Aflatooni is one of the privileges of teaching at LBCC.

Learning about privilege and oppression extends beyond the workplace. I am thankful to have family and friends who are willing to grapple with these concepts. Many dinner conversations with my daughters Rachel and Sarabeth and my partner Liz Baker have been devoted to dissecting the ways that we experience and observe institutionalized power and discrimination. So many hikes and walks have been absorbed by my own thinking or conversations about social justice with friends. Whatever I am reading, including my favorite thrillers, are seen through the lens of equity. Once you've seen it, it can't be unseen.

My greatest pleasures, challenges, and growth come from my work with LBCC students. I hear your questions; I read your articulation of concepts; I listen to your experiences being discriminated against; I support your work to comprehend your own privilege; I strive to understand the oppression you have experienced but perhaps did not have the language to describe. The greater my interactions with you, the better teacher I become.
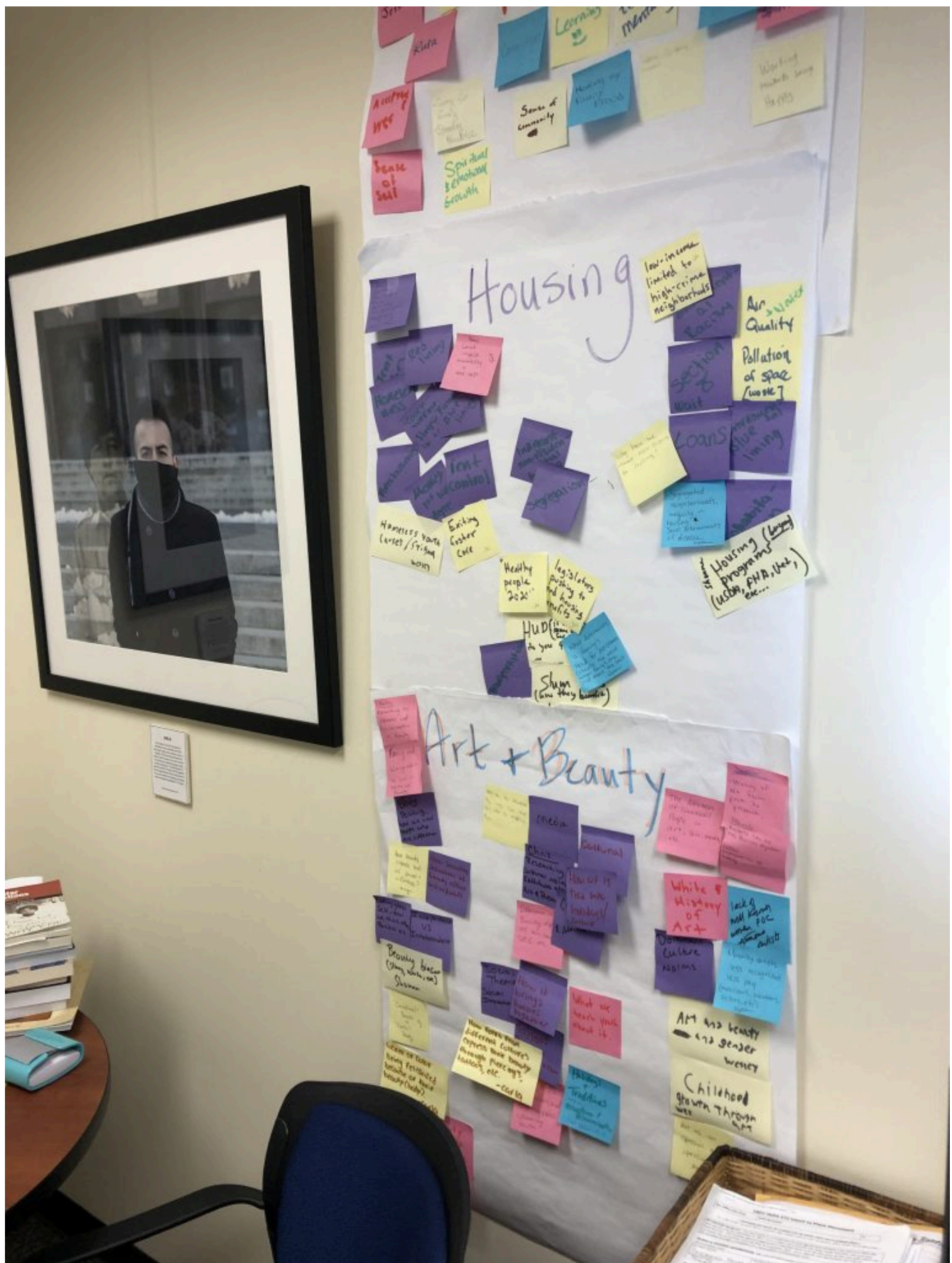
Through my interactions with students and colleagues, it became evident that the commercial text we were using did not fully support students in meeting the course outcomes. Searches over the past five years did not reveal an existing openly licensed (free to users to read, remix, or reuse) text. With funding and support from LBCC, I undertook to facilitate an open pedagogy project and write a new text. This new text takes an interdisciplinary approach that more fully supports understanding the interaction of society, institutions, privilege, and oppression.

There is strong instructional and budgetary support for creating open educational resources (OERs) that are free to students at LBCC. Certainly making knowledge more accessible makes college more equitable. Going beyond by involving student authors embeds equity within the actual text by facilitating the expression of diverse voices. Michaela Willi-Hooper, the OER Librarian, was instrumental in supporting this outcome. All three Deans who oversaw my work during this 18-month long project, Katie Winder, Oriana Mulatero Ferrando, and Meg Roland, provided additional support specifically so that students could be involved.

This openly licensed text approaches contemporary families from an equity lens and asks a question that more fully meets the Difference, Power, and Discrimination outcomes. "What do families need?" and " How do society and institutions support or get in the way of families getting what they need?" In order to answer these questions, I included the voices of the consumers of this class. I asked, "What matters most to LBCC and OSU students when it comes to family needs?" This has shaped the content of the book; it is a far different book than I would have written alone. I wanted to emphasize diversity of viewpoint, experience, social identity, and voice. It was the best way I could think of to live the concepts of Difference, Power, and Discrimination.

It takes a lot of guts to help write a textbook when you are an undergraduate, even more if you are the first person in your family to attend college. The thirteen students who participated in this project have my utmost regard for their courage and their scholarship. Deep examination of institutionalized privilege, oppression and justice is challenging and painful. They brainstormed, questioned, researched, debated, outlined, drew, and wrote. Each one has their own personal connection to the needs of families and the inequities that families experience. They introduced and advocated for the inclusion of topics that have an immediate relevance to current students' lives.

↳ What is clear ...

↳ What could be explained better or differently

*Clear of Social construction definion

↳ Maybe add more on how it releates to individuals

↳ How social media, Schools, govermets & health care views families Related to social construction

↳ How do families form a function around Social Constructions

21st Century American Families

*Clear definition on Kinship

*Would add at least one example of private & public functions to make text more clear

Social Identities

*The meaning of Social idenfities explained well & clear with the examples

Social Construction of Differences

*More information here on how families are involved

*What is Social construction of differences

*How is social Construction different than this

Social Construction of Race

*more information as mentioned

↳ How are different races affected by institutions

-Equity based Concepts

Social problem coold tie in with the Social Construction of Race or with Social identities

useful NB ...

The book content was created from brainstorming and discussion sessions with the students, followed by research conducted by the student authors, librarian and contributor, Michaela Willi-Hooper, and myself. The brainstorming sessions conducted in person during the winter and via ZOOM in spring term were integral to expressing a diversity of voice. Without those sessions, my own perspective, that comes from experiencing more privilege than most students, would override topics and viewpoints that student families experience and care about. The three images here in the preface come from student brainstorming and journaling sessions. Much of the book is written either by me or via collaborative efforts with students; you will see groups of names listed on those chapters where we collaborated. In the Justice chapter, I wanted you to read the students' words unfiltered; you will see the individual authors credited. I hope that future students will add to this chapter.

One of the best parts of an openly licensed digital text is that it is a living document. While this has been one of the most invigorating experiences of my life, it is not over. I invite you to be a part of the future of this text. When the time comes to revise this text, I will be incorporating the suggestions of colleagues, students, and friends. When there is more funding available, additional chapters with topics like education and employment will be added. I look forward to the future of this book, to its contribution to understanding inequities that families face, and the knowledge that it inspires us to advocate for and improve structures and society.

–Elizabeth B. Pearce

1. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS PREVIEW QUESTIONS

As you read this chapter, consider the following questions:

1. What is a social construction? Can you think of another example that is not in the text?
2. How does the social construction of difference contrast with a social construction?
3. If you could add a third image in Figure 1.3, what television family is the most representative today?
4. How is equity different from equality and fairness?
5. What are the big demographic family trends in the United States?
6. What is a social identity? Can you describe your own social identity via your roles, characteristics and groups?
7. How does intersectionality relate to equity?
8. How does the government affect the structure of kinship and family?

THE FAMILY: A SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED IDEA

Elizabeth B. Pearce

To begin our study of contemporary families in the United States, we will first define an important concept that is used for a large portion of this book: **social constructions**. A social construction is a mutual understanding and accepted reality created by members of a society: something that is not determined by biology or the natural world. Is there anything that humans have created that holds no real value in the natural world, yet we have assigned a great deal of value to it? If you are thinking of cash, you're right on the money. Humans have determined that certain pieces of paper and metal objects are worth an agreed-upon value. For example, in the United States, a one dollar bill is worth 100 times the value of a penny. One of the ways that we can tell money is a social construction is that it varies from **culture** to culture and over time. When you visit another country, the United States dollar bill has to be "exchanged" for money that has a different appearance and value. Compare money with another thing of value to human beings: air. Air is needed by all human beings to survive. The need for air and its value do not change over time or from culture to culture.

Figure 1.1. Reflection of a train on a building.

Social constructions also relate to behavior and activities. For example, what food would you expect to see on the menu when you go out for breakfast in the United States? What if the eating place were described as a "Mexican" restaurant? And what if you traveled to another country, say, Korea? What is eaten for breakfast varies from culture to culture and even person to person. And yet, in general, we have a socially constructed idea of what is typically breakfast food in the United States: eggs, bacon, cereal, toast, and fruit, but not vegetables, noodles, pinto beans, or hot dogs. One of the ways that you can recognize that something is a socially constructed idea is that it differs from place to place and changes over time. In addition, whatever is part of the socially constructed idea (in this case what typical breakfast foods are) becomes "the norm" or what is expected. While we might welcome trying some different foods for breakfast, they are not what is seen as the typical, or expected, American breakfast foods.

Figure 1.2. Breakfast burrito.

What does this have to do with families? While studying families, we must continually remind ourselves that the idea of the family, and in particular the internalized belief that there is a "normal family," is a social construction. What is a normal family? I suspect that we can each paint a picture in our heads, based on the years each of us has been exposed to portrayals of families in institutions such as the media, schools, government, and health care. Generally, the traditional American family has been identified as the **nuclear family**, most often represented as a male and female heterosexual married couple who is middle class, White, and with several children. When society or the individuals within a society designate one kind of family to be traditional, this may imply a value, or a preference, for this kind of family structure with these particular **social characteristics**. This is sometimes called the "Leave it to Beaver" family after the popular sitcom television show that ran from 1957 until 1963, pictured below left. A current popular sitcom, *Modern Family*, which just concluded its 11th season in 2020, also features this traditional family, but includes two other families which feature people of other ethnic groups, and a same-sex couple. Together they form an extended family who all live in the same town. It is important to note, however, that the primacy of the upper middle-class, White family image continues to be emphasized.

Figure 1.3. TV families in the 1950s vs. today.

As we study families we must keep in mind that this idea of the typical family is not representative of all families, yet it is continually reinforced by the **social processes** and institutions in our society. Media in particular continually reminds us of what families are "supposed to" look like. Whether you consume big-budget films, social media platforms, video games, and/or books and magazines, take a look. What kind of people and families do you see represented? While representation of women, people of color, and people of differing sexualities and gender expressions has increased in media, they still predominantly play less consequential characters within the plot lines. Although the majority of families in the United States no longer fit the traditional model,[1] **social institutions** perpetuate the idea of a certain family structure. Government, schools, medical institutions, businesses, and places of worship all reinforce a typical view of family through the forms, activities, requirements, and processes that are shared with the public. How many times have you tried to fill out a form with checkboxes only to find that you did not "fit" into one of the boxes? Typical examples include giving parental choices of "mother" and "father," couple status choices such as "married" or "single," and gender choices such as "male" or female," all of which reinforce a binary view of individuals and families.

The preference for an idealized traditional family type contributes to less social support for families who don't fit this type: for example, single-parent families, LGBTQ+ families, rural families, or families with a member who is disabled, unemployed, or who has a criminal record. Accepted structures and practices such as not being able to access a safe neighborhood or good school because of income, "Daddy-Daughter Dances," churches that exclude or condemn LGBTQ+ ministers and/or members, and educational materials that cannot be read with low vision are all examples of ways that some individuals and families are less recognized and

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1. Pew Research Center. (2015, December 17). The American family today. https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/1-the-american-family-today/

less privileged. You can probably think of other examples from your own family's perspective. Families exist in multiple forms that are functional.

The **social construction of difference** describes value being assigned to a perceived difference[2] (in this case, the form and function of families). While Allan Johnson wrote about differences in privilege related to **social characteristics** such as race, **ethnicity**, gender, and ability, we will extend this concept to the social construction of differences amongst families. Via the socially constructed idea of family, American systems and structures regularly create and reinforce **inequities** amongst American families.

Equity, Equality, and Fairness

You will notice that this text often refers to **equity** rather than equality or fairness. It's important that equity is defined as everyone having what they need, even if it means that some need to be given more to get there. This drawing by one of the text's authors illustrates the difference (you may have seen different variations of this concept as memes on social media). If you'd like to read more about it, this blog has a good explanation.
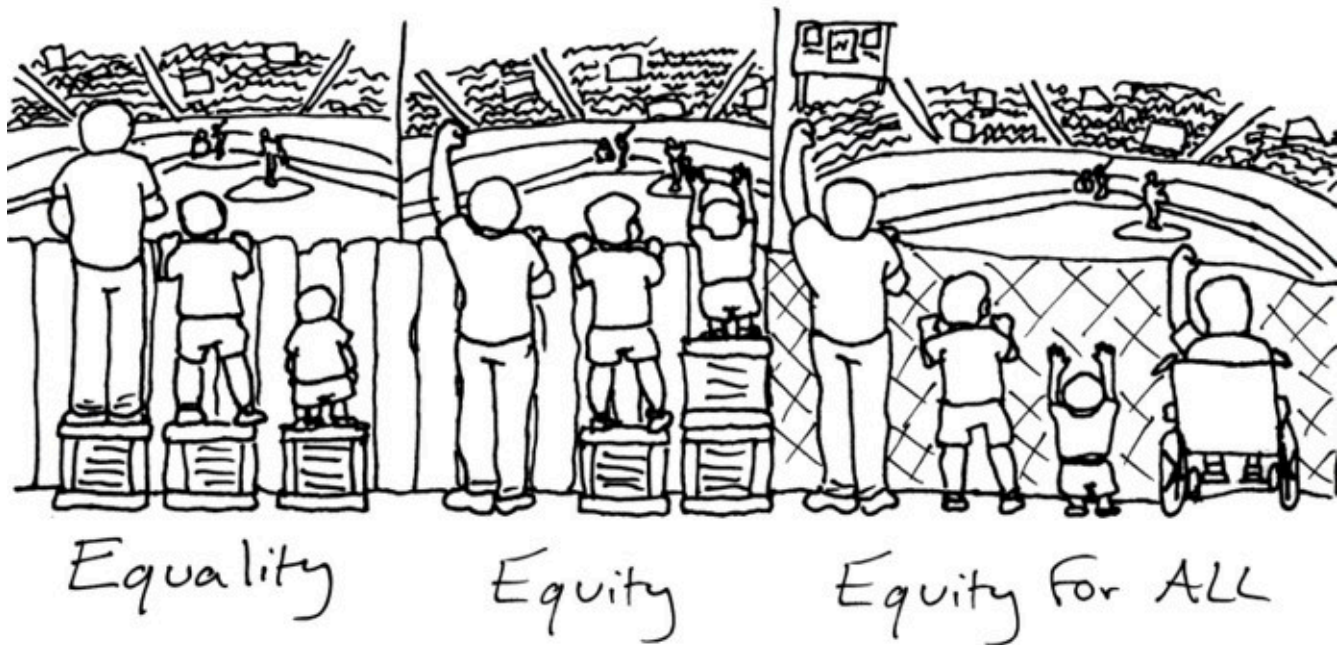

Figure 1.4. Equality, Equity, Equity for all.

This text asserts that all families need equitable resources, and analyzes the experiences and structures that get in the way. In the first panel of the drawing, although all of the participants have equal-sized boxes, they do

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2. Johnson, A.G. (2006). Privilege, power, and difference (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.

not all get to have an equal experience. In the second drawing, the participants can have the viewing experience because the boxes have been equitably distributed. And in the third panel, the structure that limited equitable access has been removed so that all participants can view the game without additional resources.

In this text, we will study American families with an emphasis on the current **inequities** in the United States. To help us understand the socially constructed nature of our view of the family and the systems that affect families, we will take a **comparative approach**.[3] This means that, while our focus is current American families, we will also look at how families have evolved in America, what the practices are of immigrant **cultures** in America, and how other countries develop systems that affect families. We will also utilize **empirical research,** data that are collected in a variety of ways, analyzed, and presented to further our understanding.

21st Century American Families

While we are studying families, it is important to note the concept of **kinship**. While definitions vary, it is widely agreed that the term kinship is broader than the term family. Kinship refers to the social structure that ties people together (whether by blood, marriage, legal processes, or other agreements) and includes family relationships. Kinship acknowledges that individuals have a role in defining who is a member of their own family and how familial relationships extend across society.

What are families in the United States like today? Because we are constrained by both our personal experiences, as well as the societal representations of "typical families," it is important to talk about what kinds of kinship structures and changes are actually occurring. At times, the study of families has been referred to as the study of "the family." This text avoids that terminology because we are studying many types of families.

In order to describe current American families and kinship structures, it is probably easiest to compare them with families of the past and families in other countries. Here is a snapshot of some kinship patterns:

There is no longer one dominant family form in the United States; children are living in increasingly varied family arrangements.

In this chart, based on data from the Pew Research Center, increases are noted in children living with a single parent (yellow color) and cohabiting parents (gray color).

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3. American Sociological Association. (2020). Comparative/historical approaches. https://www.asanet.org/topics/comparativehistorical-approaches

For children, growing diversity in family living arrangements

	1960	1980	2014
No parent	4%	4%	5%
Single parent	9%	19%	26%
Cohabiting parents			7%
2-parent remarriage	14%	16%	15%
2-parent 1st marriage	73%	61%	46%

■ 2-parent 1st marriage ■ 2-parent remarriage ■ Cohabiting parents ■ Single parent ■ No parent
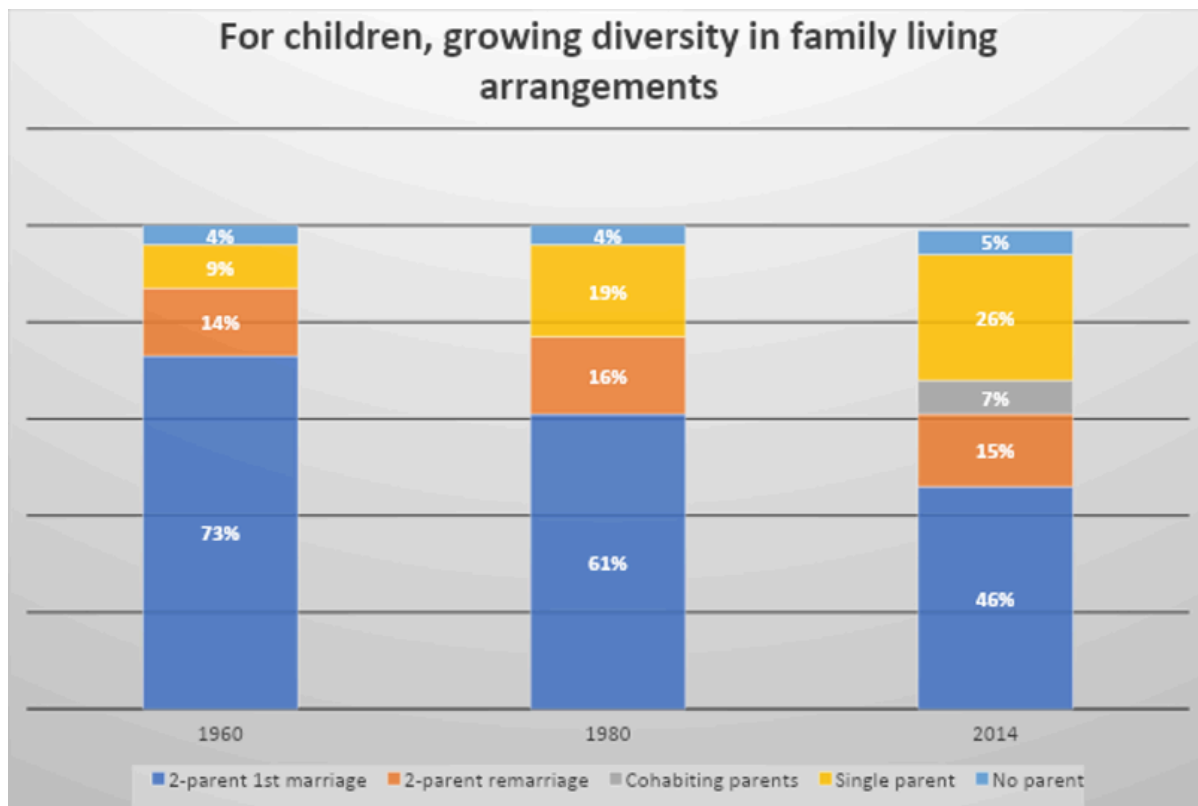
Figure 1.5. Growing diversity in family living arrangements. Data from Pew Research Center. Data for cohabitation was not available in 1960 and 1980; those children were included in the group "single parents."

Americans are getting married later in life.

This graph shows the increase, for both men (blue) and women (red) in the median age of first marriage:

Figure MS-2
Median age at first marriage: 1890 to present
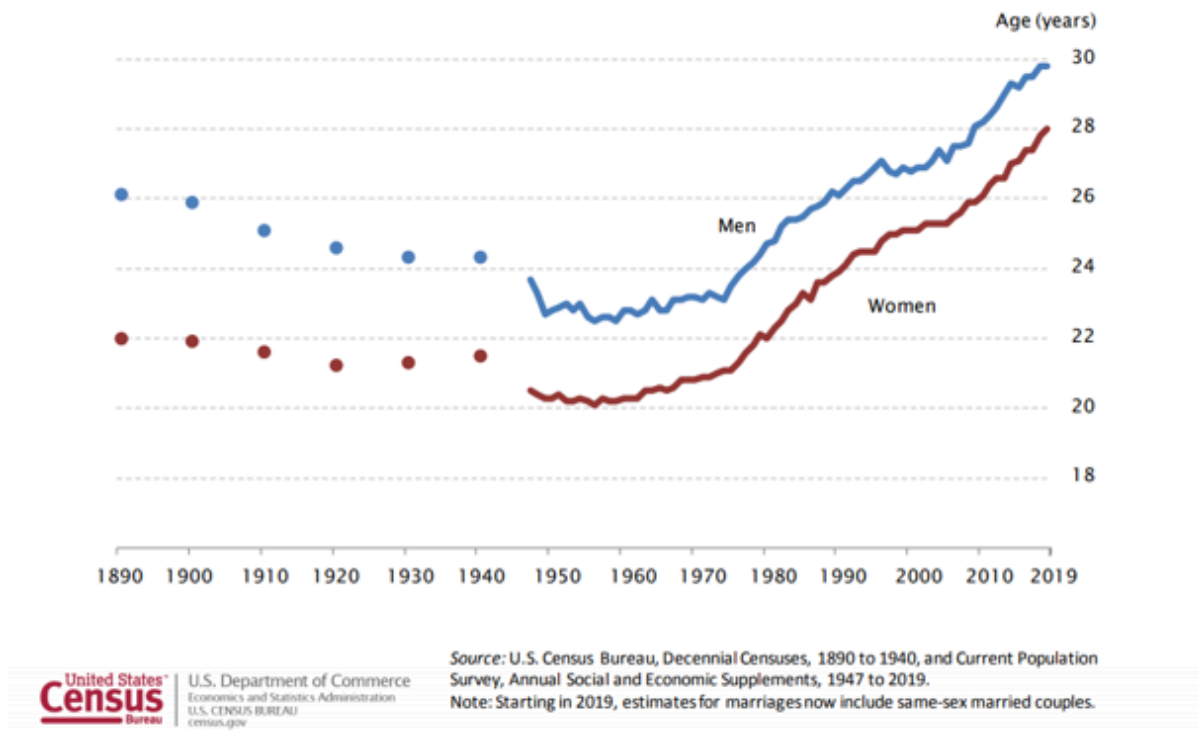
Figure 1.6. A Census graph showing first marriage age going up since the 1950s.

Both marriage and divorce rates are declining in the United States.

The marriage rate (blue) is declining a bit faster than the divorce rate (red), which is one of the factors that makes it appear as if divorce is increasing. It's actually declining, just at a slower rate than marriage is declining:
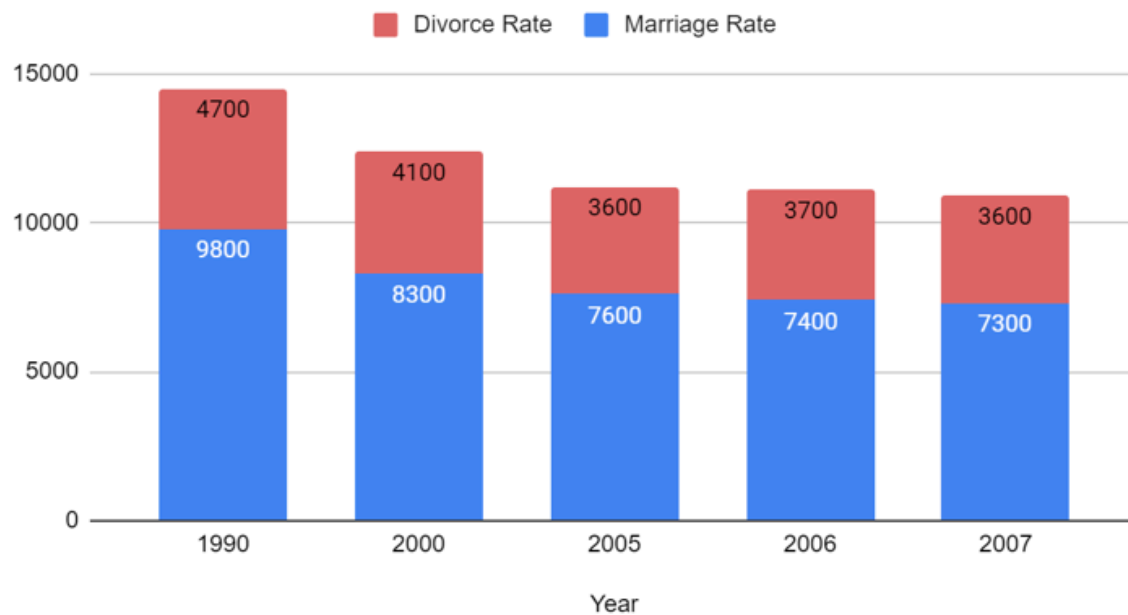
Figure 1.7. Marriage and divorce rates have gone down since the 1990s. This data comes from Statistical Abstract, 2009 based on the U.S. Census.

Fertility rates are declining in the U.S.

Women are having fewer children, following the "Baby Boom" years between approximately 1946 and 1964.

Trends in the U.S. Fertility Rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-44): Selected Years, 1940-2017
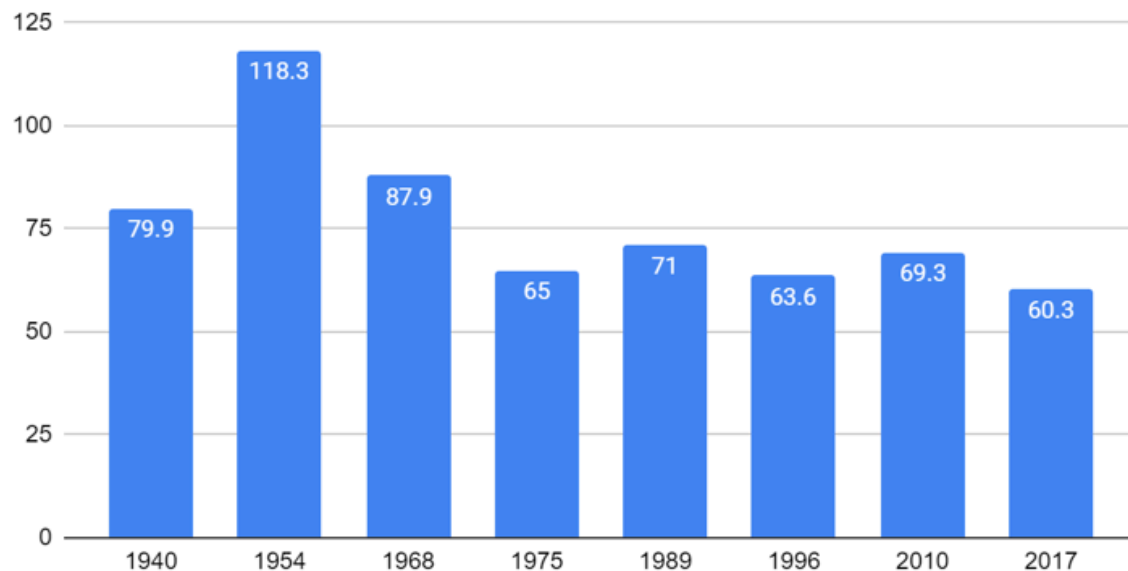
Figure 1.8. Fertility rates in the US have gone down since peaking in 1954.

Families are increasingly living in multigenerational households.

Multigenerational living includes families with two or more adult generations and families that have grandchildren under the age of twenty-five and grandparents living together. This style of living hit a low of 12% of all families in the U.S. in 1980. Since then, multigenerational living has increased in most racial and ethnic groups, age groups, and genders.[4]

4. Pew Research. (2018, April 5). Record 64 million Americans live in multigenerational households. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/05/a-record-64-million-americans-live-in-multigenerational-households/

One-in-five Americans live in a multi-generational household

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2009	2016
	32.2	26.8	25.8	27.5	35.4	42.4	51.5	64
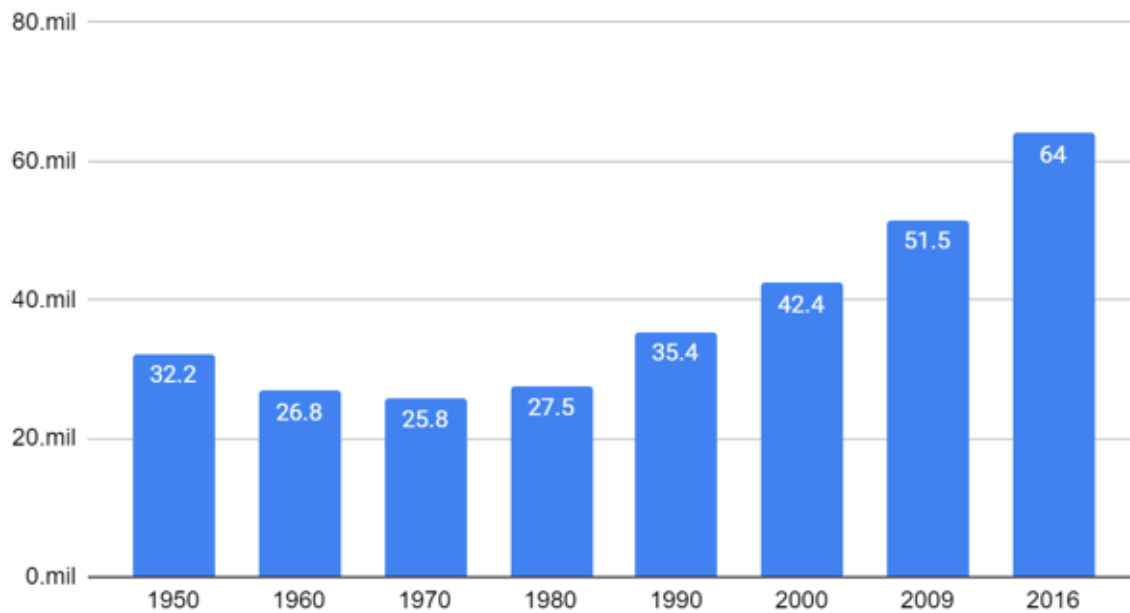
Figure 1.9. The number of Americans who live in multigenerational households has increased since the low in the 1980s. This graph is based on an analysis by the Pew Research Center based on data from the US Census and 2000-2016 American Community Survey.

Most expect to work until an older age now than did workers in the 20th century.

Beneficial trends such as longer life expectancy and being healthier longer affect people's decisions to work longer. Less beneficial trends such as concern about having adequate health care coverage, fewer jobs that have pensions associated with them, and the increasing number of workers who have multiple part-time jobs also affect this trend.

EXPECTATION OF WORKING FULL-TIME AFTER AGE 65, BY EDUCATION: RESPONDENTS AGES 51-56 IN 1992, 1998, AND 2004

(Percent expecting to work after age 65)
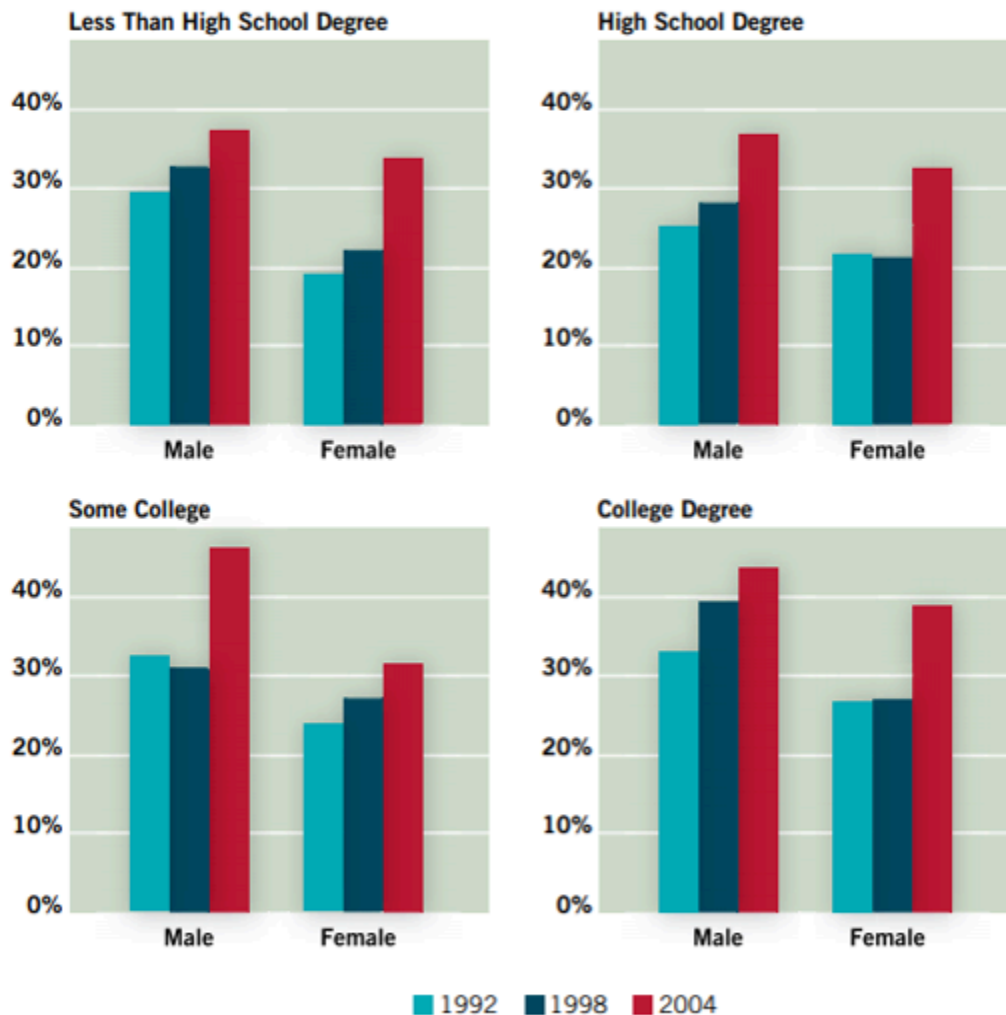
Source: HRS 1992, 1998, and 2004.

Figure 1.10. People are expecting to work longer.

This graph shows differentiation by gender and by education level, but there is also differentiation related to wealth, income, and kind of employment. Look at the difference between 1992 (light blue) and 2004 (red). Notice that for both genders, and with all education levels, people are expecting to work longer!

But expectations do not always match experience, and there is sufficient evidence that older workers are consistently forced out of stable, well-paying jobs at a significant percentage.

A Majority of Older Americans With Stable Jobs Are Pushed Out of Work

Americans who enter their 50s working full-time, long-held positions — the steadiest type of work — report being pushed out of their jobs by their employers.

Overall

Job Loss (Employer-Driven)	56%
Job Loss (Personal Conditions)	9%
Retired Voluntarily	19%
Still Working	16%

Breakdown of Employer-Driven Job Loss

Due to Layoffs	28%
Deteriorating Conditions	15%
Unexpected Retirement	13%
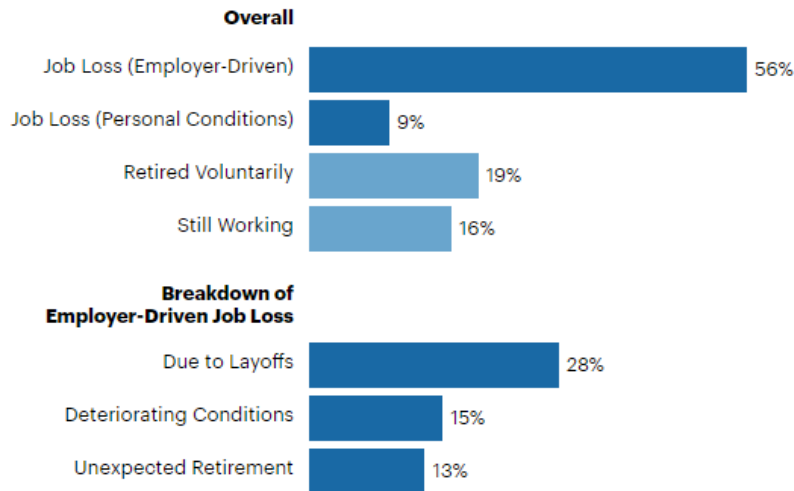
Note: Estimates are based on a sample of 2,086 respondents employed full time, full year at ages 51 to 54 and who have been with the same employer for at least five years and who are observed at least until age 65. The analysis considers only job departures that were followed by at least six consecutive months of nonemployment or that resulted in at least a 50 percent decline in weekly earnings for at least two years. Some respondents experienced more than one type of involuntary job departure after age 50, but the departure categories are arranged hierarchically so that no more than one type of separation is counted for any worker.

Source: Data analysis by ProPublica and the Urban Institute, based on the Health and Retirement Study survey by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research.

Figure 1.11. Most Americans don't retire because they want to.

To delve into additional data and read more about how this affects families, read If You're Over 50, Chances Are the Decision to Leave a Job Won't be Yours, a data analysis by ProPublica and the Urban Institute.

Functions of the Family within Society

Families have both **private and public functions**. Notably, American society today is more concerned with the private function of families, which focuses on the intimate relationships that family members share with one another. Americans value the idea that a core part of the family function is the indefinite length of loving relationships.[5]

In the past, and today in other **cultures** and countries, families were more focused on the public function such as the production of what would be called **public goods** in an economic model. The most common

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5. Cherlin, A. (2016). Public and private families. McGraw-Hill.

public good in American families are children, but caring for elderly or differently-abled adults could also be considered as producing a public good. Volunteering and contributing to places of worship, charitable organizations, and other not-for-profit agencies is another way to perform the public function. As public institutions, families support, contribute to, and benefit from the overall social structure. Although our society currently focuses on the private function, families implicitly perform both; these functions are complementary to one another. In this text we will raise awareness of the public function.

The focus on the private function of families may relate to the United States' identity as an **individualistic society**.[6] In America, there is a focus on what individuals can achieve, with value placed on accomplishments that are gained without the support of society. Many other countries have **collectivist**[7] cultures which emphasize social support for all, so that all members of the group are able to meet their goals and needs.

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Adaptations: juxtaposed with "Modern Family" photo.

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6. Morin, A. (2019, August 19). Individualistic cultures and behavior. Verywell Mind. https://www.verywellmind.com/what-are-individualistic-cultures-2795273

7. Collectivist and individualist cultures | Psychology Wiki | Fandom. Retrieved December 29, 2019, from https://psychology.wikia.org/wiki/Collectivist_and_individualist_cultures - [different source?]

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Figure 1.9. "One-in-five Americans live in a multigenerational household." License: CC BY 4.0. Based on data from Pew Research Center.

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Adaptations: juxtaposed with "Leave it to Beaver" photo.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DIFFERENCE

Elizabeth B. Pearce

Social Identities

Families are made up of individuals and each individual possesses a unique social identity. A **social identity** consists of the combination of **social characteristics**, roles, and group memberships with which a person identifies. Let's break down each of those aspects of social identity.

1. Social characteristics can be biologically determined and/or **socially constructed**. Sex, gender, race, **ethnicity**, ability, age, sexuality, nationality, first language, and religion are all social characteristics.
2. Roles indicate the behaviors and patterns utilized, such as parent, partner, sibling, employee, employer, etc.
3. Group memberships are often related to the above characteristics (e.g. a place of worship) and roles (e.g. a moms' group), but could be more specialized as well, such as being a twin, or a singer, or part of an emotional support group.
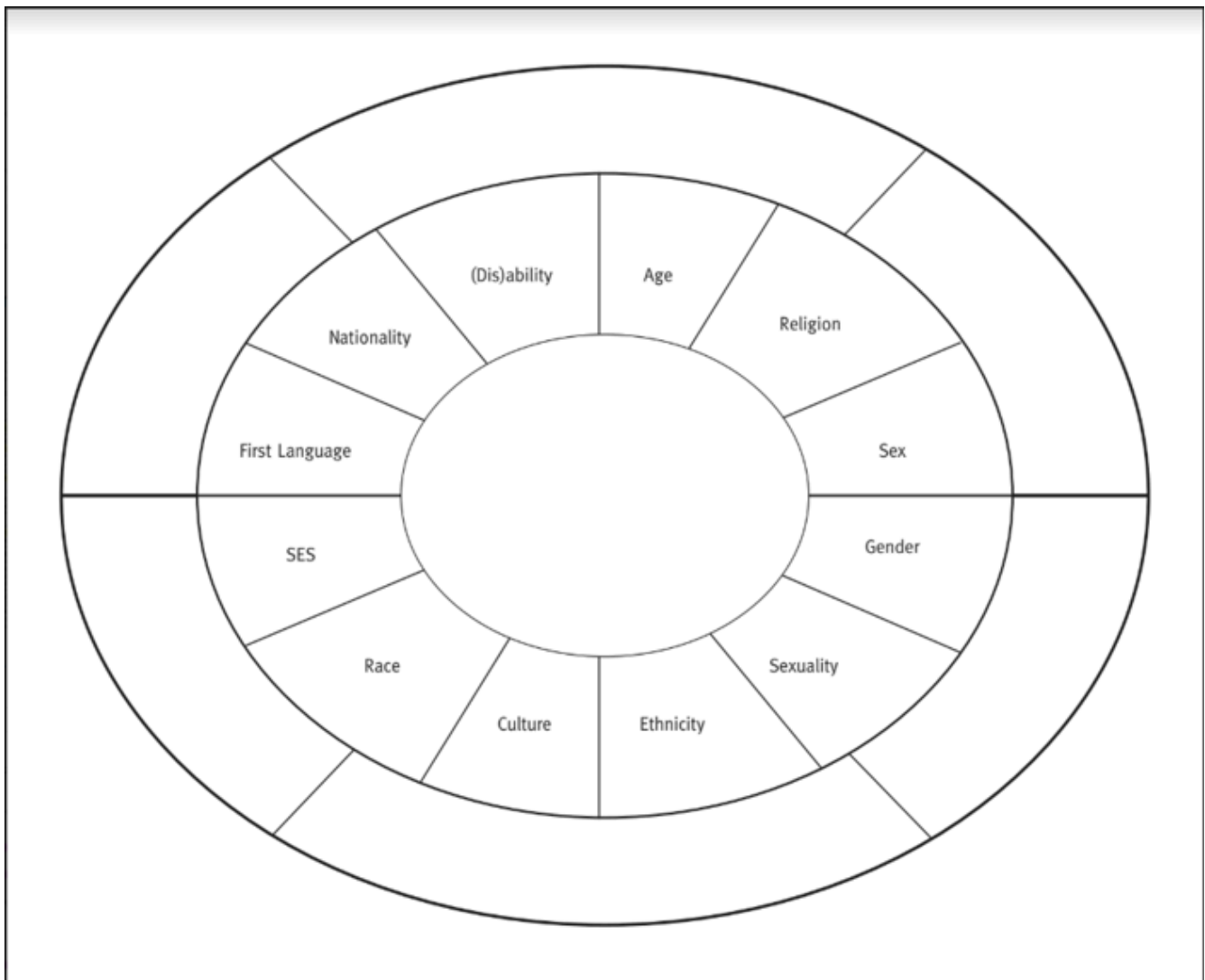
Figure 1.12. Social identity wheel.

The above Social Identity Wheel includes some common categories for **social characteristics** in the middle oval. When it comes to **social identity**, each of us gets to determine our own. That means we determine which of our social characteristics, roles, and group memberships are most important to our own identities. While each of us gets to determine our own social identity, it is important to note that others may identify us differently than we identify ourselves. Our most notable physical aspects may signal something different than our personal lived experience.

Figure 1.13. A family.

For example, in this video about **cultural humility** (which will be defined and discussed in the next chapter), Dr. Melanie Tervalon describes her identity as an African American woman, the difference between how she sees herself and how others see her, and the right that each of us has to our own social identity.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=96#oembed-1*

The founders of Mixed in America (MIA), whose mission is to empower the Mixed community and heal Mixed identity, are two multiracial activists, Jazmine Jarvis and Meagan Kimberly Smith. This is what they had to say about **social identity** on Taylor Nolan's podcast, *Let's Talk About It*: "We wanna put the power back in the person's hands, so that they can express in a way that makes them feel authentic."

The Social Construction of Difference

Social identities can help us understand the **social construction of difference**. In the process of forming our own social identities, we connect most easily to people who share the same group membership(s) that we do. According to the Social Identity Theory formulated by Henri Tajfel, we see people who are members of different groups as "others."[1] In general, we tend to be drawn to others who are more similar to ourselves, whether by appearance or related to other **social characteristics**, such as age, ability, or sex. This, in combination with the likelihood of overestimating the similarities within groups and the differences between groups, contributes to the social construction of difference.

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1. McLeod, S. (2019). Social identity theory. Simply Psychology. https://www.simplypsychology.org/social-identity-theory.html

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE

Figure 1.14. Observable physical differences such as skin color are not equivalent to race.

The **social construction** of race deserves a special mention, since there is a broadly held public assumption that there are significant biological and genetic differences between human beings based on "race" (meaning observable physical differences such as skin color). In actuality, race is a social construct rather than a biological reality. Scientists state that while genetic diversity exists, it does not divide along the racial lines that many humans notice.[2] In fact, members of the human "race" (all humans) share 99.9 % of their genes.[3] Ancestry and geography likely influence which genes get "turned on" and expressed. What makes our understanding of race complicated is that we have behaved for centuries as if there is a biological difference. Because there has been a longstanding **discriminatory** practice against people of color, there are multiple impacts today.[4]

The reasons for doubting the biological basis for racial categories suggest that race is more of a social category than a biological one. Another way to say this is that race is a social construction, a concept that has no objective reality but rather is what people decide it is. In this view, race has no real existence other than what and how people think of it.

2. Gannon, M. (2016, February 5). Race is a social construct, scientists argue. Scientific American, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/race-is-a-social-construct-scientists-argue/

3. National Human Genome Research Institute. (2011, July 15). Whole Genome Association Studies. https://www.genome.gov/17516714/2006-release-about-whole-genome-association-studies

4. Berger, P. L. & Thomas Luckman. (1966). The social construction of reality. Penguin Books.

Figure 1.15. President Barack Obama had an African father and a White mother. Although his ancestry is equally Black and White, Obama considers himself an African American, as do most Americans. In several Latin American nations, however, Obama would be considered White because of his White ancestry.

This understanding of race is reflected in the problems of placing people with multiracial backgrounds into any one racial category. Would you consider former President Obama, White, Black, or multiracial? He had one Black parent and one White parent. As another example, the well-known golfer Tiger Woods was typically called an African American by the news media when he burst onto the golfing scene in the late 1990s, but in fact his ancestry is one-half Asian (divided evenly between Chinese and Thai), one-quarter White, one-eighth Native American, and only one-eighth African American.[5]

Historical examples of attempts to place people in racial categories further underscore the social constructionism of race. In the South during the time of slavery, the skin tone of the enslaved lightened over the years as babies were born from the union, often in the form of rape, of slave owners and other Whites with enslaved people. As it became difficult to tell who was "Black" and who was not, many court battles over people's racial identity occurred. People who were accused of having Black ancestry would go to court to prove they were White in order to avoid enslavement or other problems. .[6] Litigation over race continued long past the days of slavery. In a relatively recent example, Susie Guillory Phipps sued the Louisiana Bureau of Vital Records in the early 1980s to change her official race to White. Phipps was descended from a slave owner and an enslaved person and thereafter had only White ancestors. Despite this fact, she was called "Black" on her birth certificate because of a state law, echoing the "one-drop rule," that designated people as Black if their ancestry was at least 1/32 Black (meaning one of their great-great-great grandparents was Black). Phipps had always thought of herself as White and was surprised after seeing a copy of her birth certificate to discover she was officially Black because she had one Black ancestor about 150 years earlier. She lost her case, and the U.S. Supreme Court later refused to review it.[7]

5. Williams-León, T., & Nakashima, C. L. (Eds.). (2001). The sum of our parts: Mixed-heritage Asian Americans. Temple University Press.

6. Staples, B. (1998, November 15). "Opinion: Editorial Observer: The shifting meanings of "black" and "white." The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/15/opinion/editorial-observer-the-shifting-meanings-of-black-and-white.html

7. Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2015). Racial formation in the United States (Third edition). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Social Construction of Other Social Identities, including Gender

It is important to note that the social construction of gender is another widely accepted concept. In other words, the differences that we attribute to the biological designation of female, male, or intersex are actually predominantly constructed by our societal beliefs, and not by biology. The recent broadening of gender identity and expression clearly demonstrates this concept.

Other identities are also constructed via societal agreement. Sexuality, ability, religion, **ethnicity**, age, and other identities may contain some physical parameters, and certainly contain meaning to the individuals that possess them. Critical to our study of families, however, is the understanding that society creates and reinforces social construction of these characteristics and those constructions favor some groups, discriminate against others, and generally impact the lives of families.

Intersectionality

Figure 1.16. Articulated by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, the concept of intersectionality identifies a mode of analysis integral to women, gender, sexuality studies.

Articulated by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), the concept of **intersectionality** identifies a mode of analysis integral to women, gender, and sexuality studies. Within intersectional frameworks, race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and other aspects of identity are experienced simultaneously and the meanings of different aspects of identity are shaped by one another. In other words, notions of gender and the way a person's gender is interpreted by others are always impacted by notions of race and the way that person's race is interpreted. For example, a person is never received as just a woman, but how that person is racialized impacts how the person is received as a woman. So, notions of blackness, brownness, and whiteness always influence gendered experience, and there is no experience of gender that is outside of an experience of race. In addition to race, gendered experience is also shaped by age, sexuality, class, and ability; likewise, the experience of race is impacted by gender, age, class, sexuality, and ability.

Understanding intersectionality requires a particular way of thinking. It is different than the ways in which many people imagine identities operate. An intersectional analysis of identity is distinct from **single-determinant identity models** which presume that one aspect of identity (say, gender) dictates one's access to or disenfranchisement from power. An example of this idea is the concept of "global sisterhood," or the idea that all women across the globe share some basic common political interests, concerns, and needs.[8] If women in different locations did share common interests, it would make sense for them to unite on the basis of gender to fight for social changes on a global scale. Unfortunately, if the analysis of **social problems** stops at gender, what is missed is an attention

Figure 1.17. An intersectional perspective examines how identities are related to each other in our own experiences and how the social structures of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, and ability intersect for everyone.

to how various cultural contexts shaped by race, religion, and access to resources may actually place some women's needs at cross-purposes to other women's needs. Therefore, this approach obscures the fact that women in different social and geographic locations face different problems. Although many White, middle-class women activists of the mid-20th century US fought for freedom to work and legal parity with men, this was not the major problem for women of color or working-class White women who had already been actively participating in the US labor market as domestic workers, factory workers, and enslaved laborers since early US colonial settlement. Campaigns for women's equal legal rights and access to the labor market at the international level are shaped by the experience and concerns of White American women, while women of the Global South, in particular, may have more pressing concerns: access to clean water, access to adequate health care, and safety from the physical and psychological harms of living in tyrannical, war-torn, or economically impoverished nations.

"Gender" is too often used simply and erroneously to mean "White women," while "race" too often connotes "Black men." An intersectional perspective examines how identities are related to each other in our own experiences and how the social structures of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, and ability intersect for everyone. As opposed to **single-determinant** and additive models of identity, an intersectional approach develops a more sophisticated understanding of the world and how individuals in differently situated social groups experience differential access to both material and symbolic resources such as privilege.

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8. Morgan, R. (2016). Sisterhood is global: The international women's movement anthology. Open Road Media.

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THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND FAMILIES

Elizabeth B. Pearce

One of the most, if not the most, powerful **social institutions** in the U.S. is the government. It is important to note that in the United States, the federal government has three branches: the Congress, the Executive (President), and the Judicial or Court System. In addition, the Constitution recognizes the rights and responsibilities of state governments; counties and cities have governing structures as well. If you'd like to read more about the development of the Constitution, click here. All of these structures legislate in ways that affect families, some directly and some indirectly. The United States is considered to be a Common Law country, meaning that laws are derived in three ways: legislation created by governing bodies; administrative rules and regulations; and decisions via judicial courts.

Family Composition

Most **family law** (including marriage, divorce, and adoption) is governed by the states. When there is a great deal of advocacy, unrest, **inequity**, and/or controversy, family-related matters rise to the federal level. Here are two relatively recent examples:

1. In 1958, Mildred Loving, a woman of color, and her White husband, Richard Loving, were sentenced to a year of prison for marrying each other, breaking Virginia's "Racial Integrity Act of 1924." The Lovings appealed their conviction in Virginia and eventually to the U.S. Supreme Court, who ruled in 1967 (**Loving v. Virginia**) that all laws banning interracial marriage were violations of the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution. That made it illegal for individual states to restrict interracial marriage. To read a summary of the Supreme Court case, click here.

Figure 1.18. Grace Hightower and Robert DeNiro were a prominent interracial couple.

2. More recently, the ruling on **Loving v. Virginia** has been utilized to argue that laws banning same-sex marriages were also unconstitutional. Between 2012 and 2014, plaintiffs from multiple states filed in state courts to overturn state laws that criminalized same-sex marriages. While several district courts found these laws to be unconstitutional, one district

court ruled in favor of the constitutionality of these laws. With the split between courts, the case rose to the level of the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in 2015 that all states must perform and recognize marriages between same-sex couples (***Obergefell v. Hodges)***.

No anti-miscegenation laws passed
Before 1887
1948 to 1967
12 June 1967
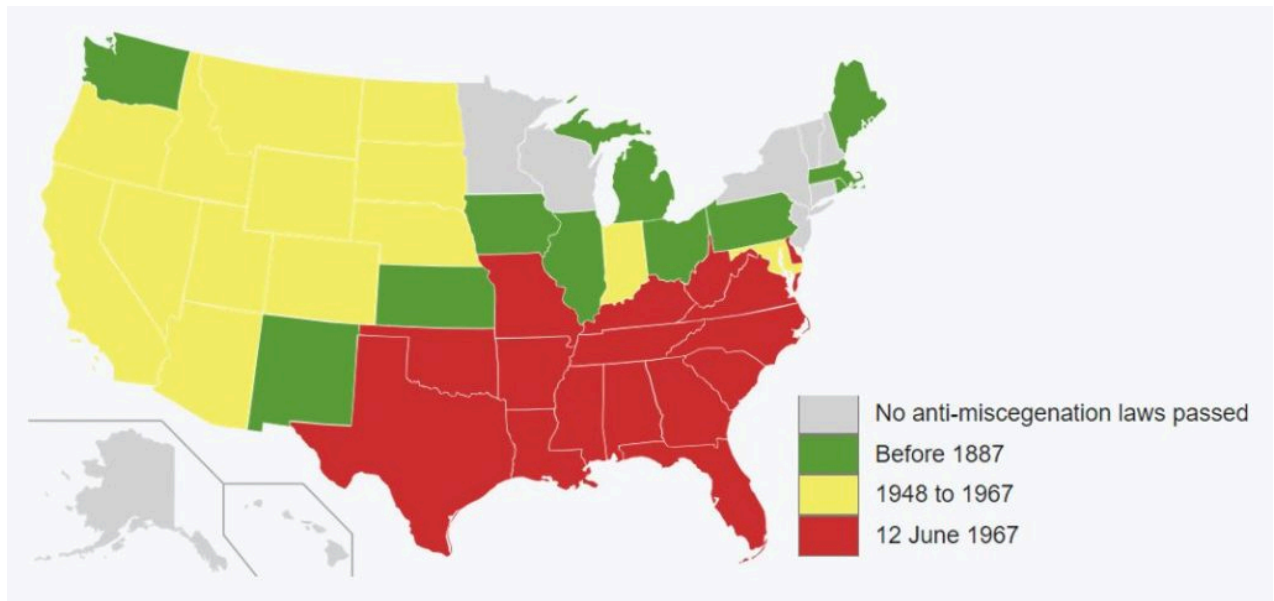
Figure 1.19. Dates of repeal of US anti-miscegenation laws by state.

Of note is that while the 1967 decision to legalize interracial marriage was a unanimous decision, the 2015 decision to legalize same-sex marriage was closely contested among the Court members and passed by a narrow 5-4 margin. How would you interpret the differentiated results of these decisions? It appears that there is still disagreement amongst the most powerful in this country about whether the language in the Fourteenth Amendment applies to marriage, **gay** and **lesbian** people, or neither. The Amendment states in part: "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

Figure 1.20. In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court decided, by a narrow margin, to legalize same-sex marriage.

From **Loving v. Virginia (1967)** and **Obergefell v. Hodges (2015)**, we can derive some understanding that governments influence whom we marry, how we divorce, and the legal relationships, rights, benefits, and taxes related to parenting, **kinship** structures, and children. Critically we must note that the government places value on socially constructed differences such as race, **ethnicity**, and sexuality in ways that impact individual and family choice.

Laws are only one of the ways that government impacts family composition. Consider the federal government's role in taxing individuals and families and then providing redistribution of that money via benefits. Benefits such as food stamps, Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF), K-12 school lunches, and financial aid for college are all distributed and regulated by the government. Tax credits, such as the **Child and Dependent Care Credit**, are driven by the government's definition related to that specific tax. Specifically, the government's definitions of eligibility and family structure impact who receives benefits and how much they receive. If the government defines "family" or "dependent" in a specific way, does that impact how families form? For example, college financial aid does not count the income of a roommate or domestic partner in an applicant's income, but it does count the income of a spouse. Might this influence a college student's decision to marry? While this union is not criminalized as the previous two examples were, it is still impacted by the government's criteria related to distributing benefits. Some of us might decide to marry or not to marry based on the federal government's criteria for benefits or taxes.

Family Residence, Kinship Structure, and Equity

While co-residence is considered by many family theorists to be a pillar of the definition of family, it is important to note that not all families live together. In fact, the U.S. government has played a role in separating family members from one another (immigrant and enslaved families in particular).

Sometimes the United States has been idealized as a "melting pot" or even a "salad bowl" of **cultures** and **ethnicities**. People often immigrate to this country to make a better life for themselves and their families. The borders of the United States were open up until the late 1800s, when the first restrictive immigration law was enacted: the Page Act of 1875, which excluded Chinese women. This act separated families and was intended to discourage Chinese laborers from staying in the United States.

Figure 1.21. Since 1882, numerous U.S. immigration laws have targeted people from Asian and Latin American countries.

By 1882, Chinese men were excluded as well. Since that time, there have been numerous restrictive versions of immigration laws in the United States, most of them targeting people from Asian and Latin American countries. Wikipedia provides a list of major immigration laws from 1790 through 2012 here. And in this article in *The Atlantic* magazine, more recent laws and practices are discussed. In combination with these laws, the United States has continued to rely on immigrant labor to perform less desirable and lower-paying jobs, specifically in agriculture, sanitation, service, and cleaning. There will be more discussion of the effects on these families in the food, employment, and housing chapters. Restrictive immigration laws and policies have contributed to the formation of involuntary **transnational families**, families whose members live on different continents and/or in different countries.

Another related idealization of the United States originates in the **Declaration of Independence**, which states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."[1] It is difficult to defend **equality** as a fundamental right, both when the document was written and today as well. The most obvious example is the enslavement of people from Africa, who were intentionally imprisoned and brought to this country for that purpose. The Declaration of Independence goes on to describe the institution of governments to secure these rights. But the government specifically secured the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for one group of people (Euro-Americans), enslaved another group (African Americans), and used legal means to oppress Native Americans and immigrants.

Slavery dramatically affected family formations and **kinship** structures. Because human beings were considered property, their family ties were not respected, which meant that children were habitually separated from parents, adults were not able to marry at will, and **common-law spouses** were removed from one another at the will of the "owner." Violence against women in the form of rape resulted in parenting relationships that were structured and controlled by the owners. To understand in more about the treatment of people who were enslaved, read Boundless US History's chapter about slave treatment, sexual abuses, and publications about maintaining White dominance.

During the writing of the **Declaration of Independence** and the **American Revolution**, both free and enslaved African Americans played active roles. About 20% of enslaved people escaped and sought sanctuary

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1. Jefferson, T., et al. (1776, July 4). The declaration of independence [transcription]. National Archives. https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript

amongst Native Americans or the British during the war. Many fought in the war, including Private Lemuel Haynes, who believed that the revolution should also be a war against slavery. He rebutted The Declaration of Independence, saying the document's principle of freedom should put an end to slavery. Thousands of Black fighters for freedom participated in the emancipation of the United States from Britain.[2]

As Dean Spade writes in the introduction to *Normal Life*:

> Social movements engaged in resistance have given us a very different portrayal of the United States than what is taught in most elementary school classrooms and textbooks. The patriotic narrative delivered at school tells us a few key lies about US law and politics: that the United States is a democracy in which law and policy derive from what majority of people think is best, that the United States used to be racist and sexist but is now fair and neutral thanks to changes in the law, and that if particular groups experience harm, they can appeal to the law for protection. Social movements have challenged this narrative, identifying the United States as a settler colony and a racial project, founded and built through genocide and enslavement. They have shown that the United States has always had laws that arrange people through categories of indigeneity, race, gender, ability, and national origin to produce populations with different levels of vulnerability to economic exploitation, violence, and poverty.[3]

2. Ortiz, P. (2018). An African American and Latinx history of the United States. Beacon Press.

3. Spade, D. (2015). Normal life: Administrative violence, critical trans politics, and the limits of law (Revised and expanded edition). Duke University Press.

Conclusion

Figure 1.22. Understanding how structures like institutions and societal views limit families can help us to strive for equity.

In this text we will discuss the ways in which **social institutions** and processes continue to reinforce the **inequities** created within the original formation of the United States. We will focus on the federal government and the tension that exists between federal powers and state's rights, which often leads to inequities amongst American families. We will examine other social institutions such as school systems, health care/insurance structures, the economy, businesses, and places of worship. We will look at the bi-directional nature of people and institutions: the ways that individuals and families organize to create social movements that influence existing practices and structures, and the ways those practices and structures influence people.

By examining the existing structures that limit families, we strive to be a part of the change that will transform our institutions, societal views, and processes in a way that increases and supports **equity** for all families.

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Figure 1.18. "Robert De Niro and Grace Hightower at the Vanity Fair party for the 2012 Tribeca Film Festival" by David Shankbone. License: CC BY 3.0.

Figure 1.19. "Dates of repeal of US anti-miscegenation laws by state" by Certes. License: CC BY 3.0. Modification: moved key closer to image.

Figure 1.20. Photo by Zackary Drucker as part of Broadly's Gender Spectrum Collection. License: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

Figure 1.21. "Chinese miners Idaho Springs" by Dr. James Underhill. Public domain.

Figure 1.22. "LGBTQ employment rights" by Victoria Pickering. License: CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

2. STUDYING FAMILIES

STUDYING FAMILIES PREVIEW QUESTIONS

As you read this chapter, consider the following questions:

1. What can you expect to learn from studying families?
2. How will studying families impact your family and your work life in the future?
3. What are the main methods for researching families?
4. What are the nuances of objectivity coupled with humanity?
5. How will cultural humility help you understand other people?
6. What are the major theoretical perspectives? Which ones make the most sense to you?
7. What is a social problem? What social problems have you experienced or observed?
8. How will having a sociological imagination and understanding equity equip you to learn about families in the United States?

HOW AND WHY WE STUDY FAMILIES

Elizabeth B. Pearce

Families and **kinship** are of great interest to most, if not all, people. We all have a family, whether or not that family meets the **socially constructed** definitions of family that are common in the United States, or our own desired definition of family. Sociologist Paul Amato separates the definition of family into the "objective" and the "subjective".[1] The objective definitions are often provided by governmental structures. Employers, schools and agencies also rely on these definitions.

Subjective definitions are both richer in context and more complicated to explain. We can define for ourselves whom we consider to be family members. When we are discussing equity and families we must attend to the subjective definitions. Because it is only by measuring the experiences of all families in the United States (whether or not they are sanctioned or favored by programs and societal preferences) that we can really perceive how privilege, power, and **discrimination** affect families

We study families in order to better understand ourselves. When we can see our own family within the greater context of the experiences of other families and societal influences and trends, we understand ourselves better. Being able to relate your own experiences to these greater forces and interactions with the world is called the **sociological imagination**. Sociologist Charles (C.) Wright Mills created this term in 1959 in order to help explain the ways that the field of sociology contributes to both everyday life and academia.[2] Throughout this course and this text you will be given opportunities to develop your sociological imagination. Ask yourself how your own family's experiences relate to the broad trends and events in this country. Where do you fit? Or find yourself as an outlier, differing from other members of your family, social group, or society?

We also study families in order to better understand other families and society. In this way we recognize both the uniqueness of each family and the ways in which groups share identities and experiences. Let's say that you feel familiar with the experience of a rural student family, because you are a student and you live in a rural community. You may be able to speak very eloquently to the challenges students are facing today, and what living in a rural setting means about your access to education, medical care, healthy food, and transportation. At the same time, you cannot speak for all rural student families, because every family has a unique history and set of

1. Amato, P. R. (2019). What is a family? National Council on Family Relations. Retrieved December 31, 2019, from https://www.ncfr.org/ncfr-report/past-issues/summer-2014/what-family
2. Wright Mills, C. (1959). The sociological imagination. Oxford University Press. Retrieved December 31, 2019, from https://sites.middlebury.edu/utopias/files/2013/02/The-Promise.pdf

circumstances that also affects their lives. So part of your job in studying families is to listen and understand how those other rural student families experience life, what their strengths are, and what they need.

Simultaneously we study families in this class to understand the circumstances and experiences of families that we have never met. It's even more important to **"listen"** to and understand families whom we might see as quite different from us. You might easily see the differences between a family that has emigrated to the United States in the past ten years as compared to a family made up of people who have lived in the United States for several generations. Could you imagine living in a country that uses a different language than you grew up speaking? Or visa versa? While we might quickly identify those kinds of differences, we need to study more deeply to understand at least two other themes: how our families share similar love, goals, and needs and how our families may be treated differently by the institutions and the society of the United States. The greater our ability to comprehend each other's experiences, the more likelihood we will be able to better understand how families are similar in what they need and what they do, and what the differences are amongst what families experience in the United States.

We study families to make a difference in our everyday lives: to better understand our own families, our neighbors, and our friends. Studying families also helps us in our work lives. All of us will work with a diverse group of individuals, all of whom have families. Whether you are a teacher who influences the next generation, a business owner who coordinates benefits for your employees, a marketing director who designs advertising campaigns, a computer programmer who creates code, or a social worker who helps people solve life problems, you will both work alongside a group of diverse individuals who have families, and you will have clients, consumers, or customers who are members of this diverse country, the United States.

Research

Much of what we know about families and **kinship** comes from research conducted in the United States and in other countries. In order to be a critical consumer of research, it is helpful to understand what methodologies are used, and what their strengths and limitations are. In addition, it is useful to be aware that there are myths and beliefs that we hold because society has created and reinforced them. When learning new information we must be prepared to question our own long-held beliefs in order to incorporate greater understanding. Finally, there are both concepts and theories relevant to the study of families; these will greatly enhance your deeper comprehension of the material that we explore in this text.

Sound research is an essential tool for understanding families. Families are complex because there are multiple ways that families form and function. Every family is comprised of unique individuals. Studies about families seek to learn about how families interact internally as well as with the greater social world. What are the effects of actions and environments on families? How do families treat each other within their structures? For example, in 2019-21 a global pandemic has impacted individuals and families in multiple ways, changing most people's health, social, work, school, and home environments. But how do we understand and quantify those changes? What impacts, dynamics, consequences and solutions have families experienced? Table 2.1 briefly

describes the major ways in which sociologists gather information, the advantages and disadvantages of each and a narrative of each method follows.

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Survey	Many people can be included. If given to a random sample of the population, a survey's results can be generalized to the population.	Large surveys are expensive and time consuming. Although much information is gathered, this information is relatively superficial.
Experiments	If random assignment is used, experiments provide fairly convincing data on cause and effect.	Because experiments do not involve random samples of the population and most often involve college students, their results cannot readily be generalized to the population.
Observation (field research)	Observational studies may provide rich, detailed information about the people who are observed.	Because observation studies do not involve random samples of the population, their results cannot readily be generalized to the population.
Existing Data	Because existing data have already been gathered, the researcher does not have to spend the time and money to gather data.	The data set that is being analyzed may not contain data on all the variables in which a sociologist is interested or may contain data on variables that are not measured in ways the sociologist prefers.

Table 2.1. Advantages and disadvantages of sociological data collection methods.

Surveys

The survey is the most common method by which sociologists gather their data. The Gallup poll is perhaps the most well-known example of a survey and, like all surveys, gathers its data with the help of a questionnaire that is given to a group of respondents. The Gallup poll is an example of a survey conducted by a private organization, but sociologists do their own surveys, as does the government and many organizations in addition to Gallup. Many surveys are administered to respondents who are randomly chosen and thus constitute a random sample. In a random sample, everyone in the population (whether it be the whole US population or just the population of a state or city, all the college students in a state or city or all the students at just one college, etc.) has the same chance of being included in the survey. The beauty of a random sample is that it allows us to generalize the results of the sample to the population from which the sample comes. This means that we can be fairly sure of the behavior and attitudes of the whole US population by knowing the behavior and attitudes of just four hundred people randomly chosen from that population.

Some surveys are face-to-face surveys, in which interviewers meet with respondents to ask them questions. This type of survey can yield much information, because interviewers typically will spend at least an hour

asking their questions, and a high response rate (the percentage of all people in the sample who agree to be interviewed), which is important to be able to generalize the survey's results to the entire population. On the downside, this type of survey can be very expensive and time consuming to conduct.

Because of these drawbacks, sociologists and other researchers have turned to telephone surveys. Most Gallup polls are conducted over the telephone. Computers do random-digit dialing, which results in a random sample of all telephone numbers being selected. Although the response rate and the number of questions asked are both lower than in face-to-face surveys (people can just hang up the phone at the outset or let their answering machine take the call), the ease and low expense of telephone surveys are making them increasingly popular. Surveys done over the Internet are also becoming more popular, as they can reach many people at very low expense. A major problem with web surveys is that their results cannot necessarily be generalized to the entire population because not everyone has access to the Internet.

Surveys are used in the study of families to gather information about the behavior and attitudes of people regarding their behaviors. For example, many surveys ask people about their use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs or about their experiences of being unemployed or in poor health. Many of the chapters in this book will present evidence gathered by surveys carried out by sociologists and other social scientists, various governmental agencies, and private research and public interest firms.

Experiments

Experiments are the primary form of research in the natural and physical sciences, but in the social sciences they are for the most part found only in psychology. Some sociologists still use experiments, however, and they remain a powerful tool of social research.

The major advantage of experiments, whether they are done in the natural and physical sciences or in the social sciences, is that the researcher can be fairly sure of a cause-and-effect relationship because of the way the experiment is set up. Although many different experimental designs exist, the typical experiment consists of an experimental group and a control group, with subjects randomly assigned to either group. The researcher does something to the experimental group that is not done to the control group. If the two groups differ later in some variable, then it is safe to say that the condition to which the experimental group was subjected was responsible for the difference that resulted.

Most experiments take place in the laboratory, which for psychologists may be a room with a one-way mirror, but some experiments occur in the field, or in a natural setting (field experiments). In Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the early 1980s, sociologists were involved in a much-discussed field experiment sponsored by the federal government. The researchers wanted to see whether arresting men for domestic violence made it less likely that they would commit such violence again. To test this hypothesis, the researchers had police do one of the following after arriving at the scene of a domestic dispute: They either arrested the suspect, separated him from his wife or partner for several hours, or warned him to stop but did not arrest or separate him. The researchers then determined the percentage of men in each group who committed repeated domestic violence during the next six months and found that those who were arrested had the lowest rate of recidivism,

or repeat offending[3]. This finding led many jurisdictions across the United States to adopt a policy of mandatory arrest for domestic violence suspects. However, replications of the Minneapolis experiment in other cities found that arrest sometimes reduced recidivism for domestic violence but also sometimes increased it, depending on which city was being studied and on certain characteristics of the suspects, including whether they were employed at the time of their arrest.[4]

As the Minneapolis study suggests, perhaps the most important problem with experiments is that their results are not generalizable beyond the specific subjects studied. The subjects in most psychology experiments, for example, are college students, who obviously are not typical of average Americans: They are younger, more educated, and more likely to be middle class. Despite this problem, experiments in psychology and other social sciences have given us very valuable insights into the sources of attitudes and behavior. Scholars are increasingly using field experiments to study the effectiveness of various policies and programs aimed at addressing **social problem**s. We will discuss social thoroughly discuss social problems later in the *Theoretical Perspectives and Key Concepts* section.

Observational Studies

Observational research, also called field research, is a staple of sociology. Sociologists have long gone into the field to observe people and social settings, and the result has been many rich descriptions and analyses of behavior in juvenile gangs, bars, urban street corners, and even whole communities.

Observational studies consist of both participant observation and nonparticipant observation. Their names describe how they differ. In participant observation, the researcher is part of the group that she or he is studying, spends time with the group, and might even live with people in the group. Several classical studies of this type exist, many of them involving people in urban neighborhoods.[567] In nonparticipant observation, the researcher observes a group of people but does not otherwise interact with them. If you went to your local shopping mall to observe, say, whether people walking with children looked happier than people without children, you would be engaging in nonparticipant observation.

Similar to experiments, observational studies cannot automatically be generalized to other settings or members of the population. But in many ways they provide a richer account of people's lives than surveys do, and they remain an important method of research on social problems.

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3. Sherman, L. W., & Berk, R. A. (1984). The specific deterrent effects of arrest for domestic assault. American Sociological Review, 49(2), 261. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095575

4. Sherman, L. W. (1992). Policing domestic violence: Experiments and dilemmas. Free Press

5. Liebow, E. (1967). Tally's corner. Little, Brown.

6. Liebow, E. (1993). Tell them who I am: The lives of homeless women. Free Press

7. Whyte, W. F. (1943). Street corner society: The social structure of an Italian slum. University of Chicago Press

Analysis and Synthesis of Existing Data

Sometimes sociologists do not gather their own data but instead analyze existing data that someone else has gathered. The US Census Bureau, for example, gathers data on all kinds of areas relevant to the lives of Americans, and many sociologists analyze census data on such social problems as poverty, unemployment, and illness. Sociologists and psychologists interested in crime and the criminal justice system may analyze data from court records, while medical researchers often analyze data from patient records at hospitals. Analysis of existing data such as these is called secondary data analysis. Its advantage to sociologists is that someone else has already spent the time and money to gather the data. If one study does not contain all the data that the researcher needs, they may synthesize data from multiple studies, both quantitative and qualitative, to reach broader conclusions.

Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Research can be qualitative, quantitative, or sometimes combine both kinds of analysis. Qualitative research deals with words and with meanings, whereas quantitative research deals with numbers and statistics. Both of these kinds of analysis are important for understanding families. For example, quantitative research can tell us how many, or what percentage of families studied, have participated in a **social process** such as marriage, divorce, or remarriage. Qualitative research can tell us how members of that family experienced the process: what emotional reactions did they have, what did it mean to them, and what other actions or behaviors they attribute to being involved in the specific social process (marriage, divorce, or remarriage.) Qualitative research is descriptive; quantitative research is measurable.

The Scientific Method and Objectivity

This section began by stressing the need for sound research in the study of **social problem**s. But what are the elements of sound research? At a minimum, such research should follow the rules of the scientific method. As you probably learned in high school and/or college science classes, these rules—formulating hypotheses, observation, gathering and testing data, drawing conclusions, and modifying the hypothesis—help guarantee that research yields the most accurate, descriptive, and reliable conclusions possible.

An overriding principle of the scientific method is that research should be conducted as objectively as possible. Researchers are often passionate about their work, but they must take care not to let the findings they expect and even hope to uncover affect how they do their research. This in turn means that they must not conduct their research in a manner that helps achieve the results they expect or desire to find. Such bias can happen unconsciously, and the scientific method helps reduce the potential for this bias as much as possible.

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LEARNING DISPOSITIONS

Elizabeth B. Pearce

One of the most important aspects of learning about families and equity is you, the learner. In order for your brain to change, to adapt, to assimilate new information you will need to work at it. Reading, writing, and discussing the material is not enough. It's a start, but the disposition that you bring to this experience will make a large impact on what you learn.

- Are you willing to set aside existing assumptions and ideas when you read something that doesn't make sense to you at first?
- Are you willing to question beliefs that may be ingrained in multiple generations of your own family or kinship group?
- Are you willing to be uncomfortable during this learning process?
- Will you work to "listen" to others that have different social identities than your own?

Dispositions that are open to trying out new ideas and ways of thinking will help you learn and your brain grow new understandings and neural pathways. We will talk about three learning dispositions here: **cognitive and emotional perspective-taking**, objectivity, and **cultural humility**.

Cognitive and Emotional Perspective-taking

To understand the diversity of family experience in the United States, students will need to practice "putting yourself in another person's shoes." Seeing that people have beliefs, values, emotions, and responses that can overlap with and differ from our own will expose the richness and depth of family life. It is important to note that we cannot always predict how we (or someone else!) will respond given a particular circumstance. Instead, it is our work as students to **"listen,"** understand, and learn more about what families experience and how they function in the United States. In particular it is critical to "listen" to those we perceive as belonging to different social groups than ourselves. By adopting an attitude of listening, rather than of judging, we will increase our own knowledge base.

Objectivity and Humanity

Every human being has a unique set of characteristics, experiences, and beliefs. This is part of what makes us

human: our abilities to think, reflect, and form conclusions based on our particular set of circumstances. This is true of social scientists as well, the human beings who study other humans, our social groups, and interactions. We rely on empirical research, data which is collected and analyzed by social scientists, to learn about individuals and families. These scientists emerge from a variety of disciplines including Anthropology, Education, Human Development and Family Sciences, Psychology and Sociology. They share the research principle that scientists must do their best to set aside their own beliefs and experiences in order to influence the study or analysis that they are conducting. Creating objectivity is considered crucial to the scientific method which includes formulating a hypothesis that is then tested via the collection and analysis of information. At the same time, we must acknowledge that this method and theory was created and validated almost exclusively by people of one gender and one race (male and European, or White) and there is room for refinement of this thinking.

The feminist perspective (described in *Theoretical Perspectives and Key Concepts* and Table 2.2) introduces some complexity to the idea of objectivity by emphasizing that in order to truly understand our social structure, researchers must acknowledge that every human being (themselves included) brings their own viewpoint based on their unique set of social characteristics to their work. The intersection of our gender, ethnicity, race, age, sexuality, ability and other identities along with our own life experiences makes each of us unique. Scientists must understand their own perspective, or bias, in order to do their best to both recognize the impact of their own viewpoint and to attempt to set it aside while collecting and analyzing information.

Cultural Humility

Figure 2.1. Understanding different cultures is crucial in our interconnected world.

As our world becomes increasingly diverse and interconnected, understanding different **cultures** becomes crucial. Without a basic understanding of the beliefs and experiences of individuals, professionals can unintentionally contribute to **prejudice** and **discrimination** or negatively impact professional relationships and effectiveness of services. To understand cultural experiences, it is important to consider the context of **social identity**, history, and individual and community experiences with prejudice and discrimination. It is also important to acknowledge that our understanding of cultural differences evolves through an ongoing learning process.[1]

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1. Tervalon, M., & Murray-Garcia, J. (1998). Cultural humility versus cultural competence: A critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education. Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved, 9(2), 117-125.

Figure 2.2. Cultural competence involves ongoing learning.

Cultural competence is generally defined as possessing the skills and knowledge of a **culture** in order to effectively work with individual members of the culture. This definition includes an appreciation of cultural differences and the ability to effectively work with individuals. The assumption that any individual can gain enough knowledge or competence to understand the experiences of members of any culture, however, is problematic. Gaining expertise in cultural competence as traditionally defined seems unattainable, as it involves the need for knowledge and mastery. Instead, true cultural competence requires engaging in an ongoing process of learning about the experiences of other cultures.[2] Further reading on cultural competence by Stanley Sue can be found in this article: In Search of Cultural Competence in Psychotherapy and Counseling.

Cultural humility is the ability to remain open to learning about other cultures while acknowledging one's own lack of competence and recognizing power dynamics that impact the relationship. Within cultural humility it is important to engage in continuous self-reflection, recognize the impact of power dynamics on individuals and communities, embrace "not knowing", and commit to lifelong learning. This approach to diversity encourages a curious spirit and the ability to openly engage with others in the process of learning about a different culture. As a result, it is important to address power imbalances and develop meaningful relationships with community members in order to create positive change. A guide to cultural humility is offered by Culturally Connected.

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2. Tervalon, M., & Murray-Garcia, J. (1998). Cultural humility versus cultural competence: A critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education. Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved, 9(2), 117-125.

Dimensions of Diversity

Figure 2.3. It is important to address power imbalances and develop meaningful relationships with community members in order to create positive change.

Although it is impossible to discuss all of the dimensions of human diversity in this section, we present some common dimensions that will be discussed in this text. We also acknowledge the importance of **intersectionality**, which was described in the Introductory chapter and the process of **cultural humility** in understanding diversity.

> **"Culture is something that unites people."**
> **–Anastasiya O., Russia**

Culture

Culture is an important dimension of diversity for community psychologists to examine. In general, culture has been challenging to define, with modern definitions viewing culture as a dynamic concept that changes both individuals and societies together over time. Further, culture in today's society refers to more than just cultural and ethnic groups but also includes racial groups, religious groups, sexual minority groups, socioeconomic groups, nation-states, and corporations. While numerous definitions for culture are available, there are key defining components, such as shared meanings and shared experiences by individuals in a group that are passed down over time with each generation. That is, cultures have shared beliefs, values, practices, definitions, and other elements that are expressed through family socialization, formal schooling, shared language, social roles, and norms for feeling, thinking, and acting.[3]

Culture can be examined at multiple ecological levels to understand its impact. This means that culture can influence the norms and practices of individuals, families, organizations, local communities, and the broader society. For example, cultural influences can have an impact on how members function and interact with one another. Further, culture should be understood within a broader context of power relationships, and how power is used and distributed.[4]

3. Cohen, A. B. (2009). Many forms of culture. American Psychologist, 64(3), 194-204.
4. Trickett, E. J. (2011). From "Water boiling in a Peruvian town" to "Letting them die": Culture, community intervention, and the metabolic balance between patience and zeal. American Journal of Community Psychology, 47, 58-68.

Race

Figure 2.4. Most genetic variation exists within racial groups rather than between groups.

While physical differences often are used to define race, in general, there is no consensus for this term. Typically, race has been defined using observable physical or biological criteria, such as skin color, hair color or texture, facial features, etc. However, these biological assumptions of race have been determined to be inaccurate and harmful by biologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and other scientists. Research has proven no biological foundations to race and that human racial groups are more alike than different; in fact, most genetic variation exists within racial groups rather than between groups. Therefore, racial differences in areas such as academics or intelligence are not based on biological differences but are instead related to economic, historical, and social factors.[5]

Instead, race has been socially constructed and has different social and psychological meanings in many soci-

5. Betancourt, H., & Lopez, S. R. (1993). The study of culture, ethnicity, and race in American psychology. American Psychologist, 48(6), 629-637.

eties.[6] In the US, people of color experience more racial **prejudice** and **discrimination** than White people. The meanings and definitions of race have also changed over time and are often driven by policies and laws (e.g., <u>one drop rule or laws</u>).

Case Study

Is Race a Selected Identity?

Rachel Dolezal, also known as Nkechi Amare Diallo, was born to White parents with no known African ancestry. As a young adult, she became involved in civil rights, became a college instructor of Africana Studies, and began self-identifying as a

Figure 2.5. Definitions of race have also changed over time and are often driven by policies and laws.

Black woman. She even became president of the Spokane, Washington chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She

resigned from her position with the NAACP and was dismissed from her role as an instructor after information surfaced casting doubt upon her racial heritage. She later acknowledged that she was born to White parents but continued to insist that she strongly identifies as a Black woman. Read more <u>here</u>.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to one's **social identity** based on the **culture** of origin, ancestry, or affiliation with a cultural group.[7] Ethnicity is not the same as nationality, which is a person's status of belonging to a specific nation by birth or citizenship (e.g., an individual can be of Japanese ethnicity but British nationality because they were born in the United Kingdom). Ethnicity is defined by aspects of **subjective culture** such as customs, language, and social ties.[8]

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6. Betancourt, H., & Lopez, S. R. (1993). The study of culture, ethnicity, and race in American psychology. American Psychologist, 48(6), 629-637.

7. Pinderhughes, E. (1989). Understanding race, ethnicity and power: The key to efficacy in clinical practice. Basic Books.

8. Resnicow, K., Braithwaite, R., Ahluwalia, J., & Baranowski, T. (1999). Cultural sensitivity in public health: Defined and demystified. Ethnicity & Disease, 9, 10-21.

While ethnic groups are combined into broad categories for research or demographic purposes in the US, there are many ethnicities among the ones you may be familiar with. Latina/o/x or Hispanic may refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Spanish, Dominican, or many other ancestries. Asian Americans have roots from over 20 countries in Asia and India, with the six largest Asian ethnic subgroups in the US being the Chinese, Asian Indians, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Koreans, and Japanese (read more here).

Fig. 2.6. Asian Americans have roots from over 20 countries in Asia and India.

Gender

Gender refers to the socially constructed perceptions of what it means to be male or female in our society and how those genders may be reflected and interpreted by society. Gender is different from sex, which is a biological descriptor involving chromosomes and internal/external reproductive organs. As a socially constructed concept, gender has magnified the perceived differences between females and males leading to limitations in attitudes, roles, and how **social institutions** are organized. For example, how do gender norms influence types of jobs viewed as appropriate or not appropriate for women or men? How are household or parenting responsibilities divided between men and women?

Figure 2.7. Gender identity is different from sex.

Gender is not just a demographic category but also influences gender norms, the distribution of power and resources, access to opportunities, and other important processes.[9] For those who live outside of these traditional expectations for gender, the experience can be challenging. In general, the binary categories for sex, gender, gender identity, and so forth have received the most attention from both society and the research community, with only more attention to other gender identities (e.g., gender-neutral, transgender, nonbinary, and GenderQueer) in recent years.[10]

9. Bond, M. A. (1999). Gender, race, and class in organizational contexts. American Journal of Community Psychology, 27(3), 327-355.

10. Kosciw, J. G., Palmer, N. A., & Kull, R. M. (2015). Reflecting resiliency: Openness about sexual orientation and/or gender identity and its relationship to well-being and educational outcomes for LGBT students. American Journal of Community Psychology, 55, 167-178.

But the attention to other gender identities is increasing, both academically and publicly. One example is the case of [Nicole Maines challenging her elementary school's restroom policy](), which resulted in a victory when the Maine Supreme Judicial Court ruled that she had been excluded from the restroom because of her transgender identity. While community psychologists are making efforts to conduct more research on the various gender identities on the gender spectrum, more research needs to continue in this area.

Age

Age describes the developmental changes and transitions that come with being a child, adolescent, or adult. Power dynamics, relationships, physical and psychological health concerns, community participation, life satisfaction, and so forth can all vary for these different age groups.[11] Although the field has started to include aging issues in research, Cheng and Heller searched for publications on older adults in major Community Psychology journals and found that this segment of the population has been neglected.[12] Although the skills, values, and training of community psychologists would likely make a difference in the lives of older adults, the attitudes within our profession and society are current barriers.

Fig. 2.8. Age describes the developmental changes and transitions that come with being a child, adolescent, or adult.

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11. Cheng, S. T., & Heller, K. (2009). Global aging: Challenges for community psychology. American Journal of Community Psychology, 44, 161-173.
12. Cheng, S. T., & Heller, K. (2009). Global aging: Challenges for community psychology. American Journal of Community Psychology, 44, 161-173.

Social Class

Fig. 2.9. Social class can include a person's income or material wealth, educational status, occupational status, and/or housing status.

Like the other components of diversity, social class is socially constructed and can affect our choices and opportunities. This dimension can include a person's income or material wealth, educational status, and/or occupational status. It can include assumptions about where a person belongs in society and indicate differences in power, privilege, economic opportunities and resources, and social capital. Social class and **culture** can also shape a person's worldview or understanding of the world; influencing how they feel, act, and fit in; and impacting the types of schools they attend, access to health care, or jobs they work at throughout life. The differences in norms, values, and practices between lower and upper social classes can also have impacts on well-being and health outcomes.[13] Social class and its intersection with other components of one's identity are important for community psychologists to understand. Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick? is a seven-part documentary that focuses on the connection between social class, racism, and health.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation refers to a person's emotional, romantic, erotic, and spiritual attractions toward another in relation to their own sex or gender. The definition focuses on feelings rather than behaviors since individuals who identify with a minority sexual orientation experience significant stigma and oppression in our society.[14] Sexual orientation exists on a continuum or multiple continuums and crosses all dimensions of diversity (e.g., race, ethnicity, social class, ability, religion, etc.). Sexual orientation is different from gender identity or gender expres-

Fig. 2.10. Sexual orientation is different from gender identity or gender expression.

13. Cohen, A. B. (2009). Many forms of culture. American Psychologist, 64(3), 194-204.
14. Flanders, C. E., Robinson, M., Legge, M. M., & Tarasoff, L. A. (2016). Negative identity experiences of bisexual and other non-monosexual people: A qualitative report. Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health, 20(2), 152-172.

sion. Over time, gay, lesbian, asexual, and bisexual identities have extended to other sexual orientations such as pansexual, polysexual, and fluid, and increasingly more research is being conducted on these populations within the field of Community Psychology.[15] As a historically marginalized and oppressed group with inadequate representation in the literature, sexual minority groups face a variety of problems and issues that necessitate further research. The empowering and participatory approaches and methods used in Community Psychology can be beneficial for research with sexual minority groups.

Ability/Disability

Disabilities refer to visible or hidden and temporary or permanent conditions that provide barriers or challenges, and impact individuals of every age and social group. Traditional views of disability follow a **medical model**, primarily explaining diagnoses and treatment models from a pathological perspective.[16] In this traditional approach, individuals diagnosed with a disability are often discussed as objects of study instead of complex individuals impacted by their environment. A **social model of ability**, which is the perspective of these authors, views diagnoses from a social and environmental perspective and considers multiple ecological levels. The experiences of individuals are strongly valued, and community-based participatory research is a valuable way to explore experiences while empowering members of a community with varying levels of ability/disability. Learn more by watching the Employment Choice for People with Severe Physical Disabilities video.

Culture must be considered when viewing ability from

Fig. 2.11. Culture may impact the diagnosis of a disability.

15. Kosciw, J. G., Palmer, N. A., & Kull, R. M. (2015). Reflecting resiliency: Openness about sexual orientation and/or gender identity and its relationship to well-being and educational outcomes for LGBT students. American Journal of Community Psychology, 55, 167-178.

16. Goodley, D., & Lawthom, R. (2010). Epistemological journeys in participatory action research: Alliances between community psychology and disability studies. Disability & Society, 20(2), 135-151. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590500059077

a social perspective[17], and may impact whether or not certain behaviors are considered sufficient for inclusion in a diagnosis. For example, cultural differences in the assessment of "typical" development have impacted the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders in different countries. Further, diagnoses or symptoms can be culturally-specific, and culture may influence how symptoms are communicated. The experience of culture can significantly impact lived experience for individuals diagnosed with a disability.

It is important to consider how **intersectionality** impacts the experience of disability. For example, students of color and other underserved groups have a higher rate of diagnosis of learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disabilities, and intellectual disabilities,[18] which may be due to economic, historical, and social factors. Diagnosis must be considered as disabled youth are at a disadvantage in a number of indicators of educational performance, leading to more substantial disparities later in life.

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"Cultural Humility," "Dimensions of Diversity," "Race," "Gender," "Age," "Sexual Orientation," and "Ability/Disability," are adapted from "Respect for Diversity" by Nghi D. Thai and Ashlee Lien in *Introduction to Community Psychology: Becoming an Agent of Change,* Rebus Community. License: CC BY 4.0. Adaptation: Edited for clarity and relevance.

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Figure 2.7. Photo by OpenClipart-Vectors. License: Pixabay License.

17. Goodley, D., & Lawthom, R. (2010). Epistemological journeys in participatory action research: Alliances between community psychology and disability studies. Disability & Society, 20(2), 135-151. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590500059077

18. Artiles, A. J., Kozleski, E. B., Trent, S. C., Osher, D., & Ortiz, A. (2010). Justifying and explaining disproportionality, 1968-2008: A critique of underlying views of culture. Exceptional Children, 76(3), 279-299. https://doi.org/10.1177/001440291007600303

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND KEY CONCEPTS

Elizabeth B. Pearce

We will examine families from a variety of theoretical perspectives. A theoretical perspective, or more briefly, a "theory" is not just an idea that someone has. Rather it is a structural framework, explanation, or tool that has been tested and evaluated over time. Theories are developed and utilized via scholarship, research, discussion, and debate. Theories help us to understand the world in general, and in this instance the ways in which families form, function, interact with, and experience the world. In addition, we will define several key concepts including **equity**, **social problems**, and the **sociological imagination** that are important to your understanding of equity and families in this course.

Because the study of families overlaps multiple disciplines, we will utilize sociological, human development, psychological, and anthropological theories and concepts. Play this video to learn about five of the foundational theories related to the study of families: Social Exchange, Symbolic Interaction, Feminist, Postmodern, and Life Course. (It is recommended that you play it at 1.25x speed and you can disregard the references to chapter numbers)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=626#oembed-1

Here is a summary table of these five theories and four others that are commonly used in this field and that will be discussed in this text.

Table 2.2. Foundational theories related to the study of families.

Theory	Major Principles	Relation to Family Life	Key Vocabulary and Concepts	Important
Conflict	Opposition, power, and conflict within the family and society are needed for society to develop and change	Emphasizes the competing interests of familial roles including the male dominating the family and providing stability to society		
Ecological Systems	Individuals are part of a group of concentric systems that impact their development and growth.	Children are influenced by the people and environments in which they spend the most time,, as well as the greater social events, trends and values.	Micro, Meso, Exo, Macro, and Chronosystems.	Urie Bronfenbrenner developed this theory in the second half of the 20th century; he influenced the creation of HeadStart in the United States.
Exchange (aka Social Exchange)	Individuals have different strengths, resources and weaknesses and enter into relationships via the evaluation of benefits and costs.	Emphasizes the motivation for familial relationships: that each person is giving and gaining within the family.	The "breadwinner-homemaker family" is the classic example.	
Feminism (aka Feminist)	Society is structured in a way that privileges men over women; the theory works to understand and to transform inequalities.	This theory emphasizes the way that gender roles are constructed within the family including the socialization of children.	Gender differences are mostly socially constructed. This theory draws on the Conflict, Exchange, and Symbolic Interaction perspectives.	Different from the Feminist Activist movement! Read and listen carefully, so that you can distinguish it.

Functionalism	Social institutions function together in order to meet individual and group needs.	The family can be seen as an institution (e.g. breadwinner-homemaker family) that contributes to a harmonious society		Formulated originally in 19th century France, it was the dominant sociological theory in mid-20th century United States
Hierarchy of Needs	Individuals meet one set of needs first in order to be motivated and able to achieve other needs.	This theory influences family life in its arrangement of what needs are most important.		There is evidence that indigenous cultures in North America developed a hierarchy of needs earlier than the more well-known model created by Abraham Maslow.
Life Course	Significant social and historical events shape the trajectories of birth cohorts and the individuals in them.	Family life is impacted by large national and international events: wars, natural disasters, pandemics, economic depressions. In particular, children and adolescents in a given cohort will be impacted by these events over time.	Emerging Early Adulthood: the period of life when people shift into adulthood as they end their education, start a career and begin families. This period of life has become more varied and complex because of societal change.	Do not confuse this with the Lifespan theory which has a different emphasis! Read and listen carefully, so that you can distinguish it.
Postmodern (aka Modernity)	Choice and individuality are emphasized in the postmodern era. Humans are able to act in the way they choose with society and within institutions.	Individuals have a much greater choice than they did in the past about how they form their families, the roles they play and who is in their family. History, family, and tradition have decreasing roles in family life.	Reflexivity: the way in which people take in new information, reflect upon it, and adjust and act with new knowledge	This theory is a very broad one and applies to many aspects of work, societal, and family life. Social Theorist Anthony Giddens has written about this theory.

| Symbolic Interaction | This theory focuses on the changing nature of symbols and the ways we interact with one another based on those symbols. Humans see themselves through the eyes of others and this affects the roles they play. | Changing roles and symbols affect the ways family members interact with each other and with society. Societal expectations and social constructions of fathering and mothering roles have changed over time and this interacts with the way fathers and mothers actually behave. | Interpretation of shared understandings influences how humans respond and interact. | Has a basis in philosophy (George Herbert Mead) and in Sociology (Herbert Blumer.) |

What is a Social Problem?

A social problem is any condition or behavior that has negative consequences for large numbers of people and that is generally recognized as a condition or behavior that needs to be addressed systemically. It cannot be solved by an individual; institutional or societal responses are needed. This definition has both an objective component and a subjective component.

The objective component is this: for any condition or behavior to be considered a social problem, it must have negative consequences for large numbers of people. How do we know if a social problem has negative consequences? Reasonable people can and do disagree on whether such consequences exist and, if so, on their extent and seriousness, but ordinarily a body of data accumulates—from work by academic researchers, government agencies, and other sources—that strongly points to extensive and serious consequences. The reasons for these consequences are sometimes debated. For example in the case of climate change: although the overwhelming majority of climate scientists say that climate change (changes in the earth's climate due to the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere) is real and serious, the percentage of Americans who agree with scientists is lower. In a 2011 poll 64 percent said they "think that global warming is happening."[1] While the majority of Americans believe in 2020 that climate change is a social problem[2], there is still a discrepancy between the scientific community and the public's view. Social identity and location influence viewpoints,

1. Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., Roser-Renouf, C., & Smith, N. (2011). Climate change in the American mind: Americans' global warming beliefs and attitudes in May 2011. Yale Project on Climate Change Communication.
2. M. (2020, June 23). Two-thirds of Americans think government should do more on climate. Pew Research Center Science & Society. https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2020/06/23/two-thirds-of-americans-think-government-should-do-more-on-climate/

according to Gallup polls that have found that people in the West and Northeast,[3] as well as younger adults,[4] are more likely to believe that climate change is at least partially caused by human behavior and needs to be addressed.

This type of dispute points to the subjective component: there must be a perception that the condition or behavior needs to be addressed for it to be considered a social problem and that viewpoint can change over time and location. This component lies at the heart of the **social construction**ist view of social problems.[5] In this view, many types of negative conditions and behaviors exist. Many of these are considered sufficiently negative to acquire the status of a social problem; some do not receive this consideration and thus do not become a social problem; and some become considered a social problem only if citizens, policymakers, or other parties call attention to the condition or behavior.

The history of attention given to rape and sexual assault in the United States before and after the 1970s provides an example of this latter situation. These acts of sexual violence against women have probably occurred from the beginning of humanity and certainly were very common in the United States before the 1970s. Although men were sometimes arrested and prosecuted for rape and sexual assault, sexual violence was otherwise ignored by legal policymakers and received little attention in college textbooks and the news media, and many people thought that rape and sexual assault were just something that happened.[6] Thus although sexual violence existed, it was not considered a social problem. When the contemporary women's movement began in the late 1970s, it soon focused on rape and sexual assault as serious crimes and as manifestations of women's inequality. Thanks to this focus, rape and sexual assault eventually entered the public consciousness, views of these crimes began to change, and legal policymakers began to give them more attention. In short, sexual violence against women became a social problem.

3. Inc, G. (2019, April 22). Climate change concerns higher in the northeast, west u. S. Gallup.Com. https://news.gallup.com/poll/248963/climate-change-concerns-higher-northeast-west.aspx

4. Inc, G. (2018, May 11). Global warming age gap: Younger americans most worried. Gallup.Com. https://news.gallup.com/poll/234314/global-warming-age-gap-younger-americans-worried.aspx

5. Rubington, E., & Weinberg, M. S. (2010). The study of social problems: Seven perspectives (7th ed.). Oxford University Press.

6. Allison, J. A., & Wrightsman, L. S. (1993). Rape: The misunderstood crime. Sage Publications.

Fig. 2.13. Before the 1970s, rape and sexual assault certainly existed and were very common, but they were generally ignored and not considered a social problem. When the contemporary women's movement arose during the 1970s, it focused on sexual violence against women and turned this behavior into a social problem.

The changing view of rape reflects the social constructionist nature of social problems. It also reflects the dynamic in which men have held more power to shape societal views. This raises an interesting question: when is a social problem a social problem? According to some sociologists who adopt this view, negative conditions and behaviors are not a social problem unless they are recognized as such by policymakers, large numbers of lay citizens, or other segments of our society; these sociologists would thus say that rape and sexual assault before the 1970s were not a social problem because our society as a whole paid them little attention. Other sociologists say that negative conditions and behaviors should be considered a social problem even if they receive little or no attention; these sociologists would thus say that rape and sexual assault before the 1970s were a social problem.

This type of debate is probably akin to the age-old question: If a tree falls in a forest and no one is there to hear it, is a sound made? As such, it is not easy to answer, but it does reinforce one of the key beliefs of

the social constructionist view: Perception matters at least as much as reality, and sometimes more so. In line with this belief, social constructionism emphasizes that citizens, interest groups, policymakers, and other parties often compete to influence popular perceptions of many types of conditions and behaviors. They try to influence news media coverage and popular views of the nature and extent of any negative consequences that may be occurring, the reasons underlying the condition or behavior in question, and possible solutions to the problem.

Social constructionism's emphasis on perception has a provocative implication: Just as a condition or behavior may not be considered a social problem even if there is strong basis for this perception, so may a condition or behavior be considered a social problem even if there is little or no basis for this perception. The "issue" of women in college provides a historical example of this latter possibility. In the late 1800s, leading physicians and medical researchers in the United States wrote journal articles, textbooks, and newspaper columns in which they warned women not to go to college. The reason? They feared that the stress of college would disrupt women's menstrual cycles, and they also feared that women would not do well in exams during "that time of the month." [7] We now know better, of course, but the sexist beliefs of these writers turned the idea of women going to college into a social problem and helped to reinforce restrictions by colleges and universities on the admission of women.

In a related dynamic, various parties can distort certain aspects of a social problem that does exist: politicians can give speeches, the news media can use scary headlines and heavy coverage to capture readers' or viewers' interest, businesses can use advertising and influence news coverage. News media coverage of violent crime provides many examples of this dynamic.[89] The news media overdramatize violent crime, which is far less common than property crime like burglary and larceny, by featuring so many stories about it, and this coverage contributes to public fear of crime. Media stories about violent crime also tend to be more common when the accused offender is Black and the victim is White and when the offender is a juvenile. This type of coverage is thought to heighten the public's **prejudice** toward African Americans and to contribute to negative views about teenagers.

7. Ehrenreich, B., & English, D. (2005). For her own good: Two centuries of the experts' advice to women (2nd ed.). Anchor Books.
8. Robinson, M. B. (2011). Media coverage of crime and criminal justice. Carolina Academic Press.
9. Surette, R. (2011). Media, crime, and criminal justice: Images, realities, and policies (4th ed.). Wadsworth.

Fig. 2.14. A social problem emerges when a social change group successfully calls attention to a condition or behavior that it considers serious. Protests like the one depicted here have raised the environmental consciousness of Americans and helped put pressure on businesses to be environmentally responsible.

The Sociological Imagination

Many individuals experience one or more social problems personally. For example, many people are poor and unemployed, many are in poor health, and many have family problems, drink too much alcohol, or commit crime. When we hear about these individuals, it is easy to think that their problems are theirs alone, and that they and other individuals with the same problems are entirely to blame for their difficulties.

Sociology takes a different approach, as it stresses that individual problems are often rooted in problems stemming from aspects of society itself. This key insight informed C. Wright Mills's (1959)*The Sociological Imagination*. The classic distinction between personal troubles and **public issues**. Public issues is another term for social problems. Personal troubles refer to a problem affecting individuals that the affected individual, as well as other members of society, typically blame on the individual's own personal and moral failings. Examples include such different problems as eating disorders, divorce, and unemployment. Public issues, whose source lies in the social structure and **culture** of a society, refer to social problems affecting many individuals. Problems in society thus help account for problems that individuals experience. Mills felt that many problems ordinarily considered private troubles are best understood as public issues, and he coined the term sociological imagination to refer to the ability to appreciate the structural basis for individual problems.

To illustrate Mills's viewpoint, let's use our sociological imaginations to understand some contemporary social problems. We will start with unemployment, which Mills himself discussed. If only a few people were unemployed, Mills wrote, we could reasonably explain their unemployment by saying they were lazy, lacked

good work habits, and so forth. If so, their unemployment would be their own personal trouble. But when millions of people are out of work, unemployment is best understood as a public issue because, as Mills put it,[10] "the very structure of opportunities has collapsed. Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions require us to consider the economic and political institutions of the society, and not merely the personal situation and character of a scatter of individuals" (p. 9).

The high US unemployment rate stemming from the severe economic downturn that began in 2008 provides a telling example of the point Mills was making. Millions of people lost their jobs through no fault of their own. While some individuals are undoubtedly unemployed because they are lazy or lack good work habits, a more structural explanation focusing on lack of opportunity is needed to explain why so many people were out of work. If so, unemployment is best understood as a public issue rather than a personal trouble.

Another social problem is eating disorders. We usually consider a person's eating disorder to be a personal trouble that stems from a lack of control, low self-esteem, or another personal problem. This explanation may be OK as far as it goes, but it does not help us understand why so many people have the personal problems that lead to eating disorders. Perhaps more important, this belief also neglects the larger social and cultural forces that help explain such disorders. For example, most Americans with eating disorders are women, not men. This gender difference forces us to ask what it is about being a woman in American society that makes eating disorders so much more common. To begin to answer this question, we need to look to the standard of beauty for women that emphasizes a slender body.[11] If this cultural standard did not exist, far fewer American women would suffer from eating disorders than do now. Because it does exist, even if every girl and woman with an eating disorder were cured, others would take their places unless we could somehow change this standard. Viewed in this way, eating disorders are best understood as a public issue, not just as a personal trouble.

Picking up on Mills's insights, Psychologist William Ryan pointed out that Americans typically think that social problems such as poverty and unemployment stem from personal failings of the people experiencing these problems, not from structural problems in the larger society.[12] Ryan's work was widely considered to be a major structuralist response to an influential report published in 1965, The Moynihan Report, which posited that the prevalence of black single parent families was "ghetto culture. The report deemphasized the role of discriminatory laws and practices.[13] Using Mills's terms, Americans tend to think of social problems as personal troubles rather than public issues. (aka social problems.) As Ryan put it, they tend to believe in blaming the victim rather than blaming the system.

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10. Wright Mills, C. (1959). The sociological imagination. Oxford University Press.

11. Boyd, E. M., Reynolds, J. R., Tillman, K. H., & Martin, P. Y. (2011). Adolescent girls' race/ethnic status, identities, and drive for thinness. Social Science Research, 40(2), 667–684.

12. Ryan, W. (1976). Blaming the victim (Rev. ed.). Vintage Books

13. Labor, U. S. D. of, & Research, U. S. D. of L. O. of P. P. and. (1965). The negro family: The case for national action. U.S. Government Printing Office.

To help us understand a blaming-the-victim ideology, let's consider why poor children in urban areas often learn very little in their schools. According to Ryan, a blaming-the-victim approach would say the children's parents do not care about their learning, fail to teach them good study habits, and do not encourage them to take school seriously. This type of explanation, he wrote, may apply to some parents, but it ignores a much more important reason: the sad shape of America's urban schools, which, he said, are overcrowded, decrepit structures housing old textbooks and out-of-date equipment. To improve the schooling of children in urban areas, he wrote, we must improve the schools themselves and not just try to "improve" the parents.

As this example suggests, a blaming-the-victim approach points to solutions to social problems such as poverty and illiteracy that are very different from those suggested by a more structural approach that blames the system. If we blame the victim, we would spend our limited dollars to address the personal failings of individuals who suffer from poverty, illiteracy, poor health, eating disorders, and other difficulties. If instead we blame the system, we would focus our attention on the various social conditions (decrepit schools, cultural standards of female beauty, and the like) that account for these difficulties. A sociological understanding suggests that the latter approach is ultimately needed to help us deal successfully with the social problems facing us today.

An Equity Lens

This text is written to complement the Difference, Power, and Discrimination outcomes of Oregon State University and Linn-Benton Community College in Albany and Corvallis, Oregon. This statement appears on the [Oregon State University webpage](#):

> The Difference, Power, and Discrimination Program works with faculty across all fields and disciplines at Oregon State University to create inclusive curricula that address intersections of gender, race, class, sexual identity, age, ability, and other institutionalized systems of inequity and privilege in the United States.
> Therefore, an equity lens is applied throughout the text as we aim to understand what families need, how and whether those needs are met, and the role that social institutions play in family outcomes.

To understand families from this perspective, we focus on how families experience personal troubles and social problems as well as the disproportionate ways that families experience them. In addition we talk about social justice, which has many definitions but commonly includes equal access or opportunity, equal treatment, and equal rights. In this text we will provide historical and cross-cultural context related to social justice, but focus on the current status of families in the United States. Here are two websites if you would like to know more about how social justice is defined and how to contribute to greater social justice in the United States:

- [Center for Economic and Social Justice](#)
- [The San Diego Foundation: What is Social Justice?](#)

You will also see thinking related to Critical Theory and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Both of these theories examine institutions and power structures. In this short video, Megan Paulson defines both theories in the first

minute. She then goes on to talk about the positive effect on students of all races and ethnicities when they have usable terms and language to talk about what they experience in terms of difference in their daily lives.

> 📰 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=626#oembed-2*

It is the intent of the authors of this text that students use what they learn in this class to understand their own experiences, and the experiences of others, better. Discussion in the face-to-face and online environments is encouraged. This text examines what families need, and how institutions and society can support those needs, or get in the way of meeting needs. This will lead to better understanding and analysis of how existing **social processes** and **institutions** contribute to family **inequity**.

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Figure 2.14. "Financing Climate Change" by Visible Hand. License: CC BY 2.0.

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"A Minute And Over: Critical Race Theory" (c) PhillipsAndover. License Terms: Standard YouTube license.

3. HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE

HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE PREVIEW QUESTIONS

As you read this chapter, consider the following questions:

1. How do socially constructed ideas affect health?
2. What is the advantage of understanding disparities related to social characteristics (race, gender, etc.)?
3. Why are people with mental illness or abuse substance disorders less likely to get medical care and support?
4. What are the challenges to all families being able to keep themselves healthy by meeting basic needs such as sleep, exercise and a good diet?
5. What is the difference between a health care system and health insurance?
6. How does family structure affect access to health insurance and health care?
7. How do geography and income level overlap when it comes to health care access?
8. What role does capitalism play in the opioid epidemic?
9. Is health a human right?

HEALTH, WELLNESS, SICKNESS, AND DISEASE

Elizabeth B. Pearce and Amy Huskey

"It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver." Mahatma Gandhi

Health is the "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity," as defined by the World Health Organization in its Constitution.[1] The organization goes on to state that families and communities are able to thrive when individuals are able to maintain health. Our employment, finances, mental and emotional functioning, and spiritual lives all interact with our overall health.

While the status of health is very real, it is also important to examine the aspects of health and illness that are socially constructed. Society shares an assumption of reality that creates a definition of both health and illness. Illness has a biological component, yet it also embodies an independent element that is experienced by the person and observed by those outside of the illness. Societies construct the idea of "health" differently from place to place, and over time. For example, many societies consider health and health care to be a human right that all human beings are entitled to, but this is not universally true. What is your viewpoint?

The social construction of the idea of family, as discussed in the first chapter of this text, plays a special role in the health of families in the United States. In all other industrialized countries, health care is considered a human right, and all individuals can access comparable care regardless of family status. But in the U.S., health care insurance is accessed through a variety of systems, all of which have age, income, employment status, and family relationships as criteria. How do definitions of "family" impact the access of any individual to health care?

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1. World Health Organization. (2005, September 15). Constitution. Retrieved December 30, 2019, from https://www.who.int/about/who-we-are/constitution

Fig. 3.1. "Chalking the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 2015" by University of Essex

Society informs the definitions for when an illness can be considered a disability, eligibility for insurance and medical coverage, what illnesses are perceived as legitimate, when the reality of an illness is questioned, and what illnesses are stigmatized.[2] These social constructs can, in themselves, contribute to differentiation in individual health as well as stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. Sociologist Erving Goffman said, "Stigma is a process by which the reaction of others spoils normal identity." A disease or illness that is "stigmatized" is one in which there is some societal disapproval or questioning of the integrity of people who have the disease, which can also include medical professionals and the person with the disease stigmatizing themselves.

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2. OpenStax. (2015, April 24). Introduction to Sociology 2e. Retrieved March 8, 2020, from https://openstax.org/books/introduction-sociology-2e/pages/19-1-the-social-construction-of-health

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=408#oembed-1

The Khan Academy Medicine channel describes the interrelationship among stigma, self, and society in the seven minute video above.

There are many socially stigmatized diseases which can include mental disorders, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse disorders, skin conditions, and diseases that are less understood by the medical community, such as auto-immune disorders and chronic fatigue syndrome. Individuals may be less likely to seek treatment when experiencing symptoms of a stigmatized condition. In the United States, where health insurance creates another layer of bureaucracy, less understood illnesses and treatments may not be covered by some insurance. Even if health care is accessed, there may be fewer social supports available, and greater chances of isolation and discrimination in the health care setting and beyond. Management of a disability because of the deterioration of health due to a stigmatized illness can prove to be a tremendous hardship.[3] It is important to consider how marginalized groups experience health **inequities**, including those experienced due to the stigma and prejudices linked with the societal perception of specific illnesses.

It is complicated to assess structural power overlaps with stigmatization in any scenario. For example, it is acknowledged men hold more power in the United States than do women or people who identify as non-binary. What role does that play in the diagnosis of real health concerns and the social construction of those concerns? We know that overwhelmingly men are the subjects of the majority of medical studies and research. That affects what is thought of as "typical" or "normal." Women have more often been told that their symptoms are "all in your head" or related to "female troubles." While this is less common than in the past, it likely continues to play a part in the misdiagnosis of serious illness in women and non-binary people. We also know that women experience diseases such as myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia in much higher numbers than do men. The medical community describes these syndromes in overly broad terms that make diagnosis difficult. We must ask ourselves, how do these multiple complex factors serve to continue to reinforce the existing power dynamic in the United States? What systemic changes in healthcare would reduce this inequity?

In this chapter, we will examine the overall health of families in the United States, with attention to comparisons amongst families' experiences with health, illness, injury and diseases as well as comparisons with other countries. We will describe the daily life factors and resources that affect health, including the effects of stigma,

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3. Sartorius, N. (2007). Stigmatized illnesses and health care. *Croatian Medical Journal, 48*(3), 396–397.

prejudice and discrimination. We will look closely at how families access health care services, including the health care insurance system. We will discuss the question of health care as a human right.

In Focus: Lung Cancer, Stigma, and Intersectionality

In a 2014 report, "Addressing the Stigma of Lung Cancer," the American Lung Association (ALA) described how stigma can contribute to patients avoiding or delaying care when symptoms are experienced and how they may resist disclosing health information to providers. Patients could also experience fewer social supports, feel more distress related to the disease, experience additional conflicts in relationships, and receive lower quality of health care. The report then explained how stigma could be related to lung cancer being hard to detect early, and then being seen as a death sentence with little hope for survival. In addition to this, being labelled "a smoker's disease" could contribute to society's feeling that people with lung cancer are personally responsible for their disease, placing perceived shame and blame on those with the illness.

In the survey conducted by the ALA, public knowledge regarding the prevalence and mortality of lung cancer was lacking, as well as knowledge about the funding levels for research. Responders also did not have as much knowledge of factors other than smoking that play a part in the development of lung cancer, like genetics and occupational or environmental exposures. Lack of knowledge could play an important role in perpetuating some of the negative associations and assumptions related to lung cancer.
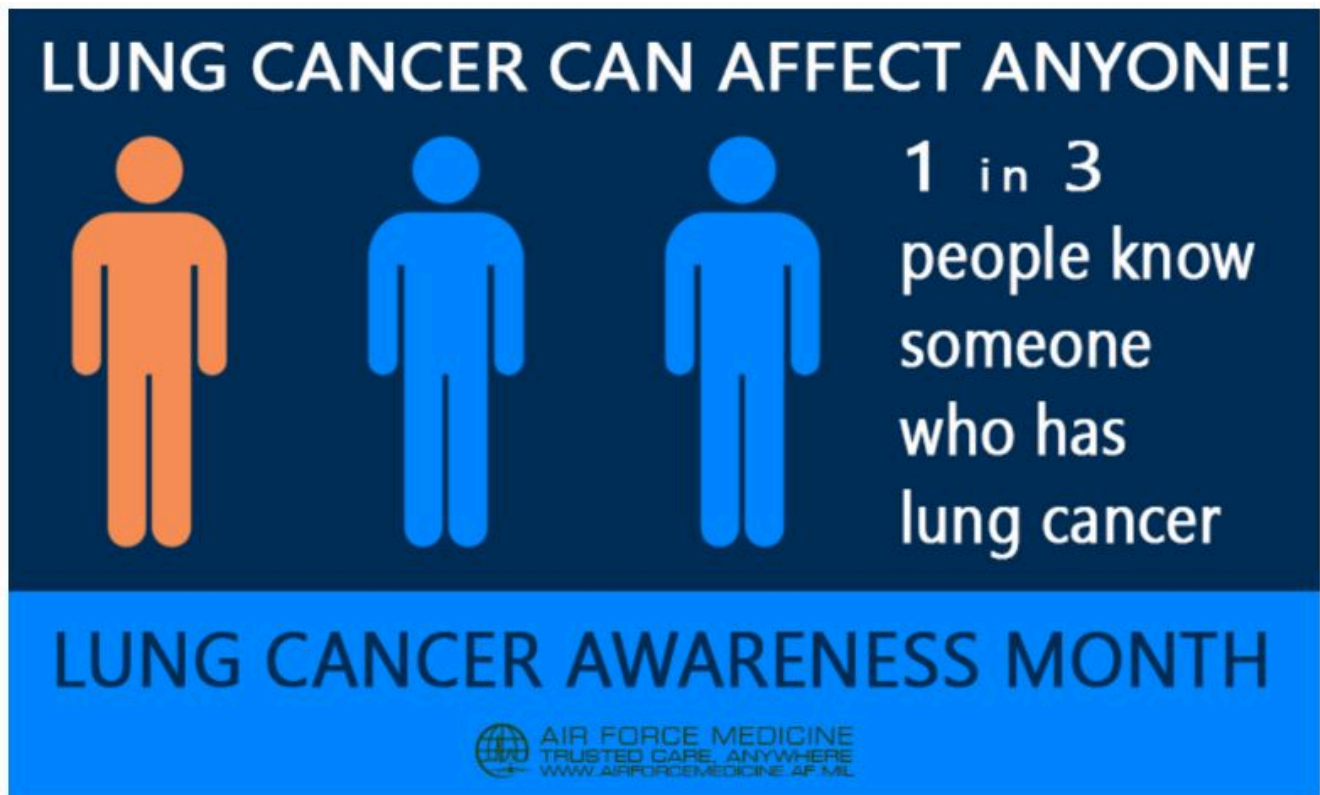
Fig. 3.2. This graphic, created by the Air Force Medicine Facebook group, raises awareness about the commonality of lung cancer, which can help reduce stigma related to the disease.

Lung cancer stigma has real consequences. People with lung cancer may hide their condition, and experience anxiety and depression, while also holding a perception that healthcare providers are judgmental and biased towards them and would treat them differently as a result. Research, advocacy, and public policy are also dimensions in which stigma can have negative consequences for advancing progress toward the treatment of this disease. For instance, lung cancer kills far more people than any other cancer type and contributes to over 25% of all cancer deaths per year.[4] Yet, a study of nonprofit research funding by cancer type determined that lung cancer ranked fourth in its level of funding and is underfunded in relation to its burden on society.[5] Not

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4. American Cancer Society. (2020, January 8). Lung cancer statistics: How common is lung cancer. https://www.cancer.org/cancer/lung-cancer/about/key-statistics.htm

5. Kamath, S. D., Kircher, S. M., & Benson, A. B. (2019). Comparison of cancer burden and nonprofit organization funding reveals disparities in funding across cancer types. Journal of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, 17(7), 849–854. https://doi.org/10.6004/jnccn.2018.7280

only are funding levels influenced by stigma, but celebrities, community leaders, and volunteers may be less likely to lend their name or volunteer their time due to negative associations with this disease.[6]

This example provides a way of analyzing how **intersectionality** can be illustrated through the lens of the social construction of illness. The LGBTQ+ community, for instance, already face challenges in finding health care providers who are culturally competent and have adequate knowledge in LGBTQ+ health.[7] If you couple this with the stigma related to a lung cancer diagnosis, then you are compounding the obstacles that stand in the way of receiving quality health care. One could also examine how socioeconomic status may further complicate this scenario by realizing that people living in poverty are more likely to have no health insurance, therefore restricting access even more.[8] Even geographical location, like living in a rural area, or in the Southern portion of the United States, will reduce accessibility to healthcare.[9] Every time an individual is grouped into a marginalized group, including illness status, it intensifies the effects of discrimination and resulting health disparities.

As you finish reading this section, notice if you blame or hold people more responsible knowing that they have lung cancer, than if they have another cancer such as breast or prostate cancer. What effect does the stigma itself have on people who are sick, and the healthcare that they receive? Then ask yourself if the stigmatization of lung cancer is a social problem. Rather than perceiving lung cancer as a personal problem does the prevalence of the illness combined with the stigmatization affect the well-being of our society?

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Figure 3.1. "Chalking the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 2015" by University of Essex. Licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

6. American Lung Association. (2014, April). Addressing the stigma of lung cancer. Retrieved March 8, 2020, from https://www.lung.org/our-initiatives/research/lung-health-disparities/addressing-the-stigma-of-lung-cancer.html

7. U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. (n.d.) Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender health. Healthy People 2020. Retrieved March 8, 2020, from https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-health#31

8. U.S. Census Bureau. (2019, May 23). Who are the uninsured? Retrieved March 8, 2020, from https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2018/09/who-are-the-uninsured.html

9. Warshaw, R. (2017, October 31). Health Disparities Affect Millions in Rural U.S. Communities. Retrieved March 8, 2020, from https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/health-disparities-affect-millions-rural-us-communities

Figure 3.2. "Lung Cancer Awareness" by Steve Thompson/ Air Force Medicine. Public domain.

"Stigma – Social and self | Individuals and Society | MCAT" by Khan Academy and AAMC. Licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.

HEALTH EQUITY

Elizabeth B. Pearce; Amy Huskey; Jessica N. Hampton; and Hannah Morelos

Health in the United States is a complex topic. One the one hand, as one of the wealthiest nations, the United States fares well in some health comparisons with the rest of the world. For example, most postoperative complications are less common in the U.S. than in comparable countries. And, as this chart shows, mortality rates for several cancers are lower.

Mortality rates for breast, colorectal, and cervical cancers in the U.S. are lower than in comparable countries

Age-standardized mortality rate per 100,000 population for malignant neoplasms of colorectal, breast, and cervix, 2015

■ United States ■ Comparable Country Average
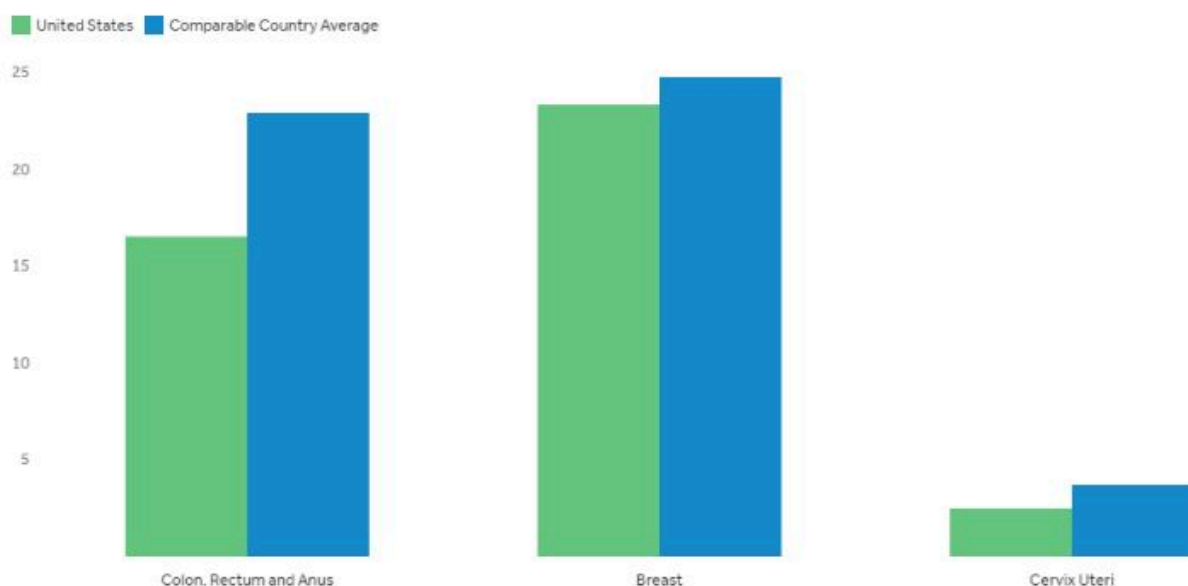
Notes: Data for breast and cervical cancers are deaths per 100 000 females (standardized rates)

Source: KFF Analysis of OECD Health Statistics (Database) • Get the data • PNG

Peterson-KFF
Health System Tracker

Fig. 3.3. While there is debate over the best way to measure outcomes for cancer, the U.S. typically performs better in both mortality rates and five-year survival rates for breast cancer. In 2015, the mortality rate for breast and cervical cancers in the U.S. was slightly lower than the comparable country average. For colorectal cancers, the U.S. has a mortality rate of 16.5 deaths per 100,000 population, compared to the average rate of 22.9 per 100,000 in similar countries.

The overall comparative picture is more grim. The United States spends a great deal more public, private, and out-of pocket funds per capita on health care[1] but also lags behind almost every industrialized country in terms of providing basic health and health care to all of its citizens.

Adults in most comparable countries have quicker access to a doctor or nurse when they need care

Percent of adults who made a same-day or next day appointment when needed care, 2016

Country	Percent
Netherlands	77%
Australia	67%
Comparable Country Average	57%
United Kingdom	57%
France	56%
Germany	53%
United States	51%
Sweden	49%
Canada	43%
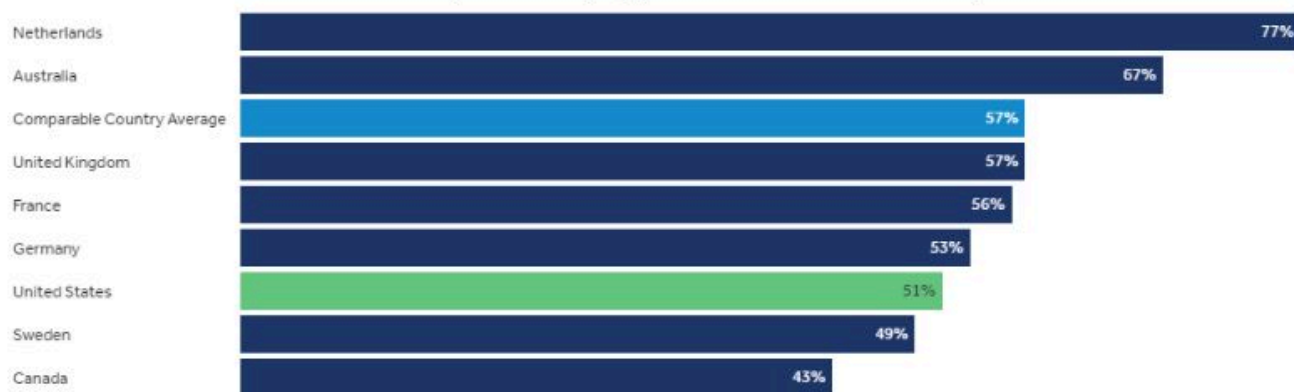
Fig. 3.4. With the exception of Canada and Sweden, patients in the United States have a harder time making a same-day appointment when in need of care. In 2016, 51% of patients in the United States were able to make a same-day appointment with a provider, compared to 57% of patients in similar countries.

1. Tikkanen, R. & Abrams, M.K. (2020, January 30). U.S. health care from a global perspective, 2019: Higher spending, worse outcomes? The Commonwealth Fund. https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2020/jan/us-health-care-global-perspective-2019

Hospital admissions for preventable diseases are more frequent in the U.S. than in comparable countries.

Age standardized hospital admission rate per 100,000 population for asthma, congestive heart failure, hypertension, and diabetes, ages 15 and over, 2015 or nearest year
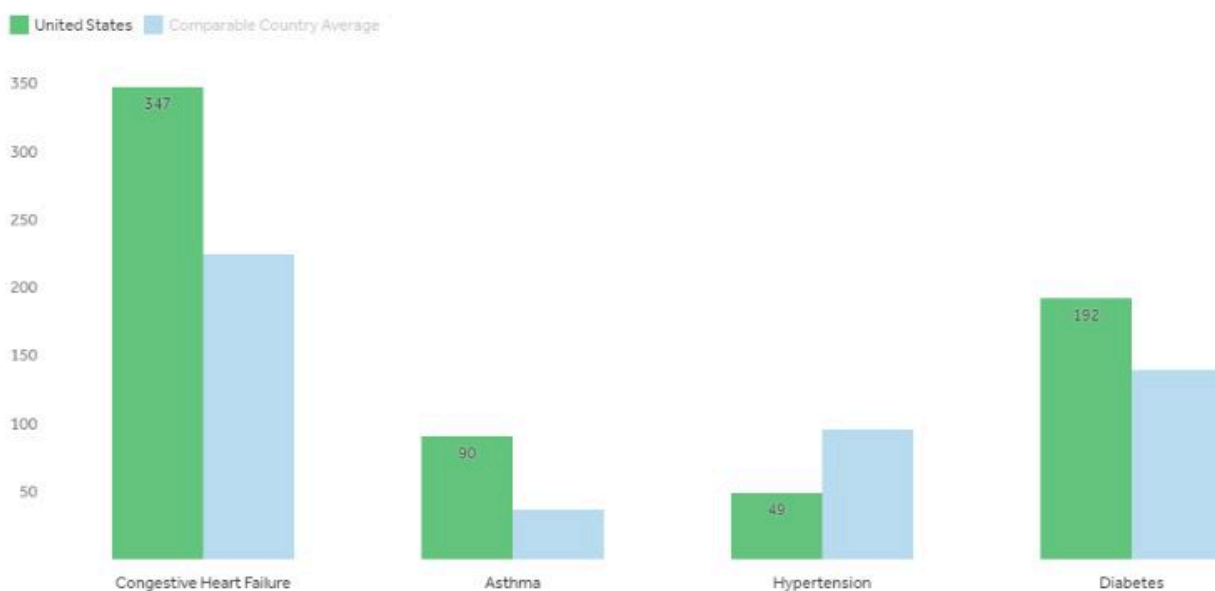
Data for Australia, Belgium, and the US are from 2014. Diabetes admission rates for Austria are also from 2014.

Fig. 3.5. Hospital admissions for certain chronic diseases like circulatory conditions, asthma, and diabetes, can arise when prevention services are either not being adhered to or delivered. Hospital admission rates in the U.S. are higher than in comparable countries for congestive heart failure, asthma, and complications due to diabetes. However, the U.S. has lower rates of hospitalization for hypertension than comparably wealthy countries do on average. In total across these four disease categories, the United States has a 37% higher rate of hospital admissions than the average of other countries.

Potential years of Life Lost have fallen steadily in the U.S. and in comparable countries

Overall age-specific potential years of life lost per 100,000 population, 1990-2017
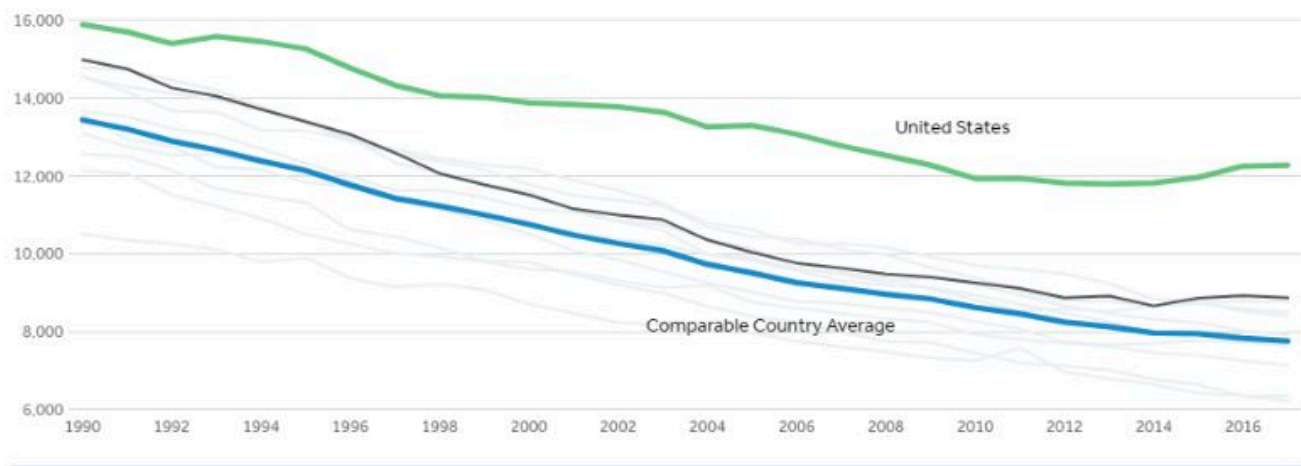

Fig. 3.6. Premature deaths are measured in Years of Life Lost (YLL), which is an alternative to overall mortality rate. It is measured by adding together the total number of years that people who died before a specified age (e.g. 70) would have lived if they had lived to that age. For example, a person who dies at age 45 would have a YLL of 25. As a measure, it provides more weights to deaths at younger ages. The U.S. and comparable OECD countries have made progress in reducing YLL's over the last 25 years (down 23% and 42% respectively), although the U.S. continues to trail comparable countries by a significant margin (12,282 v. 7,764 YLLs in 2017).

But these charts do not tell the entire story. The overall averages of health only compare the rates in the U.S. to the rates in other countries. Within the United States, groups are affected disproportionately in terms of access to health and health outcomes. These disparities are described next.

Social Determinants of Health and Disparities

Family and individual health is affected by the environments in which people live, work, learn, and play. While the focus here is health, these **social determinants of health** also affect a wide range of quality of life factors. Social engagement, access to resources, safety and security are all impacted by the settings where families spend their time. Simply put, place matters when it comes to health. To read more about the Social Determinants of Health model, consult https://health.gov/healthypeople.

Health disparities are linked to the social determinants of health. They are preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially

disadvantaged populations.[2] Populations can be defined by factors such as race or ethnicity, gender, education or income, disability, geographic location (e.g., rural or urban), or sexual orientation. Health disparities are **inequitable** and are directly related to the historical and current unequal distribution of social, political, economic, and environmental resources.

Health disparities result from multiple factors, including

- Poverty
- Environmental threats
- Inadequate access to health care
- Individual and behavioral factors
- Educational inequalities

Health disparities are also related to **inequities** in education. Dropping out of school is associated with multiple social and health problems.[34] Overall, individuals with less education are more likely to experience a number of health risks, such as obesity, substance abuse, and intentional and unintentional injury, compared with individuals with more education.[5] Higher levels of education are associated with a longer life and an increased likelihood of obtaining or understanding basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.[678]

At the same time, good health is associated with academic success. Higher levels of protective health behav-

2. CDC. (2008). Community Health and Program Services (CHAPS): Health disparities among racial/ethnic populations. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

3. McCarty, C. A., Mason, W. A., Kosterman, R., Hawkins, J. D., Lengua, L. J., & McCauley, E. (2008). Adolescent school failure predicts later depression among girls. Journal of Adolescent Health, 43(2), 180–187. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2008.01.023

4. Ellickson, P., Saner, H., & McGuigan, K. A. (1997). Profiles of violent youth: Substance use and other concurrent problems. American Journal of Public Health, 87(6), 985–991. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.87.6.985

5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2000). Healthy People 2010 objectives: Educational and community based programs.

6. Liao, Y., McGee, D. L., Kaufman, J. S., Cao, G., & Cooper, R. S. (1999). Socioeconomic status and morbidity in the last years of life. American Journal of Public Health, 89(4), 569–572. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.89.4.569

7. Jemal, A., Thun, M. J., Ward, E. E., Henley, S. J., Cokkinides, V. E., & Murray, T. E. (2008). Mortality from leading causes by education and race in the united states, 2001. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 34(1), 1-8.e7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2007.09.017

8. Breese, P. E., Burman, W. J., Goldberg, S., & Weis, S. E. (2007). Education level, primary language, and comprehension of the informed consent process. Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics, 2(4), 69–79. https://doi.org/10.1525/jer.2007.2.4.69

iors and lower levels of health risk behaviors have been associated with higher academic grades among high school students.[9] Health risks such as teenage pregnancy, poor dietary choices, inadequate physical activity, physical and emotional abuse, substance abuse, and gang involvement have a significant impact on how well students perform in school.[10][11][12][13][14]

Health by Race and Ethnicity

When looking at the social epidemiology of the United States, it is hard to miss the disparities among races. The discrepancy between Black and White Americans shows the gap clearly; in 2008, the average life expectancy for White males was approximately five years longer than for Black males: 75.9 compared to 70.9. An even stronger disparity was found in 2007: the infant mortality, which is the number of deaths in a given time or place, rate for Blacks was nearly twice that of Whites at 13.2 compared to 5.6 per 1,000 live births[15]. According to a report from the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation,[16] African Americans also have higher incidence of several other diseases and causes of mortality, from cancer to heart disease to diabetes. In a similar vein, it is important to note that ethnic minorities, including Mexican Americans and Native Americans, also have higher rates of these diseases and causes of mortality than Whites.

9. Rasberry, C. N., Tiu, G. F., Kann, L., McManus, T., Michael, S. L., Merlo, C. L., Lee, S. M., Bohm, M. K., Annor, F., & Ethier, K. A. (2017). Health-related behaviors and academic achievement among high school students—United states, 2015. MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 66(35), 921–927. https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6635a1

10. Choi, Y. (2007). Academic achievement and problem behaviors among Asian Pacific Islander American adolescents. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 36(4), 403–415. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-006-9152-4

11. Shore, S. M., Sachs, M. L., Lidicker, J. R., Brett, S. N., Wright, A. R., & Libonati, J. R. (2008). Decreased scholastic achievement in overweight middle school students. *Obesity*, *16*(7), 1535–1538. https://doi.org/10.1038/oby.2008.254

12. Valois, R. F., MacDonald, J. M., Bretous, L., Fischer, M. A., & Drane, J. W. (2002). Risk factors and behaviors associated with adolescent violence and aggression. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, *26*(6), 454–464. https://doi.org/10.5993/AJHB.26.6.6

13. Chomitz, V. R., Slining, M. M., McGowan, R. J., Mitchell, S. E., Dawson, G. F., & Hacker, K. A. (2009). Is there a relationship between physical fitness and academic achievement? Positive results from public school children in the northeastern united states. Journal of School Health, 79(1), 30–37. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2008.00371.x

14. Field, T., Diego, M., & Sanders, C. E. (2001). Exercise is positively related to adolescent's relationships and academics. Adolescence, 36(141), 105.

15. U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012. 131st ed. Washington, DC. http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

16. James, C. et al. (2007). Key facts: Race, ethnicity & medical care. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. http://www.kff.org/minorityhealth/upload/6069-02.pdf.

Lisa Berkman[17] notes that this gap started to narrow during the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, but it began widening again in the early 1980s. What accounts for these perpetual disparities in health among different ethnic groups? Much of the answer lies in the level of healthcare that these groups receive. Even after adjusting for insurance differences, racial and ethnic minority groups receive poorer quality of care and less access to care than dominant groups.[18] Racial inequalities in care include:

1. Black Americans, Native Americans, and Alaskan Natives received inferior care than White Americans for about 40 percent of measures.
2. Asian ethnicities received inferior care for about 20 percent of measures.
3. Among Whites, Hispanic Whites received 60 percent inferior care of measures compared to non-Hispanic Whites.
4. When considering access to care, the figures were comparable.

Health by Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Discussions of health by race and ethnicity often overlap with discussions of health by **socioeconomic status**, since the two concepts are intertwined in the United States. As the Agency for Health Research and Quality (2010) notes, "racial and ethnic minorities are more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to be poor or near poor,"[19] so many of the data pertaining to subordinate groups is also likely to be pertinent to low socioeconomic groups. Marilyn Winkleby and her research associates[20] state that "one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of a person's morbidity and mortality experience is that person's socioeconomic status (SES). This finding persists across all diseases with few exceptions, continues throughout the entire lifespan, and extends across numerous risk factors for disease." Morbidity is the incidence of disease.

It is important to remember that economics are only part of the SES picture; research suggests that education also plays an important role. Phelan and Link[21] note that many behavior-influenced diseases like lung

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17. Berkman, L. F. (2009). Social epidemiology: Social determinants of health in the united states: are we losing ground? Annual Review of Public Health, 30(1), 27–41. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.publhealth.031308.100310

18. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. (2010). The 2010 National Healthcare Disparities Report. https://archive.ahrq.gov/research/findings/nhqrdr/nhdr10/index.html

19. footnote]Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. (2010). The 2010 National Healthcare Disparities Report. https://archive.ahrq.gov/research/findings/nhqrdr/nhdr10/index.html

20. Winkleby, M. A., Jatulis, D. E., Frank, E., & Fortmann, S. P. (1992). Socioeconomic status and health: How education, income, and occupation contribute to risk factors for cardiovascular disease. American Journal of Public Health, 82(6), 816–820. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.82.6.816

21. Phelan, Jo C., & Link, B. G. (2003). When income affects outcome: Socioeconomic status and health. Research in Profile, 6.

cancer (from smoking), coronary artery disease (from poor eating and exercise habits), and AIDS initially were widespread across SES groups.

However, once information linking habits to disease was disseminated, these diseases decreased in high SES groups and increased in low SES groups. This illustrates the important role of education initiatives regarding a given disease, as well as possible inequalities in how those initiatives effectively reach different SES groups.

Health by Gender

Women are affected adversely both by unequal access to and institutionalized sexism in the healthcare industry. According to a recent report from the Kaiser Family Foundation, women experienced a decline in their ability to see needed specialists between 2001 and 2008. In 2008, one quarter of females questioned the quality of her healthcare[22]. In this report, we also see the explanatory value of understanding **intersectionality** and intersection theory. Feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins developed the intersection theory, which suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes. Further examination of the lack of confidence in the healthcare system by women, as identified in the Kaiser study, found, for example, women categorized as low income were more likely (32 percent compared to 23 percent) to express concerns about healthcare quality, illustrating the multiple layers of disadvantage caused by race and sex.

We can see an example of institutionalized sexism in the way that women are more likely than men to be diagnosed with certain kinds of mental disorders. Psychologist Dana Becker[23] notes that 75 percent of all diagnoses of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) are for women, according to the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This diagnosis is characterized by instability of identity, of mood, and of behavior, and Becker argues that it has been used as a catch-all diagnosis for too many women. She further decries the pejorative connotation of the diagnosis, saying that it predisposes many people, both within and outside of the profession of psychotherapy, against women who have been so diagnosed.

Many critics also point to the medicalization of women's issues as an example of institutionalized sexism. Medicalization refers to the process by which previously normal aspects of life are redefined as deviant and needing medical attention to remedy. Historically and contemporaneously, many aspects of women's lives have been medicalized, including menstruation, premenstrual syndrome, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause. The medicalization of pregnancy and childbirth has been particularly contentious in recent decades, with

22. Ranji, U., & Salganico, A. (2011). "Women's health care chartbook: Key findings from the Kaiser Women's Health Survey." The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/report/womens-health-care-chartbook-key-findings-from/

23. Becker, Dana. n.d. Borderline Personality Disorder: The disparagement of women through diagnosis." Retrieved December 13, 2011 from http://www.awpsych.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=109&catid=74&Itemid=126.

many women opting against the medical process and choosing a more natural childbirth. Fox and Worts[24] find that all women experience pain and anxiety during the birth process, but that social support relieves both as effectively as medical support. In other words, medical interventions are no more effective than social ones at helping with the difficulties of pain and childbirth. Fox and Worts further found that women with supportive partners ended up with less medical intervention and fewer cases of postpartum depression. Of course, access to quality birth care outside the standard medical models may not be readily available to women of all social classes.

The Lancet, an international peer-reviewed general medical journal, is published weekly and available to read online without cost. In 2017, they published a comprehensive series about inequality and health care in the United States. The Table of Contents for the series is linked here; although it is free, you will need to log in to read the series of articles.

Interrelationship of Mental and Physical Health

Mental and physical health have been socially constructed in the Western world to be viewed as separate, with mental disorders being stigmatized. Often mental illnesses such as depression or anxiety have been seen as something that a person should and could "get over" as opposed to a physical ailment such as a sprained ankle or strep throat that merits medical attention and assistance. Even physical illnesses such as fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome, which are experienced by many more women than men, can be seen as "in the patient's head," leading to the potential miss of physical illnesses that need medical intervention. This leaves the patient with not only the physical symptoms, but also a potential lack of understanding amongst peers, family members, medical professionals, and co-workers.

Eastern and Native cultures have long seen the connection between the mind and body and indeed, this connection is better understood in the United States and among other Western countries where dualism (the separating of the mind/spirit from the body) prevails. Cancer, heart and respiratory disease death rates are all higher in people with mental illness. In addition, it is better understood how physical lifestyle choices such as exercise, diet, and drug use affect mental health and vice versa.[25] To read more about the relationship between physical and mental health, check out this brief article from PsychCentral here.

Stigma

An example of the relationship between mental health and stigma would be a person struggling with depres-

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24. Fox, B., & Worts, D. (1999). Revisiting the critique of medicalized childbirth: A contribution to the sociology of birth. *Gender & Society*, *13*(3), 326–346. https://doi.org/10.1177/089124399013003004

25. Mental Health Foundation. (2020). Physical health and mental health. Retrieved July 3, 2020, from https://www.mental-health.org.uk/a-to-z/p/physical-health-and-mental-health

sion that also causes a physical symptom of weight gain or weight loss due to a lack of appetite or excessive hunger. Obesity and excessive thinness are both stigmatized in our culture, while the underlying mental or physical health condition may be ignored. Mental health disorders are treated and looked at differently than health struggles on a more physical level. Although we have seen a shift in media about mental illness from known celebrities coming forward, such as Demi Lovato, Chrissy Teigan, Steve Young, and Dan Reynolds, there is still a social stigma against mental health. Oftentimes, when someone is diagnosed with a physical illness such as cancer or heart disease, we see communities and families coming together. Unfortunately, we rarely see mental illness struggles come to the surface without holding a place of shame or guilt; individuals, families and communities are often more reluctant to talk about and come together in the same way.

Fig. 3.7. Individuals, families, and communities may be less supportive of mental health diagnoses compared to physical diagnoses.

When we speak about stigma, we speak of two different types: the first stigma is social stigma, meaning the prejudiced attitudes others have around mental illness and the treatment of mental illness. The second one is self-perceived stigma, which is an internalized stigma that the individual who suffers from the mental illness has. Not only may the stigma around mental illness create painful emotions and a sense of invalidation for the individual, it can result in a reluctance to seek treatment, social rejection, avoidance, isolation, and direct harm to psychological well-being. The social and self-perceived stigma attached to mental illness can be reinforced by common cultural misconceptions, social stereotypes, popular media representations, political leaders, and even some medical professionals and health care institutions.

Health Insurance Coverage and Legislation

Like all other health care in the United States, access to mental health care is highly dependent on access to medical insurance. But because the need for mental health support is not validated as fully as is the need for physical health support, insurance companies and government programs have frequently excluded or limited mental health coverage. This is an example of institutionalized or structural stigma.

This practice has been changed through two major acts of legislation; the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) passed in 2008 and The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, commonly referred to as the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and also known as Obamacare, passed by the 111th Congress and signed into law by President Barack Obama in 2010.

In 2008, federal lawmakers passed MHPAEA, which created an equity requirement for insurance providers who covered mental health services; those services must be equivalent to the physical health coverage provided. It did not, however, require providers to provide mental health care coverage. So benefits, expenses, and limits

requirements were allowed to vary from state to state along with whatever insurance plan individuals could access. It was still the case that insurance holders did not have access to mental health treatment. In 2013, 61% of insured people had access to mental health services and 54% of the insured had access to addiction treatment.[26]

The passage of the ACA reduced the **inequities** in access to mental health and addiction treatment in two fundamental ways. First, it eliminated health insurance companies' ability to deny coverage based on "pre-existing conditions." That gave consumers diagnosed with any mental or physical illness greater choice and more financial leverage when selecting an insurance company. In addition, it required insurance providers to include ten essential benefits including "services for those suffering from mental health disorders and problems with substance abuse." To read the list of all ten benefits, look here.

While these improvements in the equitability of mental health and addiction access are notable, they apply only to families who have access to certain kinds of health insurance, and not universally to all families in the United States. Structural stigma pollinates and overlaps with systemic racism, sexism, and classism.

In Focus: Sleep, Discrimination, and Intersectionality

Let's focus on how these various disparities overlap with everyday behavior. A biological need that is fundamental to human health is sleep, yet the medical community still has much to understand and learn about its exact mechanisms. Sleep is a vital part of our daily routine, and we spend about one-third of our time doing it. Quality sleep, and getting enough of it at the right times, is as essential to survival as food and water. In rats, death results from no sleep at 32 days.[27] Research has not observed human death as a result of prolonged sleep deprivation, but paranoia and hallucinations can begin happening in as little as 24 hours without sleep.[28]

Without sleep you can't form or maintain the pathways in your brain that let you learn and create new memories, and it's harder to concentrate and respond quickly. Sleep is important to a number of brain functions, including how nerve cells communicate with each other. In fact, our brains and bodies stay remarkably active while we sleep. Recent findings suggest that sleep plays a housekeeping role that removes toxins in our brains that build we are awake.

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26. Health Pocket. (2013, March 7). Few existing health plans meet new ACA essential health benefit standards. https://www.healthpocket.com/healthcare-research/infostat/few-existing-health-plans-meet-new-aca-essential-health-benefit-standards

27. Palmer, B. (2009, May 11). Can you die from lack of sleep? Slate. https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2009/05/can-you-die-from-lack-of-sleep.html

28. Waters, F., Chiu, V., Atkinson, A., & Blom, J. D. (2018). Severe sleep deprivation causes hallucinations and a gradual progression toward psychosis with increasing time awake. Frontiers in Psychiatry, 9, 303. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2018.003

Sleep affects almost every type of tissue and system in the body, from the brain, heart, and lungs to metabolism, immune function, mood, and disease resistance. Research shows that a chronic lack of sleep, or getting poor quality sleep, increases the risk of disorders including high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, depression, and obesity. All of these conditions would likely have a noticeable effect on multiple dimensions of family life and how it impacts the well being of a family as a whole.
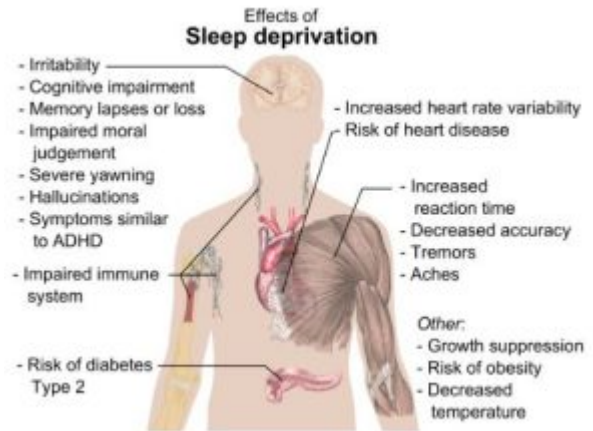
For some surprising and specific health effects of sleep view this TED Talk:

Fig. 3.8. Effects of deprivation.

> 🖳 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=414#oembed-1*

In 2010, a study was published that examined whether there were disparities in sleep quality based on poverty and race/ethnicity. They found that a "sleep disparity" did exist in the study population, and poor sleep quality was strongly associated with poverty and race. Factors such as employment, education, and health status, amongst others, significantly mediated this effect in participants experiencing poverty. The literature linking sleep and health continues to grow. This study illustrated how poor health is associated with an almost 4-fold increased likelihood of poor sleep. It is important to note that the relationship between health and sleep quality is likely bidirectional and/or parallel: sleep can influence health and vice versa.[29]

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29. Patel, N. P., Grandner, M. A., Xie, D., Branas, C. C., & Gooneratne, N. (2010). "Sleep disparity" in the population: Poor sleep quality is strongly associated with poverty and ethnicity. BMC Public Health, 10(1), 475. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-10-475

Short Sleep Duration (<7 Hours) Race/Ethnicity — Behavioral
Risk Factor Surveillance System, United States, 2014
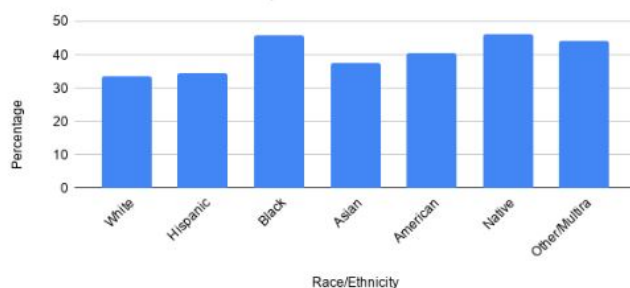
Content source: CDC - Division of Population Health

Fig. 3.9. In 2010, a study found that poor sleep quality was strongly associated with poverty and race.

Discrimination, and especially intersectional discrimination, appear to influence sleep, mental, and physical health. The relationship between discrimination and poorer mental and physical health has been established amongst populations such as women, racial and ethnic minorities, and members of LGBTQ+ groups. For instance, discrimination can harm wellbeing, increase distress and mental illness symptoms, elevate risk for a wide variety of physical illnesses and conditions, and undermine general indicators of health.[30][31] Consider also the ways that poor and marginalized groups inhabit less desirable neighborhoods. The overlap of all **social determinants of health** and feeling safe and secure in particular are likely to impact sleep. Recently, lack of sleep and less functionality during the daytime have been identified as integral aspects of the cycle of discrimination, stress, and overall mental and physical health.[32]

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"Disparities" is adapted from "Health Disparities" by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Public domain. [Adaptation: ?]

"Health by Race and Ethnicity," "Healthy by Socioeconomic Status," and "Healthy by Gender"

30. Brown, T. T., Partanen, J., Chuong, L., Villaverde, V., Chantal Griffin, A., & Mendelson, A. (2018). Discrimination hurts: The effect of discrimination on the development of chronic pain. Social Science & Medicine, 204, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2018.03.015

31. Schmitt, M. T., Branscombe, N. R., Postmes, T., & Garcia, A. (2014). The consequences of perceived discrimination for psychological well-being: A meta-analytic review. Psychological Bulletin, 140(4), 921–948. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035754

32. Hisler, G. C., & Brenner, R. E. (2019). Does sleep partially mediate the effect of everyday discrimination on future mental and physical health? Social Science & Medicine, 221, 115–123. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2018.12.002

HEALTH AND HEALTH INSURANCE

Elizabeth B. Pearce; Jessica N. Hampton; and Christopher Byers

Industrialized nations throughout the world, with the notable exception of the United States, provide their citizens with some form of national health care and national health insurance.[1] Although their healthcare systems differ in several respects, their governments pay all or most of the costs for health care, drugs, and other health needs. In Denmark, for example, the government provides free medical care and hospitalization for the entire population and pays for some medications and some dental care. In France, the government pays for some of the medical, hospitalization, and medication costs for most people and all these expenses for the poor, unemployed, and children under the age of ten. In Great Britain, the National Health Service pays most medical costs for the population, including medical care, hospitalization, prescriptions, dental care, and eyeglasses. In Canada, the National Health Insurance system also pays for most medical costs. Patients do not even receive bills from their physicians, who instead are paid by the government. Medical debt and bankruptcy due to accident or disease is a uniquely American problem.

These national health insurance programs are commonly credited with reducing infant mortality, extending life expectancy, and, more generally, for enabling their citizenries to have relatively good health. Notably, the United States ranks 33 out of 36 countries who belong to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for infant mortality. The infant mortality rate in the United States is 5.9 deaths per 1,000 live infant births, as compared to the average rate of 3.9 deaths per 1000 births. Five countries have death rates lower than 2 per 1,000 births. Their populations are generally healthier than Americans, even though healthcare spending is much higher per capita in the United States than in these other nations. In all these respects, these national health insurance systems offer several advantages over the healthcare model found in the United States.[2]

The Role of Health Insurance in the United States

Medicine in the United States is big business. Expenditures for health care, health research, and other health items and services have risen sharply in recent decades, having increased tenfold since 1980, and now cost the

1. Russell, J. W. (2018). Double standard: Social policy in Europe and the United States (Fourth edition). Rowman & Littlefield.
2. Reid, T. R. (2010). The healing of America: A global quest for better, cheaper, and fairer health care. Penguin Books.

nation more than $2.6 trillion annually. This translates to the largest figure per capita in the industrial world. Despite this expenditure, the United States lags behind many other industrialized nations in several important health indicators.

US Health-Care Expenditure, 1980–2010 (in Billions of Dollars)
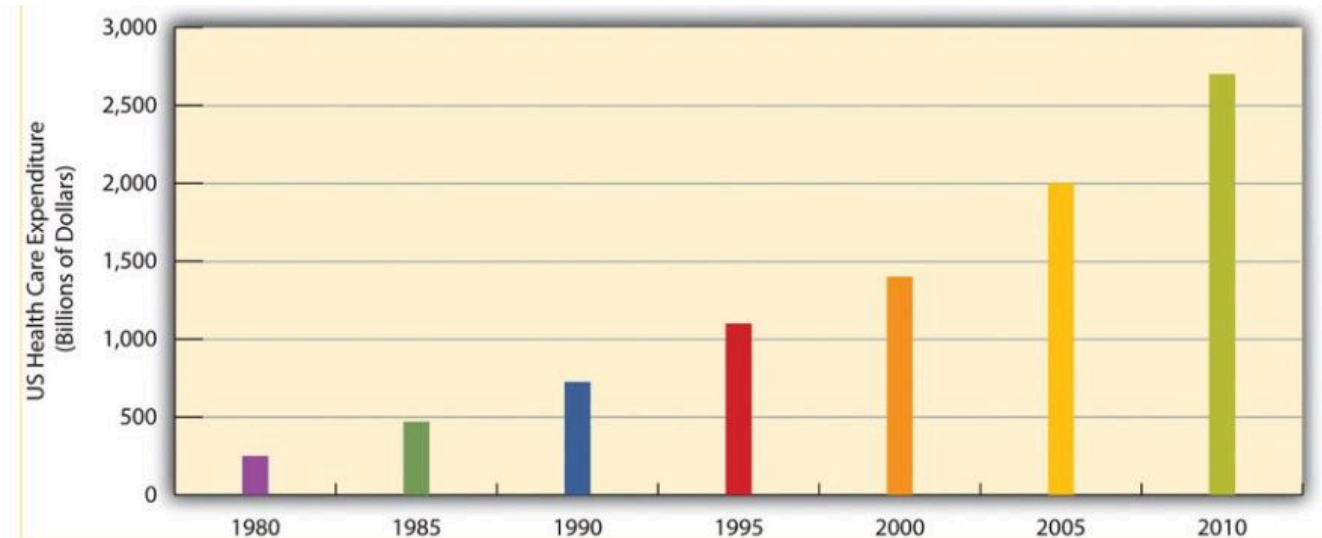
Fig. 3.10. Expenditures for health care have increased tenfold since 1980.

Access to Health Care Coverage and Insurance

There are many insurance options in America, and we will see that they disproportionately benefit some and disadvantage others based on factors like sex, income, geographical location, and ethnicity. In 2017, some of the most common ways people accessed insurance was through private plans; employer-based (56%), direct purchase (16%), or, through government plans; Medicaid (19.3%), Medicare (17.2%), and military healthcare (4.8%).[3]

To learn more about how people accessed health insurance coverage, and who remained uncovered, watch this seven-minute video provided by the United States Census Bureau.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=416#oembed-1

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3. U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). Coverage numbers and rates by type of health insurance: 2013, 2016, and 2017 [table]. Retrieved June 8, 2020, from https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/demo/tables/p60/264/table1.pdf

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) was created to make healthcare more affordable and to be less discriminatory in 2010. In 2016, section 1557 provided new regulations to the Affordable Care Act, including a way to enforce civil rights protections in healthcare by making it unlawful for health care entities to discriminate against protected populations if they receive any type of federal financial assistance. This included health insurance companies participating in the Health Insurance Marketplaces, providers who accept Medicare, Medicaid, and Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) payments, and any state or local healthcare agencies, among others. This marked the first time that discriminatory practices on the basis of race, skin color, national origin, age, sex, disability status–and in some cases, sexuality and gender identity–were broadly prohibited in the arena of public and private healthcare.[4]

Some of the common ways that lower income families and individuals access insurance in Oregon are through programs like Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Programs (CHIP): which is referred to as Oregon Health plan (OHP) in Oregon.

Oregon Health Plan Income Limits for Application to Medicaid or OHP 2020.[5]

Family Size	OHP for Adults	OHP for Children
1	$1,396/month	$3,086/month
2	$1,893/month	$4,184/month
3	$2,390/month	$5,282/month
4	$2,887/month	$6,380/month
5	$3,383/month	$7,478/month
6	$3,880/month	$8,576/month

Medicaid is a federal and state funded program that is managed by individual states. It provides government insurance to those who need it. Each state has the power to decide who is eligible for it, and most states focus on low-income individuals, and those with disabilities. With the expansion of the ACA in 2014, states had the choice to expand their Medicaid to serve more citizens; Oregon is one of 37 states that elected to do so. For up to date information on each state, consult this Kaiser Family Foundation interactive map and narrative. https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/status-of-state-medicaid-expansion-decisions-interactive-map/

4. Rosenbaum, S. (2016, September). The Affordable care act and civil rights: The challenge of Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act. Milbank Quarterly, 94. https://www.milbank.org/quarterly/articles/affordable-care-act-civil-rights-challenge-section-1557-affordable-care-act/

5. Health Plans in Oregon. (2020). Oregon health plans made easy. https://www.healthplansinoregon.com/oregon-health-plan-made-easy/

Distribution of Adults in the Coverage Gap, by State and Region, 2018

Total = 2.3 Million in the Coverage Gap
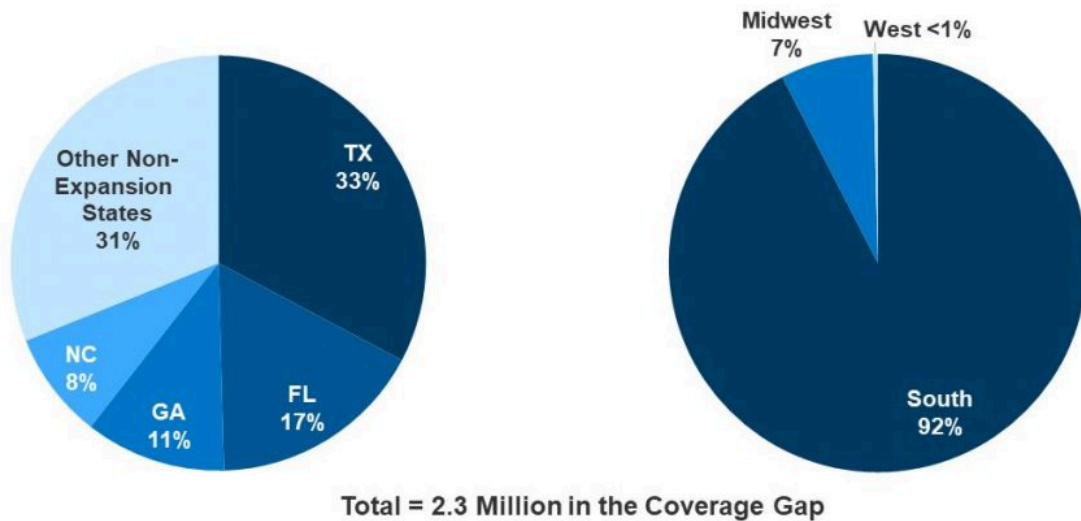
NOTE: Totals may not sum due to rounding. There are no individuals in the coverage gap in the Northeast as all states in the Northeast expanded Medicaid.
SOURCE: KFF analysis based on 2019 Medicaid eligibility levels and 2018 American Community Survey.

KFF
HENRY J KAISER
FAMILY FOUNDATION

Fig. 3.11. These graphs demonstrate that where you live affects your access to health care. Families who live in states that did not adopt the Medicaid expansion are more likely to have less access to health care.

The U.S. government's website about Medicaid (https://www.medicaid.gov) provides state by state report cards on a wide variety of health access and health quality measures. This variance in Medicaid eligibility creates great **inequity** for low-income families based on location. Those in states that have not expanded Medicaid face a much larger "coverage gap," meaning that many more families do not have access to health care insurance.[6]

Those who are age sixty-five or older can access healthcare insurance through Medicare, which is federally funded. Medicare covers about half of health care expenses for those enrolled, and many retirees who can afford to do so purchase private insurance or purchase additional coverage from Medicare itself to cover the gap.[7]

Case Study: Getting Tested for Coronavirus

Carmen Quinero, a 35-year-old essential worker who works at a distribution center that ships N95 masks in

6. Garfield, R., Orgera, K., & Damico, A. (2020, January 14). The Coverage gap: Uninsured poor adults in states that do not expand Medicaid. Kaiser Family Foundation. https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/the-coverage-gap-uninsured-poor-adults-in-states-that-do-not-expand-medicaid/

7. MedPac. (2020, March). Report to the Congress: Medicare payment policy. http://medpac.gov/docs/default-source/reports/mar20_entirereport_sec.pdf?sfvrsn=0

California, developed a severe enough cough in late March, 2020, that the human resources department at her workplace told her to go home and not to come back to work until she was tested for the virus. Quinero has health insurance coverage through her employer; she has a $3,500 deductible.

Tests were not widely available at this time, so she was directed by her doctor to go to an emergency room. She went to the closest one, a for-profit hospital owned by Universal Health Services, one of the largest health-care management companies in the United States. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (aka CARES Act) had passed the week before, and it had been widely publicized that coronavirus testing and treatment would be free to individuals and covered by the federal government.

Fig. 3.12. The patchwork of insurance, government programs and laws, and private payments inequitably affects lower income people

Unfortunately, the legislation is full of loopholes, including for people like Quinero who need a test but were unable to get one due to the low supplies. Although she was given a chest x-ray and prescribed an inhaler, she was not tested. That means that not only was she responsible for the $1,840 in hospital and doctor fees, but she had to miss a week of work (mostly unpaid), putting a considerable financial strain on Quinero and her family.

Quinero's case is not isolated and is not specific to the coronavirus. Access to, and coverage for, the test for the novel coronavirus (aka COVID-19) within the pandemic illustrates how the patchwork of insurance, government programs and laws, and private payments **inequitably** affects lower-income people, whether or not they have health insurance coverage.

To hear more about Carmen's story, listen to this four minute recording from the NPR-KFF series Bill of the Month.

https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/06/30/885053457/essential-worker-shoulders-1-840-debt-for-trying-to-get-tested-for-covid-19

Who is Left Out?

"He who has health has hope; and he who has hope has everything." **Arabian Proverb**

Most of the uninsured (84.6 %) in the United States are working age adults aged 19 to 64 years old. Men are overrepresented in these numbers; over half of all people without health insurance coverage were male (54.6 percent), even though the U.S. population has more women than men. The uninsured are disproportionately concentrated in the South.[8] The number of people without health insurance has been increasing steadily since 2016; 8.5% of all Americans (27.5 million people) did not have health insurance at any point in the year of 2018, according to the American Community Survey.[9]

Socioeconomic status plays a large part in access to healthcare. Occupation, education level, and chronic poverty all play contributing roles. The unique structure of tying health care insurance to full-time employment in the United States perpetuates income equality. Income ties into important social determinants of health including location of home, transportation, and quality of life. Medicaid, which is tied to income level, has limited medical coverage, and often does not cover dental or vision care for adults. Plans vary from state to state. Children, older adults, and people of color are disproportionately affected by health inequities.[10] [For greater detail on adults aged 18-64 who are uninsured, review this 2019 report from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.](#)

Fig. 3.13. During the coronavirus outbreak, many essential workers like nurses lacked personal protective equipment (PPE) like masks.

A separate study showed that before the expansion of the ACA in 2014, about 41% of Hispanics, 26% of Blacks, and 15% of Whites were uninsured, while after expansion the rate of uninsured individuals decreased by 7% for Hispanics, 5% for Blacks, and 3% for Whites.[11] Although the

8. U.S. Census Bureau. (2018, September 12). Who are the uninsured? . Retrieved June 9, 2020, from https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2018/09/who-are-the-uninsured.html

9. Berchick, E. R., Barnett, J. C., & Upton, R. D. (November, 2020). Health insurance coverage in the United States: 2018. https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2019/demo/p60-267.html

10. Keenan, P. S., & Vistnes, J. P. (2019, June). Research findings: Non-elderly adults ever uninsured during the calendar year, 2013–2016. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. https://meps.ahrq.gov/data_files/publications/rf42/rf42.shtml

11. Buchmueller, T. C., Levinson, Z. M., Levy, H. G., & Wolfe, B. L. (2016). Effect of the affordable care act on racial and

difference in rates for those un-insured have closed,[12] there is still a sizable gap that needs to be addressed in order to effectively address equity in access to health care. Even with these improvements, vast **inequities** exist state to state, because a family who is poor enough to receive Medicaid in one state is not "poor enough" in another state, especially those who have not expanded Medicaid. Geography matters. Although our country has a rhetoric of equality, family and health laws vary significantly state to state, which reinforces inequalities. Eligibility ranges from having an income that is 40% of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL) to having an income that is 138% of the FPL: quite a difference!

Lack of health insurance has significant consequences because people are less likely to receive preventive health care and care for various conditions and illnesses. For example, because uninsured Americans are less likely than those with private insurance to receive cancer screenings, they are more likely to be diagnosed with more advanced cancer rather than an earlier stage of cancer.[13] In an analysis published in 2009, researchers found that there was a 25% higher risk of death for adults (aged 17 to 64) who were uninsured than those who had private insurance.[14]

ethnic disparities in health insurance coverage. American Journal of Public Health, 106(8), 1416–1421. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303155

12. Inserro, A. (2018, September 11). ACA pushed uninsured rate down to 10% in 2016. American Journal of Managed Care. https://www.ajmc.com/newsroom/aca-pushed-uninsured-rate-down-to-10-in-2016-even-more-so-in-medicaid-expansion-states

13. Halpern, M. T., Ward, E. M., Pavluck, A. L., Schrag, N. M., Bian, J., & Chen, A. Y. (2008). Association of insurance status and ethnicity with cancer stage at diagnosis for 12 cancer sites: A retrospective analysis. The Lancet Oncology, 9(3), 222–231. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045(08)70032-9

14. Wilper, A. P., Woolhandler, S., Lasser, K. E., McCormick, D., Bor, D. H., & Himmelstein, D. U. (2009). Health insurance and mortality in us adults. American Journal of Public Health, 99(12), 2289–2295. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2008.157685

Research and Drug Access

Pharmaceutical research and sales are a gargantuan business in the United States. The cost of developing any single new drug is estimated to be about one billion dollars. Financing comes from the federal government and philanthropic organizations at the discovery research level; large sums of money are pumped into the initial stage of medication research.[15]

Later-stage development is typically funded by pharmaceutical companies, which can be for for-profit companies or nonprofit companies. For-profit companies may be funded by venture capitalists or as a part of larger corporations. Funding for nonprofit companies is a bit trickier; gaining access to federal and foundation funding takes staff time and expertise. The unequal and **inequitable** funding opportunities put nonprofits at a disadvantage, because they have to invest more time in writing requests for grants and funding from government corporations.

The cost of drugs in the United States increased dramatically starting in the 1990s. It is important to note that American families are not accessing more medications than people in comparative countries. In fact, Americans use fewer prescription drugs and are more likely to use less expensive generic prescriptions. It really comes down to price per pill; they simply cost more in the United States than in other countries.[16]

Fig. 3.14. The cost of developing any new drug is estimated to be about one billion dollars.

15. Institute of Medicine (US) Forum on Drug Discovery, Development, and Translation. (2009). Current model for financing drug development: From concept through approval. National Academies Press. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK50972/

16. Haeder, S. F. (2019, February 7). Why the US has higher drug prices than other countries. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/why-the-us-has-higher-drug-prices-than-other-countries-111256

Retail Rx spending per capita each year

Of the countries shown below, Sweden spends the least for pharmaceuticals per capita, at $351, while the U.S. spends the most at $1,011.

Country	Amount
Sweden	$351
Norway	$401
Netherlands	$417
Australia	$427
United Kingdom	$497
France	$553
Canada	$669
Germany	$686
Switzerland	$783
United States	$1,011
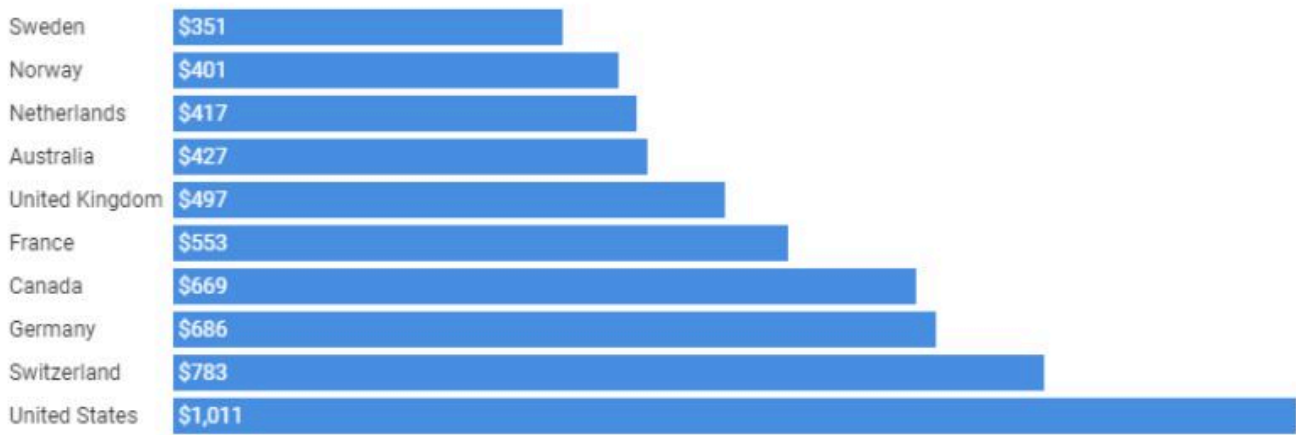
Chart: The Conversation, CC-BY-ND • Source: The Commonwealth Fund • Get the data

Fig. 3.15. Pharmaceuticals cost more in the United States than in other countries.

For-profit pharmacological companies have the upper hand in terms of distribution and overall influence on the decisions for research and funding for new medications in the United States. A company that has a mission of profit for its employees and public shareholders could be seen as having an ethical dilemma when selling its product might benefit those groups, but may not be the best course of action for the people who need those medicines to maintain their basic health. It is for this reason that most countries (excluding the United States) do not allow drug research companies to profit and create state contracts with those companies in order to keep costs low.[17]

In Focus: The Opioid Epidemic

An example of the power of for-profit drug companies can be found in the opioid epidemic. The opioid epidemic began in the United States in the 1940s. While medications like heroin and morphine have been used for pain management for thousands of years, they became more popular during World War II, when heroin and morphine were used to treat war veterans and people who have experienced trauma and wounds from battle.

Families in the United States with members who have difficulty navigating proper pain management have found opioids to be one solution. Prescriptions for these medications were given out and dispensed very generously, even for temporary pain, starting in the mid-20th century. As usage increased dramatically in the 1990s,

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17. Gross, D. J., Ratner, J., Perez, J., & Glavin, S. L. (1994). International pharmaceutical spending controls: France, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Health Care Financing Review, 15(3), 127–140.

pharmaceutical companies assured the medical community and patients that these drugs were not addictive.[18] It is now known that addiction to these opioids and other substances often starts with prescription medications and progresses to a more dangerous level of use if left unchecked.

THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC BY THE NUMBERS

130+ People died every day from opioid-related drug overdoses[3] (estimated)

10.3 m People misused prescription opioids in 2018[1]

47,600 People died from overdosing on opioids[2]

2.0 million People had an opioid use disorder in 2018[1]

808,000 People used heroin in 2018[1]

81,000 People used heroin for the first time[1]

2 million People misused prescription opioids for the first time[1]

15,349 Deaths attributed to overdosing on heroin (in 12-month period ending February 2019)[2]

32,656 Deaths attributed to overdosing on synthetic opioids other than methadone (in 12-month period ending February 2019)[2]

SOURCES
1. 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Mortality in the United States, 2018
2. NCHS Data Brief No. 329, November 2018
3. NCHS, National Vital Statistics System. Estimates for 2018 and 2019 are based on provisional data.

HHS.GOV/OPIOIDS

Fig. 3.16. This 2019 chart illustrates the current opioid epidemic, which is estimated to kill over 130 people a day.

Private lawsuits and governmental action against pharmaceutical companies began to emerge in the early 2000s in the United States. It has been found that companies failed to follow government regulations related to drug production and regulation such as tracking and investigating suspicious orders of these medications. Both name-brand (e.g. Oxycodone) and generic drug manufacturers were guilty of these actions, although generic

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18. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (September, 2019). About the epidemic. Retrieved July 2, 2020, from https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/about-the-epidemic/index.html

manufacturers remained unchecked for longer. Companies made billions of dollars of profits during this same period of time.[19]

Lawsuits against drug companies and distributors by the federal government, multiple states, Native American tribes, and local municipalities show promise for compensation. Examples include allegations of deceptive business practices, fraud, lax monitoring, and oversaturation of the market.[20] These actions resulted in not only individual negative consequences but have also contributed to systemic breakdown in communities.

The ripple effects on families and communities are difficult to quantify. While overdoses and deaths can be counted, loss and grief is immeasurable. Diminished parenting, loss of employment, loss of housing, and broken relationships all affect families, schools, workplaces, and communities. The effects of drug addiction and trauma are generational; we will not know how many families have been affected by this multi-century epidemic until well into the future.

Keeping our Families Healthy

If you were to spend a few minutes brainstorming a list, what would you include as the most important requirements to keeping your family healthy? While this chapter has focused on health care and health insurance as important aspects of health management, the authors of this text would like to emphasize that health care starts with access and decision-making related to exercise, diet, relationships, work, sleep, intellectual stimulation, addictive substances, education, and social life. This is our list; perhaps you have other aspects to add!

Importantly, those individual and family decisions are directly impacted by the social institutions and processes at the core of the United States. Past and present laws, policies, practices, and biases that create and reinforce **inequities** mean that families live with vastly different access to resources, including food, safe and stimulating outdoor environments, time, work environments, social life, and health care.

19. Yerby, N. (2020, June 18). DEA database shows generic drug manufacturers contributed most to the opioid epidemic. AddictionCenter.com https://www.addictioncenter.com/news/2019/08/generic-drug-manufacturers-opioid-epidemic/
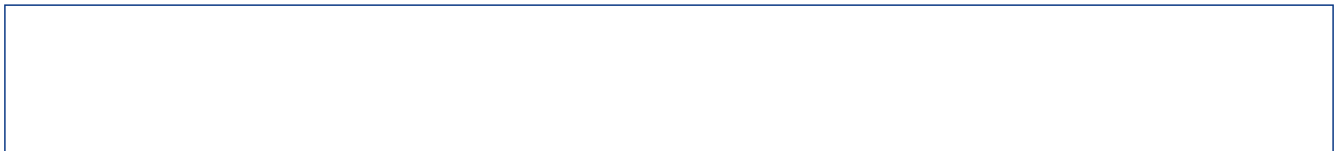
20. Haffajee, R. L., & Mello, M. M. (2017). Drug companies' liability for the opioid epidemic. New England Journal of Medicine, 377(24), 2301–2305. https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMp1710756

Fig. 3.17. Tips for physical distancing outside during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

For example, many families live without easy access to recreational trails and playgrounds. The Housing Now chapter of this text details the ways in which laws, regulations, and lending corporations have actively participated in pushing minoritized racial-ethnic groups into these areas. We must pay attention to these past practices and the ways that they impact present families' health. During the current (2020) COVID-19 Pandemic, it is becoming clear that the virus is transmitted more easily in crowded spaces indoors than in the outdoors. There is a disproportionate number of coronavirus cases and deaths amongst minoritized populations in the United States[21], and it is possible that lack of access to outdoor spaces plays a role. So at the same time that this lack of resources makes it more difficult to maintain everyday physical and mental health, it may also contribute to illness, hospitalization, loss of employment, and even death during the pandemic.

This video from the American Medical Association features an interview with Doctor Aletha Maybank and explains how funding, data collection and the overlap with structural discrimination affect the rates of the virus.

21. Godoy, M. and Wood, D. (2020, May 30). Growing data show Black And Latino Americans bear the brunt. NPR. https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/05/30/865413079/what-do-coronavirus-racial-disparities-look-like-state-by-state

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=416#oembed-3*

Institutionalized **inequities** have been amplified during the current pandemic. Crowded work environments such as meat-packing facilities; food deserts; less health insurance, less access to health care and virus testing as measured by geography and transportation options; and greater likelihood to experience discrimination, stress, and lack of sleep, are some of the factors that contribute to greater numbers of Black, Native, and Latinx families being affected by the COVID-10 virus.[22] These overlapping factors are discussed throughout this text.

It is important to recognize the role of activism in alleviating all social problems, including the problem experienced by so many families in the United States: poor health that could be improved by adequate health care. There is hope; there are many countries that have differing successful models of health care that give all citizens access. In this country there are multiple groups, many led by physicians or other medical professionals, that are working to create and/or modify systems so that all individuals and families can access the basic health care that they need. Two organizations that are prominent are [Health Care for ALL Oregon](#) and [Physicians for a National Health Program.](#)
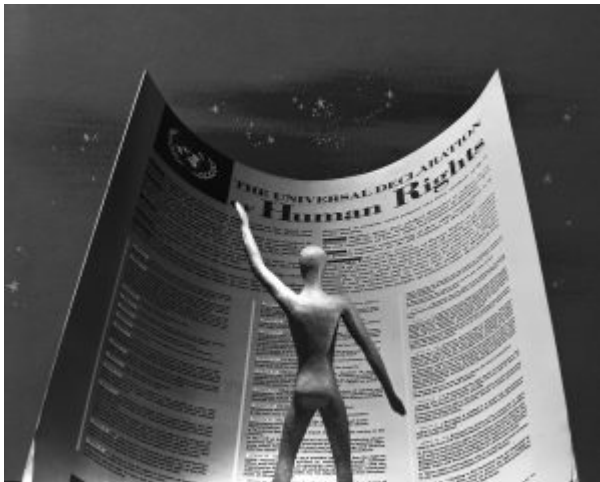
Fig. 3.18. The United Nations identifies health as a human right.

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 25 identifies health as a human right.

Article 25.

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.[23]

Some non-industrialized nations and all industrialized nations, with the United States as the notable excep-

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22. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, June 25). COVID-19 in racial and ethnic minority groups. Retrieved July 4, 2020, from https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html

23. United Nations. (1948, December 10). Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Retrieved July 4, 2020, from https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/

tion, have adopted some form of universal healthcare system since the 1948 adoption of this Declaration. The irony is that the framework for the human rights declaration came from the United States and the work of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his wife and Statesperson Eleanor Roosevelt.[24] The United States does not have an actual health care system, but rather multiple systems of health insurance accessed: via employment, via family configuration as defined by government structures, state-funded block programs, and federal programs for specific groups such as people who are indigent, disabled, or older. In other words, not all families.

While families in the United States strive to make the best choices for themselves, they are limited by the existing access to resources needed to be as healthy as possible. Some of these inequities were created by past laws and practices. But those, and others, can be adjusted and changed. The societal and governmental commitment to the standards of health and well-being as identified in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights is a way to begin.

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Figure 3.10. "US Health-Care Expenditure, 1980–2010 (in Billions of Dollars)" in *Social Problems* by Anonymous. License: CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Based on data from Statistical Abstracts/U.S. Census.

Figure 3.11. "Distribution of Adults in the Coverage Gap, by State and Region, 2018" by Peterson-KFF. License: CC BY-NC-ND 3.0.

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Figure 3.14. "Money Behind Health Care" by Truthout. License: CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

Figure 3.15. "Retail RX spending per capita each year" by The Conversation. License: CC BY-ND 4.0. Based on data from The Commonwealth Fund.

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24. Gerisch, M. (n.d.). Health care as a human right. Human Rights Magazine, 43(3). Retrieved July 4, 2020, from https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/the-state-of-healthcare-in-the-united-states/health-care-as-a-human-right/

Figure 3.16. "The Opioid Epidemic by the Numbers" by the US Department of Health and Human Services. Public domain.

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Income, Poverty and Health Insurance – Health Insurance Presentation" by US Census Bureau. Public domain.

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Figure 3.17. "COVID-19: Physical Distancing in Public Parks and Trails" (c) National Recreation and Park Association. Image used with permission.

"COVID-19 Update for April 21, 2020" (c) American Medical Association. License Terms: Standard YouTube license.

4. HOUSING

HOUSING PREVIEW QUESTIONS

As you read this chapter, consider the following questions:

1. What are houselessness and housing insecurity?
2. Where do most families in the U.S. live?
3. What are some institutional barriers to home ownership and who are those barriers most likely to affect?
4. What are redlining and bluelining?
5. What is the purpose of the Fair Housing Act and how successful has it been?
6. How do economics and power relate to home ownership?
7. How does where you live relate to other aspects of family life, such as health?
8. What are some solutions to the housing challenges that families in the U.S. face?

HOUSING NOW!

Elizabeth B. Pearce; Katherine Hemlock; and Carla Medel

> **"I just feel like I influence people because I'm like – I was practically homeless."**   — **Cardi B**

Housing is another word for the place that families go each night to find shelter not only from the physical elements, but also to find enough emotional safety that they can become centered, rejuvenated, and sleep securely. In the best scenarios it provides not only security, but a place for families to love and nurture the self and one another.

Figure 9.1. Cardi B rose from poverty to fame.

Cardi B, a famous rapper (born as Belcalis Almanzar), describes being able to move out of her abusive boyfriend's home with money earned from her work stripping in a club. "There were two pit bulls in that house, and I had asthma. There were bed bugs, too," she told Vibe. "On top of that, I felt like my ex-boyfriend was

cheating on me, but it was like even if he was cheating on me, I still can't leave because—where was I gonna go?"[1]

In Cardi B's case, she had safety from the outside physical world. But she was not safe inside her home. This is just one example of the complexities of housing, and specifically the ways that **inequities** play out in the United States.

Income is the primary determining factor in housing access. Price, availability, location, and macroeconomics all play a role, but a family's annual income is the main determinant in **housing affordability**.[2] Therefore, inequities in income distribution directly affect housing access, and the capability of families to be safe, secure, and able to function to their maximum potential.

Cardi B grew up living between two different Bronx neighborhoods in New York City. When she describes her parents, she says, "I have real good parents, they poor. They have regular, poor jobs and what not," she said in an interview with [Global Grind](). "They real good people and what not, I was just raised in a bad society"[3]. It is common in the U.S. for families to have multiple wage-earners, with multiple jobs, and still be unable to afford adequate housing.

Figure 9.2. It is common in the U.S. for families to have multiple wage-earners, with multiple jobs, and still be unable to afford adequate housing.

Part-time and temporary jobs frequently come with lower pay and fewer benefits such as health care, sick leave, and other paid and unpaid leaves. This makes it harder to budget for regular expenses such as food and housing. These jobs are unequally distributed by sex, immigration status, and ethnic groups. **Affordable housing** is defined as housing that can be accessed and maintained while paying for and meeting other basic needs such as food, transportation, access to work and school, clothing, and health care. Diverse income levels, reinforced by governmental and lending practices that discriminate based on racial-ethnic groups, immigration status, and **socioeconomic status**, widen the gap between those who are housing secure, **housing insecure**, and **homeless**.

1. Akhtar, A. (2017, September 27). *How Cardi B escaped poverty to become the first female rapper in 19 years to top the charts*. http://money.com/how-cardi-b-escaped-poverty-to-become-the-first-female-rapper-in-19-years-to-top-the-charts/
2. Tilly, C. (2006). The economic environment of housing: Income inequality and insecurity. In R. G. Bratt, M. E. Stone, and C. Hartman, *A right to housing: Foundation for a new social agenda* (pp. 20-35). Temple University Press.
3. Shamsian, J. & Singh, O. (2019, October 10). *How Cardi B went from a stripper to a chart-topping rapper*. Business Insider. https://www.insider.com/who-is-cardi-b-bodak-yellow-2017-9

Houselessness

In 2019, over a half million Americans were considered **houseless**. Many of these are children and youth. In early 2018, just over 180,000 people in 56,000 families with children experienced houselessness. More than 36,000 young people (under the age of 25) were unaccompanied youth who were houseless on their own; most of those (89%) were between the ages of 18 and 24 years.[4]

These recent statistics were collected for Oregon (2019):

- Total Houseless Population: 15,876
- Total Family Households Experiencing Houselessness: 1,147
- Veterans Experiencing Houselessness: 1,438
- Persons Experiencing Chronic Houselessness: 4,902
- Unaccompanied Young Adults (Aged 18-24) Experiencing Houselessness: 1,590
- Total Number of Houseless Students: 23,141
- Total Number of Unaccompanied Houseless Students: 3,575
- Nighttime Residence, Unsheltered: 2,511
- Nighttime Residence: Shelters: 1,855[5]

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4. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2018, December). *The 2018 annual homeless assessment report to Congress*. https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf

5. United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2019, January). Oregon homelessness statistics. https://www.usich.gov/homelessness-statistics/or/

A recent national survey that included Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC) in Albany, Oregon found that students at the two-year institution had higher levels of houselessness than do their counterparts nationally. With a response rate of 9.7%, 558 of 5,700 surveyed LBCC students participated in the 2019 #RealCollege Survey Report instituted by Temple University in 2019. 19% of LBCC students reported experiencing houselessness in the past year, compared with 17% nationally. In addition, 53% of LBCC students reported experiencing housing insecurity (described below) in the past year, compared with 50% nationally.

This report indicates that more than half of community college students are struggling with some kind of stress related to having a safe, stable place to

Figure 5. Comparison of Basic Needs Insecurity Rates

Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey
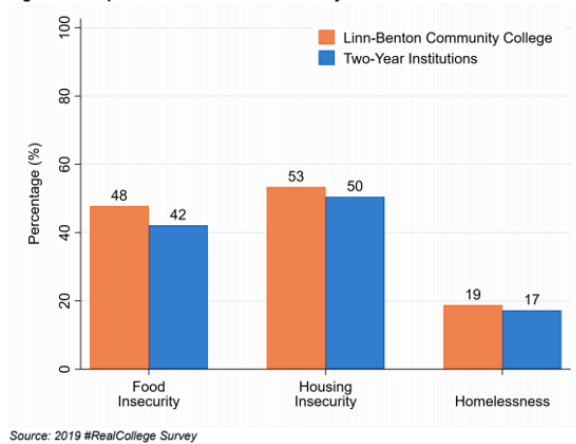
Figure 9.3. A recent national survey that included Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC) in Albany, Oregon found that students at the two-year institution had higher levels of houselessness than do their counterparts nationally.

care for themselves and their families. Demographic factors that indicate a higher rate of houselessness and housing insecurity include being female, **transgender**, Native American, Black, Latinx, and 21 or older. Although men, Whites, young students (18-20) and athletes were less likely to experience houselessness or housing insecurity, they still did so in double-digit percentages.[6]

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6. Goldrick-Rab, S., Baker-Smith, C., Coca, V., Looker, E. & Williams, T. (2019, April). College and university basic needs Insecurity: A national #RealCollege survey report. The Hope Center. https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/HOPE_realcollege_National_report_digital.pdf

Figure 9.4. The Wayne Morse Federal Courthouse is within sight of a temporary location of the Whoville Homeless Camp in Eugene, Oregon.

Living in tents, couch surfing and car sleeping all are forms of houselessness. In an effort to provide stability and safety to the houseless population, formal encampments called Tent Cities have popped up across America in response to the cost of living and other societal problems. Dignity Village in Portland Oregon provides a community that is self-organized and offers a bit of security. Because the majority of Tent Cities are not officially legal, people living in them lack stability and live under the threat of being swept or evicted. In 2017, there were 255 tent cities reported across the US, ranging in size from 10 to over 100 people living in them. "Of those [tent cities] where legality was reported, 75 percent were illegal, 20 percent silently sanctioned, and 4 percent legal." Tent cities are a response to the fact that most city-run shelter beds are maxed out and affordable housing has not become available in response to the growing need.[7]

Houseless shelters provide needed temporary immediate service to over 1.5 million Americans each year.[8] Primarily federally funded, many nonprofit organizations also provide support and temporary shelter for families and individuals. Some are so full that they sleep people in shifts, especially in the cold of winter. Many houseless people have nowhere to go during the day; however, day shelters such as Rose Haven in Portland, Oregon, offer dignity and services to those in need. The shelter serves about 3,500 individuals, including women, children, and gender non-conforming people who experience trauma, poverty, and health challenges.

Tensions exist amongst tent dwellers, staff, and users of shelters, and the business and home-owning communities. This is exemplified in Corvallis, Oregon, where the community has struggled for years to find a permanent location for the men's overnight cold-weather shelter. Advocates for people who are houseless argue for a location close to needed city services; accessibility is important when walking, bicycling, and public transportation are the primary modes of getting around. These needs bump up against business owners' desires for welcoming environments. Most recently, churches outside of the downtown area have allowed people to erect tents on the church property.[9] With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, more people who are houseless

7. Invisible People. (n.d.). How many people live in tent encampments? https://invisiblepeople.tv/tent-cities-in-america/

8. Popov, I. (2017, February). Shelter funding for houseless individuals and families brings tradeoff. Center for Poverty Research, University of California , Davis. https://poverty.ucdavis.edu/policy-brief/shelter-funding-homeless-individuals-and-families-brings-tradeoffs

9. Hall, B. (2019, April 10). Corvallis, Benton County homeless council reboot moves ahead. Albany Democrat Herald. https://democratherald.com/news/local/corvallis-benton-county-homeless-council-reboot-moves-ahead/article_d2f33b88-a911-5d29-ba27-77bc499a1dfc.html

are moving into tents, and the city has intentionally stopped removing illegal campsites. In addition, Corvallis is providing hygiene centers that include showers, hand-washing, laundry, and food services.[10]

The **socially constructed** ideas of "normal" or "acceptable" identities are barriers to many people in accessing shelter, housing and other services. In houseless shelters, transgender women may be refused admittance by the women's shelter and at risk of violence at the men's shelter. More progress must be made to provide security for all, regardless of identity.[11]

Another barrier some women with children face in seeking shelter from domestic violence is the shelter rules themselves. Early curfews and overly strict rules can compromise the empowerment of residents. Many women fleeing domestic violence find themselves facing punitive and inflexible environments that mimic the patterns of control they are trying to escape. The Washington State coalition against domestic violence, called Building Dignity, "explores design strategies for domestic violence emergency housing. Thoughtful design dignifies survivors by meeting their needs for self-determination, security and connection. The idea here is to reflect a commitment to creating welcoming accessible environments that help to empower survivors and their children."[12]

Housing Insecurity

Housing insecurity is less transparent than houselessness. People who are **houseless** are somewhat visible, but we may be less likely to know whether or not someone is **housing insecure**. That's because it is an umbrella term that encompasses many characteristics and conditions. Signs of housing insecurity include missing a rent or utility payment, having a place to live but not having certainty about meeting basic needs, experiencing formal or informal evictions, foreclosures, couch surfing, and frequent moves.[13] It can also include being exposed to health and safety risks such as mold, vermin, and lead, overcrowding, and personal safety fears such as abuse.[14] Cardi B's living situation, which she describes as "practically homeless," illustrates housing insecurity.

10. Day, J. (2020, May 4). Corvallis to aid shelter hygiene center. Albany Democrat Herald. https://democratherald.com/news/local/corvallis-to-aid-shelter-hygiene-center/article_d1562ff0-6e81-5914-bfc1-91d9a6d6b89c.html

11. National Center for Transgender Equality. (2019, June 9). The Equality Act: What transgender people need to know. https://transequality.org/blog/the-equality-act-what-transgender-people-need-to-know

12. Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (n.d.). Building dignity: Design strategies for domestic violence shelter. https://buildingdignity.wscadv.org/

13. Office of Policy Development and Research. US Department of Housing and Urban Development. (n.d.). Measuring housing insecurity in the American housing survey. PD&R Edge Magazine. https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-frm-asst-sec-111918.html

14. Health People 2020. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). Housing instability. https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/housing-instability

Housing insecurity can be defined as a **social problem**; the current estimates are that 10-15% of all Americans are housing insecure. The increase in the number of **cost-burdened households**, households that pay 30% or more of monthly income toward housing, is dramatic amongst families who rent homes. Since 2008, these households increased by 3.6 billion to include 21.3 billion by 2014. And households with the most severe cost burden (paying 50% or more for housing) increased to a record 11.4 million.[15] By definition, a cost-burdened household is one that also faces housing instability and insecurity.

Somewhere In-Between

A well-established housing system that is often left out of the 'standard' talks regarding housing is immigrant housing. There are many immigrants who come to the United States as part of a guestworker program, which dates back to 1942 with the **Bracero Program** and continues through the hiring today of **H2-A** workers. Although these folks are called "guest workers," they are not treated in the way that we imagine treating honored guests when it comes to living spaces.

> The Bracero Program was an agreement between the United States and Mexico which was signed into law by Congress in 1942. This program was initially designed to bring in a few hundred Mexican laborers to harvest sugar beets in California. What was thought to be a small program eventually drew at its peak more than 400,000 workers a year. When it was abolished in 1964, a total of about 4.5 million jobs had been filled by Mexican citizens. After the Bracero Program, foreign workers could still be imported for agricultural work under the H-2 program, which was created in 1943 when the Florida sugar cane industry obtained permission to hire Caribbean workers to cut sugar cane on temporary visas. The H-2 program was revised in 1986 and was divided into the H-2A agricultural program and the H-2B non-agricultural program which are still up and running today. These programs provide temporary jobs and income for workers but do not offer any advantage in terms of establishing residency or citizenship in the United States.

The protections provided to these guest workers vary depending on the program they are under, so the quality of living varies widely but is often low quality. The housing vicinities lack basic necessities and are often in areas considered to be dangerous. Many guest workers find themselves living in one-room containers that later may

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15. Joint Center for Housing Studies. Harvard University. (2016, June 22). The state of the nation's housing 2016. https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research-areas/reports/state-nations-housing-2016

be split up between many workers. Other guest workers find themselves living in what are called 'Tent Cities,' placed right next to the field where they are picking crops. One tent is provided to fit multiple guest workers or an entire family.

These living spaces are often in very rural locations, which isolate these workers and make them totally reliant on their employers. Many employers forbid them from bringing visitors, which reinforces the guest workers' dependence on the employer and limits the likelihood of reports about the poor living conditions or other violations.[16]

The Influence of Institutions: Governments and Lending Institutions

Federal, state, and local governments all influence housing access via laws, zoning rules, permitting processes, and regulations. In addition, the government has the power to regulate the way that most Americans access home ownership, which is a loan agreement between an individual or couple and a lending institution such as a bank or credit union. In fact, it is the lending institution who owns any home, until the individual or couple completely pays the mortgage, which is a combination of the home's original price and the interest that is charged, typically over a 15-, 20-, or 30-year loan.

Figure 9.5. Government and lending institutions control who can borrow money, where they can access housing, the down payment required, and the interest rate that each family pays.

Together, government and lending institutions control who can borrow money, where they can access housing, the down payment required, and the interest rate that each family pays. These regulations do not treat all families equally: **socioeconomic status**, racial-ethnic identity, marriage and sexuality, and immigrant and documentation status have all played a role in lending policies over time in the United States. Immigrants and individuals with **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)** status have difficulty securing loans due to ambiguous federal legislation affecting their status. People who do not have a social security number are eligible for loans, but these typically require a higher down payment and higher interest rates.

Home foreclosures added to the economic disparity following the housing market crash of 2008. Over half

16. Southern Poverty Law Center. (n.d.). Guest worker rights. Retrieved February 20, 2020, from https://www.splcenter.org/issues/immigrant-justice/guest-workers

of US States were affected by prior predatory lending practices and lack of oversight of the banking system. Uninsured, private market subprime loans were made available with looser requirements, quickly driving up the price of homes so that some people owed more on their house than it was worth. Many were considered "underwater in their loans" or "upside-down" in their home value and defaulted on payments. Banks took back homes and many families were forced into shelters, into living in their cars, or into the homes of family members increasing the numbers of **cost-burdened**, **housing insecure**, and **houseless** families.

Where Families Live

Considering the location of families in the United States, we will briefly look at three factors: geography; household size; and types of locations, which commonly include urban, suburban, and rural communities. **Exurbs**, a relatively new term, describes areas just outside of suburban communities which typically feature low density housing and large homes. These may overlap into farm or forested areas, but are not considered rural.

Geography
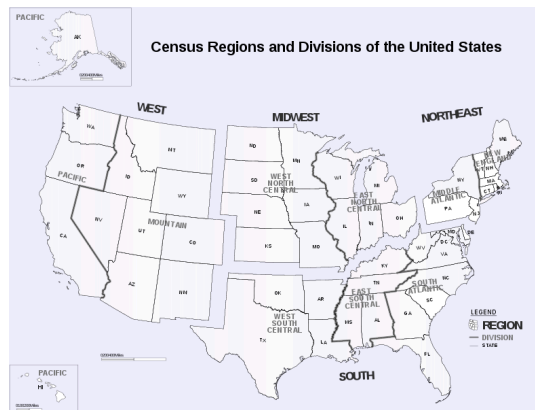
Figure 9.6. The Census Bureau divides the United States into four regions: the Northeast, Midwest, South, and West.

Population distribution is divided into four main regions by the U.S. Census Bureau in order to register the population: the Northeast, Midwest, South, and West; see the map below for divisions within regions.

Population is spread unevenly across the United States with density focused in the Northeast and Southern regions, and two smaller divisions: the East North Central in the Midwest, and the Pacific division of the West, which includes Oregon.

Figure 9.7. Population is spread unevenly across the United States.

Although the population of the United States is growing, the rate of growth is slowing as exemplified by the most populous states listed in descending order: California, Texas, Florida, and New York and for the states that are increasing in population. The four states that have the largest numeric growth in the past ten years are Texas, Florida, Arizona and North Carolina. The states with the most growth, percentage wise, are Idaho, Nevada, Ari-

zona, and Utah, experiencing between 1.7% and 2.1% growth in the past year (2018-2019).[17] For comparison, Oregon grew 1.3% in the same time period.[18]

Communities

Where families live can also be examined related to living in urban, suburban, rural, and exurban areas. Over the second half of the 20th century and the first part of the 21st century, families generally moved away from urban centers and into the suburbs. But the recession of 2008-2015 reversed that trend and urban areas made some growth, while suburbs and **exurbs** declined. Since 2016, the overall trend has again shifted, increasing family growth in suburbs and metropolitan areas (as opposed to urban cores), with Midwestern metro areas seeing the most growth.[19] To understand the demographics of who lives in which kind of community, read this article from the Pew Research Center: What Unites and Divides Urban, Suburban and Rural Communities. Values, racial-ethnic groups, and education are all factors in family location.

Environments and locations have differing health advantages and risks. Air quality, access to green spaces, clean water, and places to recreate are often described as "quality of life" factors. But a greater emphasis is critical as these are considered to be as important to overall health as are genetics and lifestyle.[20] Air and water will be discussed more in depth in the Food, Water, and Air chapter of this text. With the advent of shelter-at-home restrictions related to the pandemic of COVID-19, home environments have become even greater a factor in our overall health. For more on how to assess your environment and its importance to health, watch this TEDMED TALK with Bill Davenhall.

Household Size

Household size had been declining from 1790 through 2010, going from an average size of 5.79 people to 2.58 people. Since then it has increased to 2.63 people in 2018. This increase is likely due to several factors. The

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17. United States Census Bureau. (2019, December 30). 2019 US population estimates continue to show the nation's growth is slowing. https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2019/popest-nation.html

18. Portland State University. (2019, November 15). PSU's Population Research Center releases preliminary Oregon population estimates. https://www.pdx.edu/news/psu%E2%80%99s-population-research-center-releases-preliminary-oregon-population-estimates

19. Frey, W. H. (2018, March 26). US population disperses to suburbs, exurbs, rural areas, and "middle of the country" metroes. The Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/03/26/us-population-disperses-to-suburbs-exurbs-rural-areas-and-middle-of-the-country-metros/

20. Office of the Surgeon General. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2019, May 14). Healthy homes reports and publications. Retrieved May 14, 2020, from https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/healthy-homes/index.html

recession affected families across the United States and many families "doubled up" in their housing. In addition, the trend of young adults living with their parents for longer periods of time decreases the number of independent households.[21] And there is an increase in multigenerational households. This reflects the growing racial-ethnic diversity in the United States; Asian, Hispanic, and Black families are more likely to live in multigenerational households than are non-Hispanic Whites.[22] The trend of increasing household size is important to note because it will likely impact the economy in the United States if it continues, as it will influence that amount of new housing construction.

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Figure 9.2. "home sweet home" by Libor Gabrhel. License: CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Figure 9.4. "Whoville Homeless Camp (Eugene, Oregon)" by Visitor7. License: CC BY-SA 3.0.

Figure 9.5. Photo by Pxfuel. License: Pxfuel terms of use.

Figure 9.6. "Census Regions and Division of the United States" by US Census Bureau. Public domain.

Figure 9.7. "2010 Population Distribution in the United States and Puerto Rico" by US Census Bureau. Public domain.

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Figure 9.3. "Comparison of Basic Needs Insecurity Rates" (c) The Hope Center. Used with permission.

21. Fry, R. (2019, October 1). The number of people in the average U.S. household is going up for the first time in over 160 years. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/01/the-number-of-people-in-the-average-u-s-household-is-going-up-for-the-first-time-in-over-160-years/

22. Menasce Horowitz, J., Brown, A., & Cox, K. (2019, April 9). Views on race in America 2019. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2019/04/09/race-in-america-2019/

FINDING A HOME: INEQUITIES

Elizabeth B. Pearce; Carla Medel; Katherine Hemlock; and Shonna Dempsey

Finding a place to call "home" is important. Living in a place that supports access to outdoor spaces, a feeling of security, effective schools, transportation, food and other resources and the potential for community are quality factors that affect a family's abilities to function effectively and efficiently. We might call these "livable environments."

Home ownership has been and is still the most basic and viable way to accrue wealth in the United States. Access to home ownership is important to families for both livability and financial investment purposes. Uncovering the **inequities** in access to home ownership is critical to understanding the well-being of families in the United States.

Power and the American Dream: Home Ownership

The government and financial organizations both hold substantial power in the United States. Together, they affect how homes are purchased and who can purchase them. Although we know that race is a **social construction**, it is still used as an identifying feature for families, and has been used by these systems to control home purchases and to segregate living areas. We will discuss housing from the perspective of racial-ethnic groups affected by these regulations and practices.

As noted above, households that rent homes rather than buy are on the increase; more people are renting now than at any time in the last fifty years. This is not due to lack of desire to own a home; in a 2016 Pew Research Center Survey, 72% of renters said that they desire to own a home.[1] Denial rates for mortgages continue to be higher for Black and Hispanic applicants. When they are approved, they tend to have higher monthly payments, which increases the **cost burden** on families. This is typically due to having fewer financial resources with which to make a down payment.[2]

While it may be obvious that home ownership increases stability and enables individuals and families to accrue wealth, it is also true that home ownership has a significant effect on the life satisfaction of low-income

1. Cilluffo, A., Geiger, A.W., & Fry, R. (2017, July 19). More US households are renting than at any point in 50 years. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/07/19/more-u-s-households-are-renting-than-at-any-point-in-50-years/
2. Desilver, D., & Bialik, K. (2017, January 10). Blacks, Hispanics face mortgage challenges. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/10/blacks-and-hispanics-face-extra-challenges-in-getting-home-loans/

people. Home buyers have been found to have higher levels of life satisfaction and may also have increased self-esteem and a sense of control compared to renters.[3] It is impossible to talk about lower rates of home ownership amongst minoritized groups without discussing the practices of intentional segregation and gouging enacted by the federal government, lending institutions, local governments and housing covenants enacted following the legal end of slavery in the United States.

Redlining

Figure 9.8. Segregated neighborhoods did not come about organically, but through deliberate planning of policies and practices.

Redlining is the **discriminatory** practice of refusing loans to creditworthy applicants in neighborhoods that banks deem undesirable or racially occupied. Although homeownership became an emblem of the American citizenship and the American dream during the 20th century, Blacks and other nationalities were specifically limited in their abilities to purchase homes. Both the federal government, which created the Home Owners' Loan Corporation in 1933 and the Federal Housing Association (FHA) in 1934, along with the real estate industry, worked to segregate Whites from other groups in order to preserve property values.

Lending institutions and the federal government did this by creating maps in which the places where people of color and/or foreign-born individuals lived were colored red. Then those areas were designated to be "dangerous" or "risky" in terms of loaning practices. Because families in these same groups were often denied access to the neighborhoods designated to be "good" or "the best" they were forced to take loans that required higher down payments and/or higher interest rates.

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3. Rohe, W. M., & Stegman, M. A. (1994). The effects of homeownership: On the self-esteem, perceived control and life satisfaction of low-income people. Journal of the American Planning Association, 60(2), 173–184. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944369408975571

The Home Owners' Loan Corporation, which regulated home loans, created residential security maps divided into four different categories:

- Green: "The best" for businessmen
- Blue: "Good" for white-collar families
- Yellow: "Declining" for working-class families
- Red: "Detrimental" or "Dangerous" for foreign-born people, low-class Whites, and "negroes"
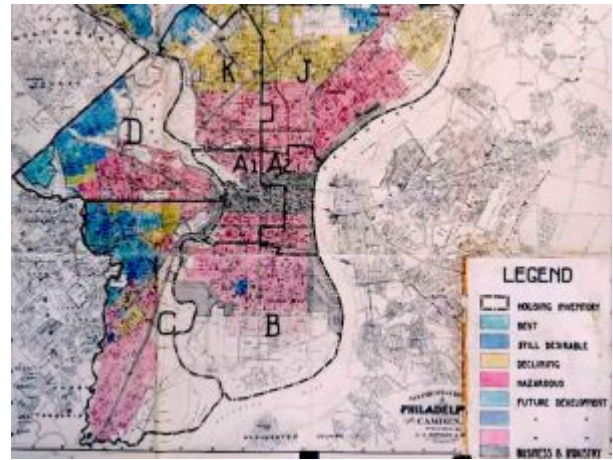

Figure 9.9. Lending institutions and the federal government created maps in which the places where people of color and/or foreign-born lived were colored red.

These ratings indicated to lending institutions how "risky" it was to provide loans by area. It was then less likely that loans could be secured in the red and yellow neighborhoods; interest and payments would be higher. Unscrupulous private lenders used this opportunity to create unfair practices such as unreasonably high payments with devastating consequences if one payment or partial payment was missed, such as the Black homeowner losing their home and all equity that had been earned.[4]

In 1968, these practices were outlawed by **the Fair Housing Act**, which was part of the Civil Rights Act. The Fair Housing Act is an attempt at providing equitable housing to all. It makes discriminating against someone based on skin color, sex, religion, and disability illegal. Also banned is the practice of real estate lowballing, where banks underestimate the value of a home, in effect forcing a borrower to come up with a larger down payment to compensate for the lower loan value. The offering of higher interest rates, insurance, and terms and conditions to minority loan applicants is illegal. Denying loans and services on the basis of an applicant's protected class is also illegal.

Still, much damage was done prior to its passage. For decades, the federal government poured tax monies into home loans that almost exclusively favored White families. Home ownership is the most accessible way to build equity and wealth and it was denied to many minority families for decades. Once the Fair Housing Act passed, local governments, residential covenants, and deed modifications continued to discriminate well into the 2000s, and families in minoritized groups still had less success in achieving home loans.

The result of these institutionalized efforts resulted in residential segregation, the physical separation of two or more groups into different neighborhoods. Many times this is associated with race, but it can also be associated with income. Segregated neighborhoods did not come about organically, but through deliberate planning of policies and practices that have systematically denied equal opportunity to minority populations. Segrega-

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4. Coates, Ta-Nehisi. (2014, June). The case for reparations. The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/

tion has been present in the United States for many years, and while now it is illegal to do so, it has been institutionalized in neighborhood patterns. From information collected in the 2010 census, we see that a typical White person lives in a neighborhood that is 75% White and 8% African American, while a typical African American person lives in a neighborhood that is 35% White and 45% African American.[5]

📽 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=123#oembed-1*

Play this six-minute video for a summary of housing segregation in the United States.

As a recipient of federal funding, the city of Portland is required to abide by the rules of **the Fair Housing Act**, but like many cities in the United States, Portland has a history of redlining and other discriminatory practices. In order to better understand Portland's practices, learning about Oregon's history is useful. The Oregon Encyclopedia contains a summary of Black exclusion laws in Oregon; these laws were put in place when the state was founded in order to discourage people of color from settling in Oregon.

Between 1900 and 1930, Portland began zoning practices, the act of separating land based on what it will be used for, such as residential, industrial, and commercial. In 1924, Portland approved its first zoning code, Zone 1–Single-Family, Zone 2–Multi-Family, Zone 3–Business-Manufacturing, and Zone 4–Unrestricted. Most residential areas were designated Zone 2, except for 15 neighborhoods considered the "highest quality" that were designated Zone 1.[6]

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5. Frey, W. H. (2020, March 30). Even as metropolitan areas diversify, White Americans still live in mostly White neighborhoods. The Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/research/even-as-metropolitan-areas-diversify-white-americans-still-live-in-mostly-white-neighborhoods/

6. Hughes, J. et al. (2019, September). Historical context of racist planning: A history of how planning segregated Portland. Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. City of Portland, Oregon. https://beta.portland.gov/sites/default/files/2019-12/portlandracistplanninghistoryreport.pdf

Table 9.1. Some of the 15 neighborhoods that were designated Zone One
Data from Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America[7]

Neighborhood	Environment	Occupants	Building Zone
Alameda	Convenience to schools, churches, shopping centers and transportation. Fully improved streets and sufficiency of utilities and conveniences.	Foreign born: Few to none Black: Few to none	5-7 rooms mansions
Arlington-Heights	Schools, churches, transportation, recreational and trading areas reasonably available.	Foreign born: Few to none Black: Few to none	7-10 rooms mansions
Eastmoreland	Convenience to grade schools, churches, transportation, recreational and trading centers. Presence of all utilities and conveniences.	Foreign born: Few to none Black: Few to none	5-7 rooms houses
Abernathy	A sheltered and secluded neighborhood of great natural appeal. Schools, churches and trading centers reasonably available.	Foreign born: Few to none Black: Few to none	Mansions and Farm houses

Figure 9.10. Portland City Council's rezoning in the 1930s-40s was used as a tool to further reinforce racial segregation.

Between the 1930s and '40s, Portland City Council rezoned large areas of multi-family zoning to single-family zoning. This was done to protect real estate values of single-family homes and make it easier for homeowners to obtain Federal Housing Administration loans in those areas. During this time, roughly 14.25 square miles was rezoned from multi-family to single-family housing. This was used as a tool to further reinforce racial segregation by restricting federal and private lending. It made it difficult, sometimes even impossible, for residents living in "redlined" neighborhoods to receive residential and commercial loans.

Neighborhood planning from 1960 to 1970 included the ideas of residents instead of only the real estate industry. In 1973, a Senate bill was passed which eventually led to the creation of the state's land use planning

7. Nelson, R. K. et al. (n.d.). Mapping inequality: Redlining in New Deal America. University of Richmond. Retrieved March 9, 2020, from https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/

program. This program required cities to have a 20-year plan to accommodate growth. There was a strong interest from Portland residents in housing policies which would distribute low-income housing throughout the entire Portland area. Although many strong neighborhood associations formed, power continued to reside with the more affluent, mostly White neighborhoods, and the 1980 Comprehensive Plan favored expanding and protecting single-family zones.

In 1994, the Community and Neighborhood Planning Program was adopted to address issues that sprouted after the Comprehensive Plan. With this they did the opposite of what had been done for many years in the past by expanding the multi-family zones. Central City, Albina, Outer Southeast, Southwest, Inner Southeast, Peninsula area, Northwest Portland, and Northeast Portland were identified as focus neighborhoods. The program involved staggering the plans and completing them periodically and systematically. The program sought to expand and intermix multi-family housing, but it was met with resistance and controversy that led to uneven results.

VisionPDX came forward in 2005 as an effort to engage community members, especially those from under-represented communities, in developing a shared vision of Portland. They wanted to focus on providing a space for other folks who previously had no say in the future of Portland to now have the opportunity for input. This new way of thinking about **equity** in planning led to the development of new goals and policies in the most updated version of the Comprehensive Plan in 2016.

Figure 9.11. Portland has failed to create more mixed neighborhoods.

Today, single-family zoning accounts for approximately 74% of the total land area for housing in Portland. Since the 1920s, very little change has occurred with the original 15 single-family zones. These neighborhoods have remained stable and demographically homogeneous with low levels of vulnerability to displacement and tend to be the zones for White households. Similarly, the zones originally designated as less desirable are homes for many families from marginalized groups, and contain fewer resources and amenities desired by families.

So what can we learn from this? Portland's land use planning history, intentional or not, has resulted in **discrimination** and segregation. These planning practices and the decisions made have predominantly benefited and privileged White homeowners while communities of color have been burdened, excluded, and displaced. Decision-making for collective improvement is often complicated when it affects individual outcomes. The same people who may believe in equity may also resist change when they perceive that it affects them individually. This is called the "Not in my Backyard" (NIMBY) phenomenon and likely affected Portland's failure to move toward creating more mixed neighborhoods. Portland and all cities can do better. Fair housing regulations can be achieved by understanding the history and then creating policy change which will lead to more equitable outcomes.

Bluelining

Blue Lining is a current banking and lending issue as a result of climate change. Real estate that is considered high risk due to low elevation may not qualify for loans. With the current rate of ocean warming, sea levels are expected to rise and warm water will generate storms that displace millions of people in the United States and worldwide. Flooding could displace 126 million people, or 40% of the U.S. population, by 2021. **Climigration** is the act of people relocating to areas less devastated by flooding, storms, drought, lack of clean water or economic disaster due to the forces of climate change.

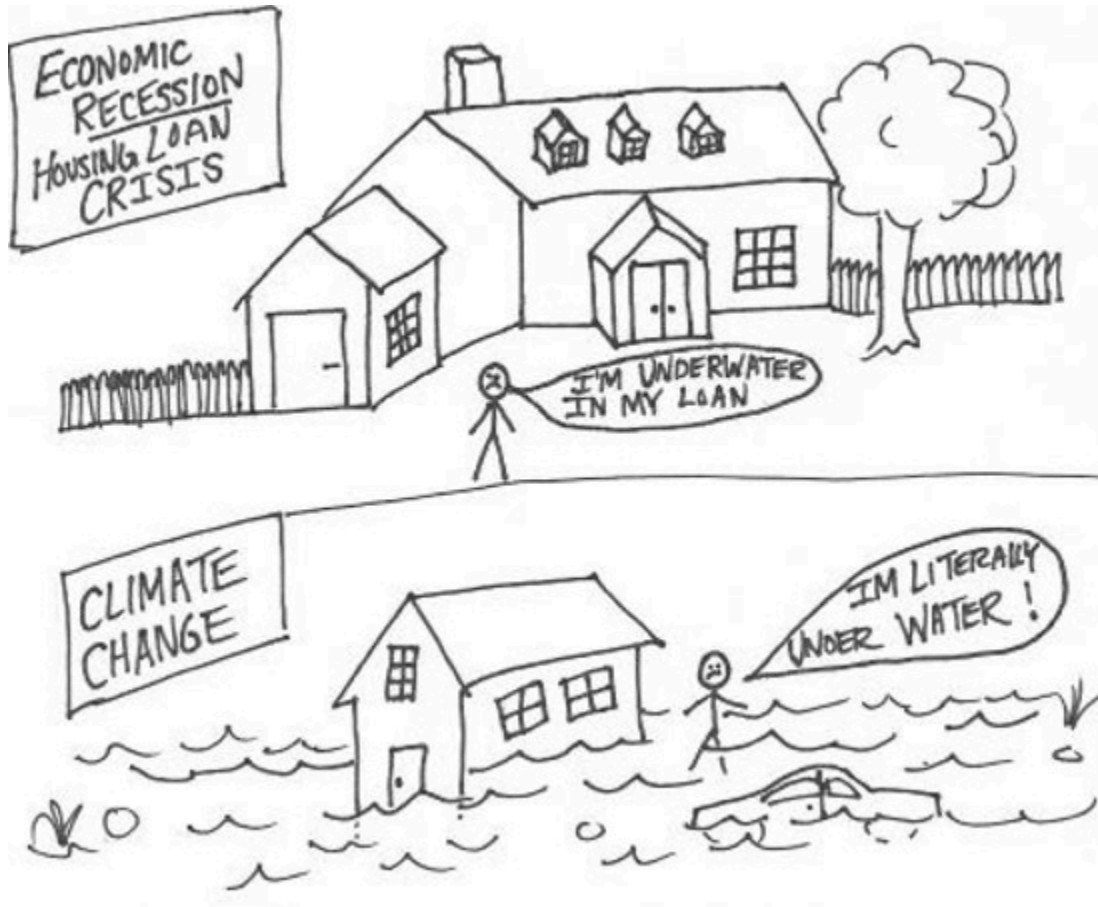Figure 9.12. Flooding could displace 126 million people, or 40% of the U.S. population, by 2021.

Many American families relocate as jobs disappear or land becomes flooded or arid. In response to immediate disaster, many families move to live with relatives or friends. Some families have nowhere to turn. "In January 2018, 3,900 people were staying in sheltered locations specifically for people displaced by presidentially

declared national disasters. People in these locations were displaced from areas struck by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, and Nate; western wildfires; and other storms and events."[8]

Climate change has also changed the economic desirability of entire regions, creating a new divide between the poor and the privileged. In the Southern California region of Los Angeles, shade has become an increasingly precious commodity, giving respite from the searing heat that bakes the community during longer, hotter warm seasons.

Figure 9.13. People who live in less desirable neighborhoods and use public transportation suffer the highest heat index

In the 1950s, the lure of the California sunshine attracted settlers from across the US to propel LA into a major metropolis. Now, shade provided by large tree-lined neighborhoods and areas of upscale urban design are enjoyed by the affluent but absent for those who need it the most. There is a public health benefit from trees, with studies showing benefits like lower asthma and improved mental health for those exposed to greenspaces.

People who live in less desirable neighborhoods and use public transportation also wait at the more than 750 bus stops where police ordered the removal or minimization of trees in an earlier era.

They spend more time outdoors traveling to jobs and needed resources and suffer the highest heat index.[9]

8. Henry, M., Mahathey, A., Morrill, T., Robinson, A., Shivji, A., & Watt, D. (2018, December). The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf

9. Arango, T. (2019, December 1). Why shade Is a mark of privilege in Los Angeles. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/01/us/los-angeles-shade-climate-change.html

The accessibility of greenspaces is proving to have a direct impact on health. This will be discussed more thoroughly in the Food, Water, and Air chapter.

Reservation Land and Home Ownership

There is another group of families unable to build capital via home ownership: Native American Indians who reside on reservations. When the United States government sequestered Native Americans to reservation lands, it also retained ownership of that land, creating a "ward:

Figure 9.14. The accessibility of greenspaces is proving to have a direct impact on health.

guardian relationship" between the government and the Indian Nations, as characterized by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall in 1831.[10] The government holds reservation lands "in trust" for the tribe nations.

While there is much public debate about other aspects of tribal rights such as casinos, and the effects of using Native or Indian images and names for sport teams, there is little discussion about the ways the U.S. government has limited the abilities of Native Americans to own property within the communities where they live.[11] This most basic way of building equity in a country that values individualism and capitalism has been restricted for the people who have inhabited it the longest. Native Americans have the highest poverty rate of any racial-ethnic group (28% in 2015) and it is likely that the control the government has exerted over their living conditions contributes to this circumstance.[12]

Fair Housing Act

What legally constitutes as a family has influenced a multitude of the availability of resources and within that bubble of needs, housing is one of them. Housing distribution appears to have always been a necessity that was historically **discriminatory** towards minoritized groups regarding **social identities** such as race, **sexual orientation**, gender and sex, country of origin, and disability. **The Fair Housing Act** passed in 1968 originally banned the sale and rental of housing (and other housing practices) indicating preference or discrimination

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10. Cherokee Nations v. Georgia, 30 U.S. (5 Pet.) 1 (1831)

11. Schaefer Riley, N. (2016, July 30). One way to help Native Americans: property rights. The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/native-americans-property-rights/492941/

12. U.S. Census Bureau. (2015, November 2). Facts for Features: American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month: November 2015. https://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/us-census-bureau-profile-america-facts-features-american-indian-and-alaskan

based on race, color, religion or national origin. In 1974, it was amended to include sex, and in 1988, people with disabilities and people with children. To date, it does not include gender identity or sexual orientation. Only a handful of states have made it illegal to discriminate based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and that creates a challenge for LGBTQ+ couples.

Socially constructed ideas of "normal" or "acceptable" identities are barriers to many people in accessing shelter, housing, and many other services. Specifically in the case of **houseless** shelters, **transgender** women may be refused admittance by the women's shelter and at risk of violence at the men's shelter.[13] More progress must be made to provide security for all, regardless of identity.

Another barrier some women with children face in seeking shelter from domestic violence is the shelter rules themselves. Early curfews and overly strict rules can compromise the empowerment of residents. Many women fleeing domestic violence find themselves facing punitive and inflexible environments that mimic the patterns of control they are trying to escape. The Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence created a resource called Building Dignity, which "explores design strategies for domestic violence emergency housing. Thoughtful design dignifies survivors by meeting their needs for self-determination, security and connection. The idea here is to reflect a commitment to creating welcoming and accessible environments that help to empower survivors and their children."[14]

Stigma

It is important to note the critical nature of stigma. When a characteristic or behavior is devalued in society, whether it be by legal status or by **social construction of difference**, individuals and families have a more difficult time accessing needs of survival, including housing. When negative labels are placed on people, the consequences that the labels create can have lasting effects. Being called "homeless," "drug-addict," "unemployable," can in fact cause the persons being called these things to self-fulfill the negative labels that society has placed on them. Because people of color, LGBTQ+ **kinship** groups, immigrant families, and others have been stigmatized, they are more likely to then be given other negative behavior-based labels. When someone feels as though they are seen as nothing, they can in turn feel as though they have nothing to offer. The Labeling Theory is a good example of how society can perpetuate things such as houselessness and criminality even though they might not necessarily realize that they are doing so. The Labeling Theory is a "sociological hypothesis that

13. National Center for Transgender Equality. (2019, June 9). The Equality Act: What transgender people need to know. https://transequality.org/blog/the-equality-act-what-transgender-people-need-to-know

14. Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (n.d.). Building dignity: Design strategies for domestic violence shelter. Retrieved March 9, 2020, from https://buildingdignity.wscadv.org/

claims that by describing an individual in terms of particular behavioral characteristics may have a significant effect on his or her behavior, as a form of self-fulfilling prophecy."[15]

Families who Rent

Inherent with the owner role comes power. Decision-making about rental rates, whom to rent to, and upkeep of the home resides with the owner. People who rent, while receiving variable rights and responsibilities dependent on the municipality in which they reside, have less control over their living space than do owners. While many owner-renter relationships are mutually beneficial, renters who live at or below the poverty line have fewer choices and are more likely to encounter landlords who are inattentive or worse.

Slumlords

According to Wikipedia, a slumlord is: "a slang term for a landlord, generally an absentee landlord with more than one property, who attempts to maximize profit by minimizing spending on property maintenance, often in deteriorating neighborhoods."[16]

Typically, these homes are found in low-income areas. People and families who cannot rent anywhere else utilize this type of housing, usually because the rent is cheap and there are no background checks. Families who have had previous rental issues (evictions, late rent, etc.) frequently get sucked into this housing option. Also, persons who have criminal records and have no other options may rent from these types of owners.

Figure 9.15. Homes owned by "slum lords" are typically in low-income areas.

15. American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Labeling theory. In The APA Dictionary of Psychology. Retrieved March 9, 2020, from https://dictionary.apa.org/labeling-theory
16. Wikipedia. (n.d.). Slumlord. Retrieved February 21, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slumlord

Section 8 Housing

The housing choice voucher program, more commonly known as Section 8 housing, is the federal government's program for assisting low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford housing. An important thing to notice is how since housing assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual, participants themselves are able to find their own housing.

Housing choice vouchers are administered locally by public housing agencies (PHAs). The PHAs receive federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to administer the voucher program. A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by the PHA on behalf of the participating family. The family then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program. Sometimes, a family could even use its voucher to purchase a home with a PHA's authorization.[17]

Qualifying for Section 8 housing is not a guarantee of moving into **affordable housing**. In 2020, the median wait time for people who have applied for a housing voucher in the United States is 1.5 years, with some waits as long as seven years. Currently in Oregon there are thirteen open waiting lists and at least seven counties where families cannot even get on a waiting list.[18]

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Figure 9.8. "Sign: 'We Want White Tenants in our White Community'" by Arthur Siegel / Office of War Information. Public domain.

Figure 9.9. "Home Owners' Loan Corporation Philadelphia redlining map." Public domain.

Figure 9.10. "Food carts – Portland, Oregon, USA" by Daderot. CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.

Figure 9.11. "Portland, Oregon skyline from the Ross Island Bridge" by Visitor7. License: CC BY-SA 3.0.

Figure 9.13. "LA Metro 200 bus stop on Alvarado Street" by Downtowngal. License: CC BY-SA

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17. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (n.d.). Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8). Retrieved February 21, 2020, from https://www.hud.gov/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8

18. Affordable Housing Online. (n.d.). Search low income apartments and wait lists. Retrieved February 21, 2020, from https://affordablehousingonline.com/

[3.0](#).

Figure 9.14. "[Green spaces (4)](#)" by Anthony O'Neil. License: [CC BY-SA 2.0](#).

Figure 9.15. "[Slum Lord](#)" by Bart Everson. License: [CC BY 2.0](#).

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Figure 9.12 "Economic & Environmental Irony" by Kate Hemlock. Licensed under [CC BY 4.0.](#)

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MOVEMENT TOWARD EQUITY

Elizabeth B. Pearce; Katherine Hemlock; and Wesley Sharp

Understanding and acknowledging past injustices is the first step toward making homes **equitably** available to all families. Efforts to make changes come from multiple directions. There are legislative changes (some which have passed and some that are proposed), and nonprofit agencies and advocacy groups that work both legislatively and with direct action. In addition, there are grassroots efforts to change neighborhood dynamics and to add resources.

Updating the Fair Housing Act

Housing distribution was historically discriminatory towards minority groups regarding **social identities** such as **people of color**, **sexual orientation**, gender and sex, country of origin, and disability. **The Fair Housing Act** passed in 1968 and banned sale, rental and other housing practices that indicated preference or **discrimination** based on race, color, religion, or national origin. In 1974, it was amended to include sex, and in 1988 to include people with disabilities and people with children. While in 2016, a rule by the Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) insured equal access to Community Planning and Development programs regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or marriage status, non-conforming gender individuals may find it difficult to access services as this rule applies to one specific program (and not to other public or private programs).[1] To date, the Fair Housing Act does not include gender identity or sexual orientation. Only a handful of states have made it illegal to discriminate based on sexual orientation and gender identity and that creates a challenge for LGBTQ+ families and couples.[2]

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1. 24 CFR § 5.106

2. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (n.d.). Housing discrimination and persons identifying as LGBTQ. Retrieved March 9, 2020, from https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/housing_discrimination_and_persons_identifying_lgbtq

Figure 9.16 Many years of social activism, including protests, contributed to the creation and passage of the Fair Housing Act.

The **2019 Equality Act** is an attempt to make all Americans equal. The Equality Act is a 2019 bill passed by the US House of Representatives that would amend the Civil Rights Act to "prohibit discrimination on the basis of the sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition of an individual, as well as because of sex-based stereotypes." This Act was sent to the Senate in May 2019, but has not been taken up for consideration at this time (August 2020).[3]

3. Equality Act, H.R. 5, 116th Cong. Session §1 (2019).

Addressing Houselessness: Housing First

People who are **houseless** (aka "housing bereaved") can experience an overlap of **social problems**, such as poverty, untreated mental illness, unemployment, and/or addictions. Traditionally, programs attempt to help people become "ready for housing" via support and criteria that may require multiple moves. For example, the person must become sober or employed first. A relatively new and innovative approach, "Housing First" sprung from grassroots efforts as early as 1988 in California and 1992 in New York. Simply put, the idea is that if people have stable housing, solving other problems becomes more likely. Having a secure home, consistent access to schooling, transportation and support services means that people can be more successful in addressing overlapping issues such as mental health, addiction, and seeking employment.

[Housing First: National Alliance to End Homelessness](#) is a nonprofit organization that exemplifies the approach to end houselessness. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness has endorsed the Housing First approach. HUD estimates that houselessness costs the government between $30,000 and $60,000 per person annually, due to emergency room visits and jail time. A less expensive solution is to actually provide people with housing.

Various communities have adopted the Housing First approach and it looks different depending on the resources and principles of each location. Utah's Housing First approach is a model for how these services can be made available. Through the collaboration of many local organizations and donations from local churches, real permanent semi-communal housing is provided, along with services such as counseling. A true success story, "Grace Mary Manor in Salt Lake City is a permanent **affordable housing** facility for 84 chronically homeless individuals with a disabling condition." (Clifford, NPR, 12/2015) Through programs like this, Utah was able to decrease their houseless population by 91%. [4]

At the time of this writing (July 2020), [the state of Oregon hosts a web page dedicated to Permanent Supportive/Supported Housing Resources,](#) which contains some of the federal government's resources about Housing First. It is unclear how the COVID-19 pandemic will affect the future of this program. In addition, [JOIN was founded in Portland in 1992](#) and reports that they supported 1,377 people leaving the street for permanent and stable housing in 2018. One year later, 83% of those families remain stable. [5]

Creating Standards

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness has determined criteria and benchmarks for com-

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4. Mcevers, K. (2015, December 10). Utah reduced chronic homelessness By 91 Percent. Here's how. NPR. https://www.npr.org/2015/12/10/459100751/utah-reduced-chronic-homelessness-by-91-percent-heres-how

5. Join. (n.d.). About. Retrieved May 15, 2020, from https://joinpdx.org/about/

munities to achieve the goal of ending chronic **houselessness**. Standards are important because they help us identify what we are working toward. These criteria are summarized as follows:

1. The community has identified and provided outreach to all individuals experiencing or at risk for chronic houselessness and prevents chronic houselessness whenever possible.
2. The community provides access to shelter or other temporary accommodations immediately to any person experiencing unsheltered chronic houselessness who wants it.
3. The community has implemented a community-wide Housing First orientation and response that also considers the preferences of the individuals being served.
4. The community assists individuals experiencing chronic houselessness to move swiftly into permanent housing with the appropriate level of supportive services and effectively prioritizes people for permanent supportive housing.
5. The community has resources, plans, and system capacity in place to prevent chronic houselessness from occurring and to ensure that individuals who experienced chronic houselessness do not fall into houselessness again or, if they do, are quickly reconnected to permanent housing.

These goals are considered met when the benchmark of maintaining these criteria has been met for 90 days. Though likely not achievable, the goal of zero houseless individuals in a community is aspirational.[6]

Changing Opportunities

We've discussed at length redlining and the continuing effects on people of color. How can the effects of so many years of institutionalized discrimination be undone? Analysis and action can contribute to change. Communities across the United States have been analyzed by The Opportunity Atlas, which identifies neighborhoods from which children are most likely to rise out of poverty. (Click on the link to assess your own community from a variety of social characteristics, including race, sex, and income).[7]

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Sloan School of Management partnered with the Seattle Public Housing Authority and King County (WA) Public Housing Authority and used The Opportunity Atlas to create a pilot program that offered families using housing vouchers to move into "high opportunity

6. U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2016, June 1). Criteria and benchmark for achieving the goal of ending chronic homelessness. https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Chronic_Homelessness_Criteria_and_Benchmark_Aug18.pdf
7. U.S. Census and Opportunity Insights. (n.d.). The opportunity atlas [interactive map]. Retrieved May 14, 2020, from https://www.opportunityatlas.org/

neighborhoods" as defined by the Atlas. Research shows that each year spent in a high opportunity neighborhood increases the likelihood of children going to college and total lifetime earnings by at least $200,000.[8]

In this study, the [Creating Moves to Opportunity](#) (CMTO) project, families received additional basic services, such as education on the location of opportunity neighborhoods, personalized rental application coaching, housing search assistance, and financial assistance. 54% of the families receiving this assistance chose to move to opportunity neighborhoods compared to approximately 14% of families who received standard services. This demonstrates that families using housing vouchers are not choosing lower opportunity neighborhoods because of preference; when given education, means, and the choice to move to higher opportunity neighborhoods, they are more likely to do so. This still in progress project offers hope that there are ways that federal housing voucher programs can change the course of intergenerational poverty via investments in families who use vouchers.[9] In 2019 the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) funded a larger version of this project.[10]

Community Efforts

Individuals and communities are taking initiative to improve their neighborhoods aesthetically and with increasing resources that benefit families, such as informal libraries, greenspaces, and art houses.

8. Chetty, R., Hendren, N., & Katz, L. F. (2016). The effects of exposure to better neighborhoods on children: New evidence from the moving to opportunity experiment. American Economic Review, 106(4), 855–902. https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20150572

9. Delvin-Foltz, S. (2019, February 20). The new mobility demonstration puts opportunity within reach for children across the country. Opportunity Insights. https://opportunityinsights.org/updates/the-new-mobility-demonstration-puts-opportunity-within-reach-for-children-across-the-country/

10. Bell, A. (2019, February 15). HUD funding bill will launch housing voucher mobility demonstration. CBPP. https://www.cbpp.org/blog/hud-funding-bill-will-launch-housing-voucher-mobility-demonstration

Figure 9.17. Theaster Gates organized multiple grassroots efforts that have used culture to transform the Greater Grand Crossing neighborhood in Chicago.

For example, Theaster Gates, a University of Chicago professor who is also a potter and social activist, started by drawing attention to one run-down home that he refurbished, and gradually organized multiple grassroots efforts that have used culture to transform the Greater Grand Crossing neighborhood in Chicago.[11]

Gates founded the Rebuild Foundation in 2010, which is a non-profit organization that encompasses multiple neighborhood improvement projects. To read more about his community work, visit the "Projects" section of his website.

> One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=125#oembed-1

Another example combines an international organization, Firmeza Foundation based in the Netherlands, which works with local neighborhoods to create community artwork. Artists Jeroen Koolhaas and Dre Urhahn (aka Haas and and Hahn) work on the designs with community members, then hire and train local residents to complete the painting. Dre Urhahn describes the impact of the attention and love that community members pour into their neighborhoods, as well as the resulting beauty, as transformational aspects of the projects.[12] Two well known projects are the favela paintings in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Northern Philadelphia in the United States. To learn more about how their work is funded and organized, listen to their TED TALK here.

> One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=125#oembed-2

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11. TED Talks. (2015, March 18). Theaster Gates. Retrieved May 15, 2020, from https://www.ted.com/speakers/theaster_gates

12. Urhahn, D. (2017, November 10). How can public art projects transform rough neighborhoods (G. Raz, Interviewer)? NPR. Retrieved May 15, 2020, from https://www.npr.org/transcripts/562877158

Conclusion: An Existence of Human Dignity

In prior chapters, we have discussed models related to what human beings need. We shared this graphic that shows two versions of how needs are met.
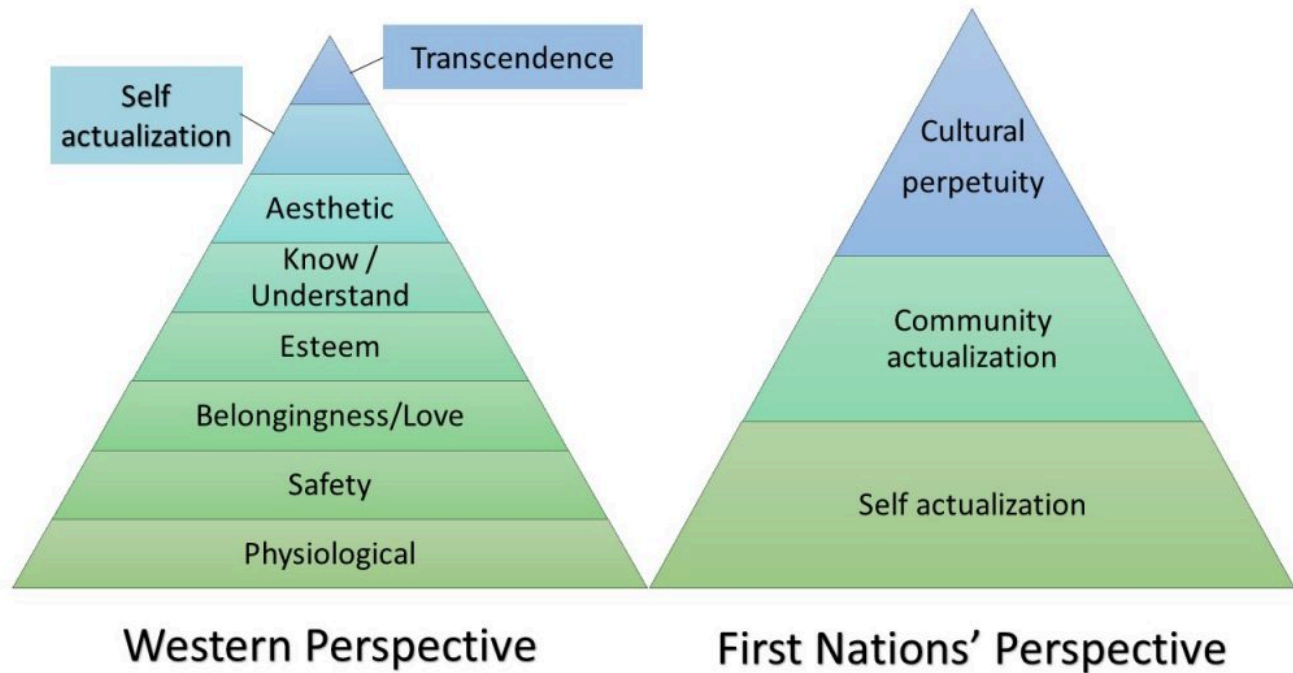

Figure 9.18. Maslow's hierarchy of needs compared to the First Nations' perspective. Maslow's scope of analysis is individual rights/privilege in one lifetime. The First Nations have an expansive concept of time and multiple dimensions of reality.

The models differ in perspective, but they both emphasize the importance of basic needs, of which shelter is one. Maslow's model on the left places shelter as the foundation of the hierarchy of needs, meaning that it must be met first in order for other needs to be achieved. In the First Nations' Perspective on the right, the well-being of the community is prioritized; well-being includes basic needs for all being met.

The United Nations, a 193 nation member group founded in 1945, summarizes its mission as: Peace, Dignity and Equality on a Healthy Planet created a Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which includes

"Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection."

–Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations. 1948. Article 23[13]

There is broad agreement that secure housing is a critical need for families to survive and thrive. While institutional biases that contribute to **inequity** and lack of secure housing for many families in the U.S. have decreased, they have not been completely eradicated. Nor have the effects of the prior centuries of **discrimination** been undone. We must continue to work to understand the past and the present in order to impact the future.

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Figure 9.16. "Fair housing protest, Seattle, Washington, 1964" by Seattle Municipal Archives. License: CC BY 2.0.

Figure 9.17. "Theaster Gates" by Locust Projects. Public domain.

"How to revive a neighborhood: with imagination, beauty, and art" by Theaster Gates/TED Talks. License: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

"How painting can transform communities" by Jeroen Koolhaas and Dre Urhahn/TED Talks. License: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

Open Content, Original

Figure 9.18. "Maslow's hierarchy of needs compared to the First Nations' perspective". License: CC BY 4.0. Based on research from Rethinking Learning by Barbara Bray.

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13. Rosenbaum, R. (n.d.). Sustainable living wages and income. CREA. Retrieved March 9, 2020, from https://crea.org/sustainable-living-wage-and-income/sustainable-living-wage-introduction/

5. CONNECTION AND LOVE

CONNECTION AND LOVE PREVIEW QUESTIONS

As you read this chapter, consider the following questions:

1. How are community and connection important to individuals? What theory best helps you understand this idea?
2. How are kinship and family similar? Different?
3. What are the factors contribute to Union Formation? Which ones have influenced you the most personally?
4. In what ways does the government influence partnership, marriage, and break ups?
5. How does societal stigma influence union formations?
6. What are the issues related to equity when it comes to partnerships including marriage?
7. If you were writing the laws and regulations around taxes and benefits related to union formations and kinship groups, what would they look like?

CONNECTION

Elizabeth B. Pearce; Wesley Sharp; and Nyssa Cronin

> "A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."
>
> –Albert Einstein

The need for, and benefits of, being connected in an emotional and social way to other human beings is one of the central foundations of family life. The quote speaks to the tension amongst Western, Eastern, and Indigenous views about individuality and **collectivism**. He refers to the "optical delusion" (what we might call a **social construction**) of seeing ourselves as separate beings from others and the natural world. Increasing layers of research, however, speak to the importance of close social relationships (belongingness and connectedness) as well as the wider circle of social networks.[1]

Theorists who discuss families, parenting, and mate selection rely on an underlying principle: that it is the mutual social and emotional interdependence of human beings that fosters family development and growth. In addition, our ability to connect to the greater society and planet, including those who are less similar or related to us, enhances our care for family and community. An emphasis of this text is the disposition of being willing to listen and to learn about the greater community in which we live.

As we discuss social connection, we are referring to qualities and experiences such as:

- Positive relationships with others in the social world;
- Attachment, an affectionate emotional connection with at least one other;
- A feeling of belonging and lack of feeling of exclusion;
- Social support, which includes connection but may also include informational support, appraisal sup-

1. Seppala, E., Rossomando, T., & Doty, J.R. (2013). Social Connection and Compassion: Important Predictors of Health and Well-Being. Social Research: An International Quarterly 80(2), 411-430. http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/sor.2013.0027

port (such as personal feedback and/or affirmation), and/or practical support (such as money or labor);
- The act of nurturing and being nurtured;
- An individual's perception of all of the above.

It matters most to the individual what they perceive as connection and support, and less how others would view it.

For example, in Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, he shows the individual within concentric circles that emphasize all the people and places in that person's life. The outer circles include the community values and norms, as well as the person's location in time and geography. Although Bronfenbrenner identified systems (for more on Bronfenbrenner's theory, see the Studying Families chapter), it can be argued that all systems consist of people. It is the people within these circles that will interact with and impact each of us.

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, also discussed in the Studying Families chapter, includes the emotional need for affection and loving connections to others once basic physiological and biological needs are met. In contrast, there are theories created by multiple indigenous groups, and best documented by the Blackfoot Nation in North America, that emphasize the self-actualization of not just the individual, but of the community as the most primary of needs.
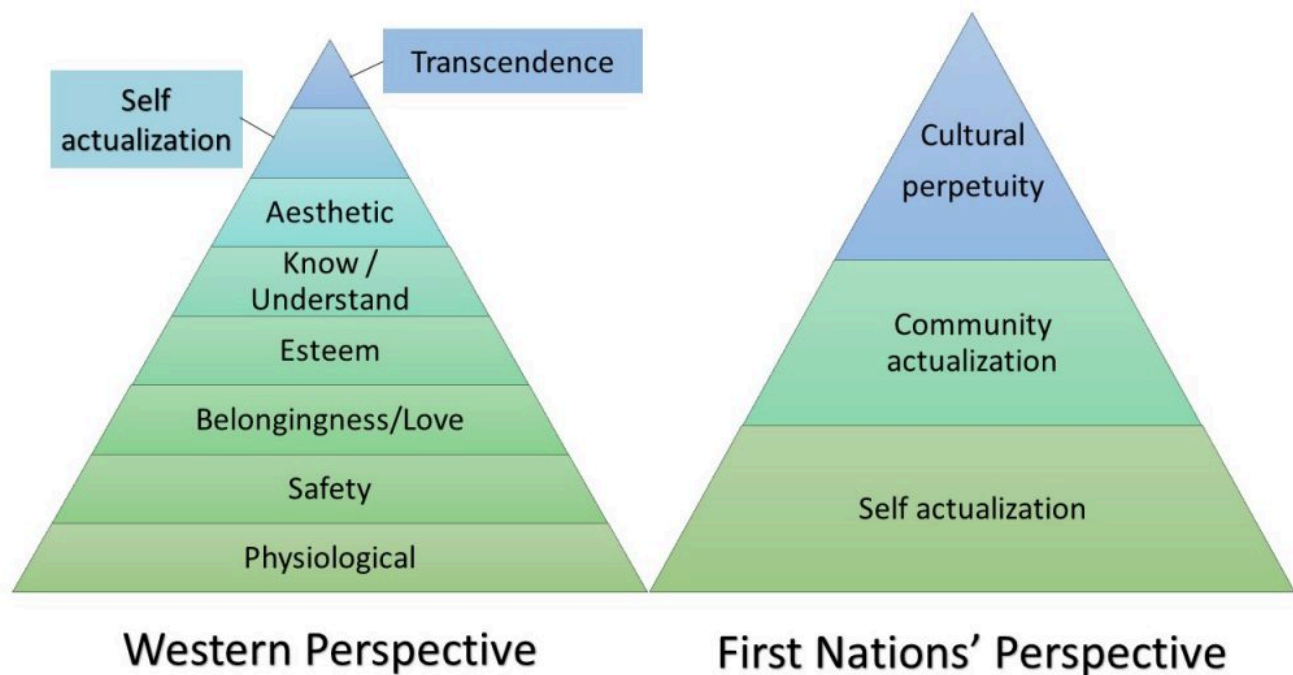

Fig. 5.1. Comparison between Maslow's Hierarchy and First Nation's Perspective.

In 1938 Maslow spent time with the Blackfoot Nation (link to archival photo) in Canada prior to releasing

his Hierarchy of Needs theory. It is believed that he based the teepee-like structure on the Blackfoot ideas but westernized the focus to be on the individual rather than on the community.[2]

If we look more closely at the representation of Blackfoot ideas, it can be seen that the well-being of the individual, the family, and the community are based on connectedness, the closeness that we experience with family and friends, and the prosocial extension that we provide to others in our communities and in the world. In addition, this model focuses on time; the top of the teepee is cultural perpetuity and it symbolizes a community's **culture** lasting forever.

Maslow's theory is of value, but the mislabeling of it as a theory of human development rather than as a "Western Cultural Theory of Human Development" mistakenly applies what Maslow observed to all human beings. Bringing theories from other cultures and geographical regions forward helps us to understand the variety of ways that human beings develop and to recognize the value of the diversity of family experience and beliefs.

Human connectedness and prosocial relationships are increasingly associated with better health outcomes and longevity. The World Health Organization now lists "Social Support Networks" as a determinant of health. Their webpage notes that a person's social environment, including culture and community beliefs, is a key determinant in overall health.[3] Household sizes are decreasing, and families are more often living apart. Employment and education options mean that some families make the choice to live distantly from their families of origin. But other families live apart, not by choice, but because of immigration laws that restrict family cohesion, or economic needs that force a choice between survival and family togetherness. This country has a history of immigration law that has often separated families, including spouses. For more on this topic, look back at the Social Construction of Families chapter. This practice contributes to the number of **transnational families**, many of whom are involuntarily so. In 2018, the United States developed a "zero tolerance" policy toward illegal immigration from the South and imprisoned families seeking legal status, separating children from parents. Although the policy was officially ended in June 2018, it has continued to at least October 2019, with about 1,100 additional children being separated from their parents since that time. If you would like to read more about this particular policy, there is a deep dive [on this Human Rights Watch webpage,](#) and there are links to detailed fact sheets and descriptions of visits to the facilities where parents, babies, toddlers, and children are being held.[4]

Public health officials are working to move forward the prioritization of social connections as a part of pub-

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2. Bray, B. (2019, March 10). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Blackfoot Nation beliefs. Retrieved December 28, 2019, from https://barbarabray.net/2019/03/10/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-and-blackfoot-nation-beliefs/

3. World Health Organization. (2020). The social determinants of health. Retrieved March 6, 2020, from https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1

4. Trump administration family separation policy. (2020). Wikipedia. Retrieved April 24, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trump_administration_family_separation_policy

lic health efforts in the United States. They propose examining current evidence and research, conducting additional research, and creating a consensus process amongst experts related to social connectedness.[5]

Families in the United States have the opportunity to know and be connected to people of many **ethnicities**, histories, experiences, and cultures. It is important to acknowledge one of the underlying motivations for connecting to others that we see as different from ourselves: a feeling of similarity and positivity.[6] Similarity initially connects us and draws us together, and it is possible to see similarity in people that we might first identify as a member of "the other" group. It seems that once we feel connected to others that a more familial sense of belongingness can develop, which then benefits individuals and the greater community. This research supports the belief systems of indigenous peoples, such as the Blackfoot Nation discussed earlier, and Eastern philosophies which see a reciprocal relationship between the good of the community, the planet, and the good of individuals.

In this chapter, we will explore **kinship** connections, including chosen families and partner or mate selection. In addition, we will look more closely at the factors that affect our partner choices and family formations, including psychological, societal, and institutional factors.

Kinship

Kinship refers to the broader social structure that ties people together (whether by blood, marriage, legal processes, or other agreements) and includes family relationships. Kinship acknowledges that individuals have a role in defining who is a member of their own family and how familial relationships extend across society.

At times we may use the terms "kinships" or "kinship groups" interchangeably with "families" to remind ourselves of this broader definition.

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5. Holt-Lunstad, J., Robles, T. F., & Sbarra, D. A. (2017). Advancing social connection as a public health priority in the United States. American Psychologist, 72(6), 517–530. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000103

6. Cialdini, R. B., Brown, S. L., Lewis, B. P., Luce, C., & Neuberg, S. L. (1997). Reinterpreting the empathy-altruism relationship: When one into one equals oneness. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73(3), 481–494

Fig. 5.2. Connection to other people is a foundational need in kinship groups.

Chosen Families

According to *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Marriage, Family, and Couples Counseling*, "chosen families are non-biological kinship bonds, whether legally recognized or not, deliberately chosen for the purpose of mutual support and love."[7] Chosen Family is an option for every individual, although it has historically been associated with the LGBTQ+ **culture**. People who identify as **lesbian**, **gay**, or other stigmatized identities have sometimes been disowned by families who do not accept these identities and therefore do not accept their children (or other family members). You may wonder if they are the only ones who have chosen families. The short answer is no, chosen families can be for anyone of any background who desires to connect through **kinship** bonds with others who are not blood- or legally-related individuals. The chosen family can meet or supplement needs not sufficiently met by the biological or otherwise traditionally structured family. In some cases, people are ostracized from their family of origin and are denied a sense of belonging. Others may be living away from

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7. Carlson, J., & Dermer, S. B. (Eds.). (2019). The SAGE encyclopedia of marriage, family, and couples counseling. SAGE Reference.

their biological families due to schooling, immigration, employment, legal restrictions, migration or other reasons. While anyone can have a chosen family, it is important to understand why we have them and how they are formed–and how they can be seen through the lenses of love, nurturance, and **equity**.

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Figure 5.1. "Maslow's hierarchy of needs compared to the First Nations' perspective." License: CC BY 4.0. Based on research from Rethinking Learning by Barbara Bray.

LOVE AND UNION FORMATION

Elizabeth B. Pearce

Love and Union Formation

> "Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage."
>
> –Lao Tzu, Philosopher

Relationships represent the excitement, passion, security, and connection we experience; they also represent the sadness, heartbreak, insecurities, violence, and loneliness we find at times.

Close relationships, such as those with a confidant or spouse, are highly associated with health and recovery from disease. In studies of various forms of cancer, including breast cancer, having one or more confidants decreased the likelihood and frequency of relapse.[1] As a social species, intimate relationships are a fundamental aspect of our life.
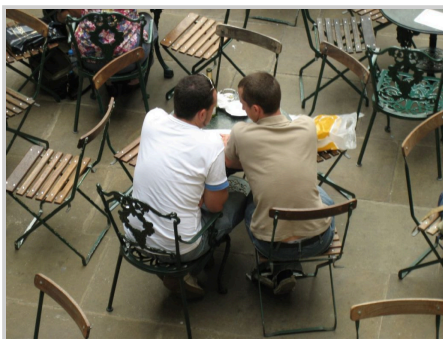

Fig. 5.3. Talking.

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1. Maunsell, E., Brisson, J., & Deschênes, L. (1995). Social support and survival among women with breast cancer. Cancer, 76(4), 631–637. doi: 10.1002/1097-0142(19950815)76:4<631::aid-cncr2820760414>3.0.co;2-9.

Fig. 5.5. Hugging.

Fig. 5.4. Walking.

Theories of Love

Love is a multidimensional concept and psychologists and sociologists have defined it in a variety of ways over the years. Here we look at two frameworks that describe varying kinds of love within intimate relationships.

Lee's Theory of Love

John Lee was a well-known Canadian psychologist who has a theory on love including six love types. Lee assumed that we all shared six core components of love and that our current loving relationship can be assessed and measured. Lee also claimed that there are qualities of love types—some more long-lasting and supportive of relationships and some pathological and defective which inhibit relationships. Lee's love types are widely used to help people understand their love styles. Lee claimed that six types of love comprised our loving experiences.

Eros

Eros is the love of sensuality: sex, taste, touch, sight, hearing, and smell. Eros love is often what we feel when turned on. Eros love is neither good nor bad; it is simply part of the overall love composite we experience with another person.

Storgé

Storgé is the love of your best friend in a normal casual context of life. Storgé is calm and peaceful, surprising to some who might have simply hung out together at one point but suddenly discovered that their friendship deepened and became more important than other friendships. "We started needing to be together, talking on the phone for hours, and missing each other when apart," are common descriptions of Storgé love.

Pragma

Pragma is the love of details and qualities in the other person. Pragma lovers are satisfied and attracted by the other because of their characteristics (e.g., athleticism, intelligence, wealth). Pragma lovers feel love at a rational level—thinking to a certain degree about the good deal.

Agapé

Agapé is the love that is selfless, other-focused, and seeks to serve others rather than receive from others. In Christian theology it's the love of God for mankind.

Ludis

Ludis is an immature love that is more of a tease than a legitimate loving relationship.

Ludic lovers trick their mates into believing that they are sincerely in love, while grooming 1, 2, or even 3 other lovers at the same time. Ludic lovers typically artificially stroke their sense of self-worth by playing a cruel game on their lovers who end up feeling used and betrayed.

Mania

Mania is an insecure love that is a mixture of conflict and artificially romantic Eros expressions. Manic lovers fear abandonment and are simultaneously terrified by the vulnerabilities they feel when intimate with their lover. Thus, their daily routines typically involve extreme highs and lows including arguing, making love, sweet-talking, and fighting with their lovers.

Fig. 5.6. LOVE.

Robert Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love

Robert Sternberg was the "Geometry of Love" psychologist who triangulated love using intimacy, passion, and commitment by measuring the intensity of each and how intense the triangulation was for the couple. To Sternberg it was important to consider how each partner's triangle matched the other partner's. He said that a couple with all three types of love balanced, and in sufficient magnitude, would have a rare yet rewarding type of love that encompassed much of what couples seek in a loving relationship. Sternberg's consummate love is a love type that had equal measures of passion, intimacy, and commitment that is satisfactory to both lovers.

In modern day applications of love, various components have been found as the ingredients of love: commitment, passion, friendship, trust, loyalty, affections, intimacy, acceptance, caring, concern, care, selflessness, infatuation, and romance. There is a love type identified that many people are aware of called unconditional love. Unconditional love is the sincere love that does not vary regardless of the actions of the person who is loved. You often hear it expressed in greater measure among parents of children whose misbehaviors embarrass

or disappoint them. The love types and patterns discussed below are taken from many sources, but fit neatly into the Lee, Maslow, Sternberg, or Chapman paradigms.

Romance

Romantic love is based on continual courtship and physical intimacy. Romantic lovers continue to date long after they marry or move in together. They often express the strong sexual attraction to each other that was there from the beginning. Romantic lovers are idealistic about their relationship and often feel that it was destined to be. They often define mundane activities such as grocery shopping or commuting to work as escapades of two lovers.

Infatuation

What happens when very young people feel love for the first time? What is puppy love or infatuation? Infatuation is a temporary state of love where the other person is overly idolized and seen in narrow and extremely positive terms. An infatuated person might think obsessively about the other, may feel a strong emotional response when they are together, may see their entire world as revolving around the other, may see them being together for the rest of their lives, may find one or two qualities of the other as being near perfect, or may be seen by others as having a crush on the other person. Regardless of the details infatuations rarely last very long. This love develops quickly much like a firework launches quickly into the night sky, puts on an emotional light show, then burns out quickly. Many define puppy love or infatuation as an immature love experienced by those who are younger and perhaps a bit credulous.

Commitment

Committed love is a love that is loyal and devoted. Two lovers may share committed love with or without: physical affection, romance, friendship, trust, loyalty, acceptance, caring, concern, care, selflessness, and or infatuation. Committed lovers have a long-term history with one another and typically combine care-giving, concern for one another's well-being, and spending much time thinking of the other. Committed lovers are there when needed by the other person.

Altruism

Altruism is a selfless type of love that serves others while not serving the one who is altruistic. True altruism is hard to find, according to some. Mothers who tend their sick child throughout the night; fathers who work 3-4 decades in a job they don't love to provide for their family; and even firefighters who sacrifice their safety to save the lives of others are all considered to be altruistic in their actions. Because so much of what we do in our relationships is considered in the larger overall equation of the fairness in a relationship, selfless acts can be seen

as acts which either build a reservoir of goodwill which will later be repaid or creating a debt of sorts in which the other person owes you some selfless service in return.

Passion

Sexual or passionate lovers are focused on the intensely sensual pleasures that are found with the senses of taste, smell, touch, feel, hear, and sight. Sexual lovers lust one another and feel closest when together and being physical. Sexual lovers can be together for five minutes, five days, five weeks, or five years, but sexual love, by itself is typically short-lived. There is closeness during sex and activities leading up to sex, but not much thereafter. Sexual love when combined with other love types can be very beneficial to the couple. Sexual love is almost always the love type experienced by those having an extra-marital affair.

Friendship

Friendship love includes intimacy and trust among close friends. Today, most long-burning or enduring love types form among people who were first close friends. Friendship lovers tend to enjoy each other's company, conversation, and daily interactions. They consider one another to be "go-to" friends when advice is needed or when problems need to be talked about together. Not all friendship lovers become a couple. Many are just close or best friends. Yet many who spend the rest of their lives together will start out their relationship as friends.

Realistic Love

Criteria or realistic love is the love feelings you have when your list of a potential mate's personal traits is met in the other person. For example, women often desire their male love companions to be taller. People often desire to find a partner with **assortative** traits (e.g., same religion, political leanings, hobbies, etc.).

Obsession

Obsessive love is an unhealthy love type where conflict and dramatic extremes in the relationship are both the goal and the theme of the couple's love. Obsessive lovers live for storms and find peace while they rage. They are often violent or overly aggressive at different levels. Sometimes couples bring complimentary traits to the relationship which light the other's fire of madness. In other words, she may be angry and violent with him, but not with some other males. He may feel simultaneously drawn to her and repulsed, but not with other females. Their personality-chemistry contributes to the insanity and lack of peace. These couples most likely need professional counseling and would probably be better off if they broke up. At the same time, why would they seek help or leave the person whose entanglements bring them such an occupation with drama and conflict that they are freed from their boredom and entertained at the same time?

Influences on Union Formations

The factors related to the selection of the people that we are emotionally and/or physically intimate with are complex and nuanced. The spirit of this textbook is to aspire to discuss this topic in a way that recognizes the diversity of family formations in the United States. Here we will do our best to identify some of the shared factors that affect human beings who choose a mate for a long-term relationship.

In order to organize our own thinking we name and label things to better understand the world around us. As our society changes and expands, descriptions and labels come more slowly, creating **cultural lag** and causing disconnection. For example, marriage was once defined between only a man and a woman. It is now recognized legally that this is a limiting description that is not representative of our nation's unions. In addition, couples have formed via common-law marriage and/or cohabitation throughout our country's history. We will use the terms "partnerships, relationships, and union formations" to include all couple relationships, including marriage. When specific research has focused only on married relationships rather than the broader spectrum, we will use the term "marriage." Within our text, we acknowledge and celebrate all marriages/unions/partnerships/relationships that may have mixed legal, religious, or community acceptance.

Here we will explore the ways that kinship groups and society influence our selection of a primary mate or mates. In addition, we will review the **Social Exchange Theory**.

Fig.5.7. Polyamory is an expression of love among multiple intimate partners.

Fig. 5.8. Romantic couple.

Family Experiences, Values, and Expectations

How we choose the people we connect with is influenced by our family experiences, values, and expectations. It is common for adults to communicate and mold these with their young children. For example, a parent makes a light-hearted comment about their three-year-old having a boyfriend or girlfriend. And in another comment about marriage, assumes that that child will marry, and that it will be to a person of the opposite gender in a binary system. Within the rules and structure of our family of origin, children navigate crucial social experiences that will affect mate selection and relationship dynamics. Young children are most influenced by the world that is both tangible and current. **Socialization theory** suggests that many of our ideas about gen-

der-based behaviors are formed for life during our early childhood years. Our family of origin impacts how we orient to particular family themes, identity images, and myths that further delineate and define who is an appropriate intimate partner for us.[2]

Assortative Mating

When you consider your current mate, or any intimate partners that you seek, are they more like you or quite different from you? The idea of **assortative mating**, simply put, is that human beings tend to choose intimate mates who are more like themselves than if mates were assigned randomly. (As it turns out, non-human animals do as well, but that's another story).

The ways in which we might choose partners assortatively are quite wide and varied, but can be divided very loosely into two categories: the physical and the social. Height and appearance both fit into the physical category; in this text we will focus more on the social categories which include culture, **ethnicity**, religion, education, and **socioeconomic status**.[3] In particular, education level has become an increasingly assortative factor within union formations in the United States. Between the 1940's and the 1980's education increased as an assortative factor until it leveled off for those with higher education degrees. It continues to increase for those without a high school degree, however.[4] While the patterns in assortative and disassortative relationships have been studied, it is challenging to determine the underlying reasons for this behavior.

Because income level is increasingly associated with higher education, this pattern interacts with the trends in socioeconomic status in this country and may contribute to the cycle of poverty. It is important to note that this change affects the current generations in ways that we don't yet completely understand. Millennials (or Gen Y) and Gen Z (or iGen) are coping with the increased importance of education to income and status at the same time that college costs and student debt have increased dramatically. How this affects union formation and other family patterns remains to be seen. Based on what is known about couples wanting to be financially stable before marrying, it is likely that the trend of marrying less and marrying later will continue.

The Evolving Economy and Social Movements

Economics and social change affect personal choices about unions, but they also influence the way the role of mate, partner, or spouse is defined. In the early days of this country, and indeed before the formation of the United States, both Native families and Euro-American settlers relied on their kinship and family groupings for

2. Anderson, S. A., & Sabatelli, R. M. (2011). Family interaction: A multigenerational developmental perspective (5th ed). Allyn & Bacon.

3. Assortative mating. (2020). Wikipedia. Retrieved March 6, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assortative_mating

4. Eika, L., Mogstad, M., & Zafar, B. (2017, March). Educational assortative mating and household income. Federal Reserve Bank of New York. https://www.newyorkfed.org/medialibrary/media/research/staff_reports/sr682.pdf

survival. Native families lived in tribes that shared spiritual beliefs and resources. Extended kin networks were, and still are, critical to the stability of the community.[5] Euro-American families were large, with an emphasis on mate selection that would ensure as much financial stability and likelihood of survival. Fertility was valued because children were seen as assets in the shared family work. Love as a rationale for marriage was disdained; feelings might change and a marriage built on instability could threaten survival.[6]

Fig. 5.9. Industrialization and other economic change influence union formations and patterns.

As the country industrialized, roles became more gender specific: men tended to work in the factories and women more likely managed the home and children. This is known as the development of separate spheres,

5. Deer, S., Clairmont, B., & Martell, C. A. (Eds.). (2008). Sharing our stories of survival: Native women surviving violence. AltaMira Press.

6. Coontz, S. (2000). Historical perspectives on family studies. Journal of Marriage and Family, 62(2), 283–297. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00283.x

an idea that has persisted, though weakened, into the 21st century.[7] A growing economy and more routinized family patterns contributed to stability and a decreased focus on survival. It was still important to consider economics in a partnership, but romance, sexual companionship, and love also became expectations of intimate and marriage relationships. Family size decreased dramatically as both child mortality decreased and the White middle class evolved. Children and women in minoritized groups continued to contribute to the family income. Labor laws protected most children who were White. Important social programs such as the Social Security Act of 1935 excluded domestic and agricultural workers, who were primarily immigrants and people of color. It is important to note that the idealized version of a sparkling house, home-cooked meals, and wife and mother who volunteered at her child's school was maintained via the assistance of other low-paid workers in the home, usually members of minoritized groups. In families that were not protected and privileged by government programs, survival was and is still paramount.
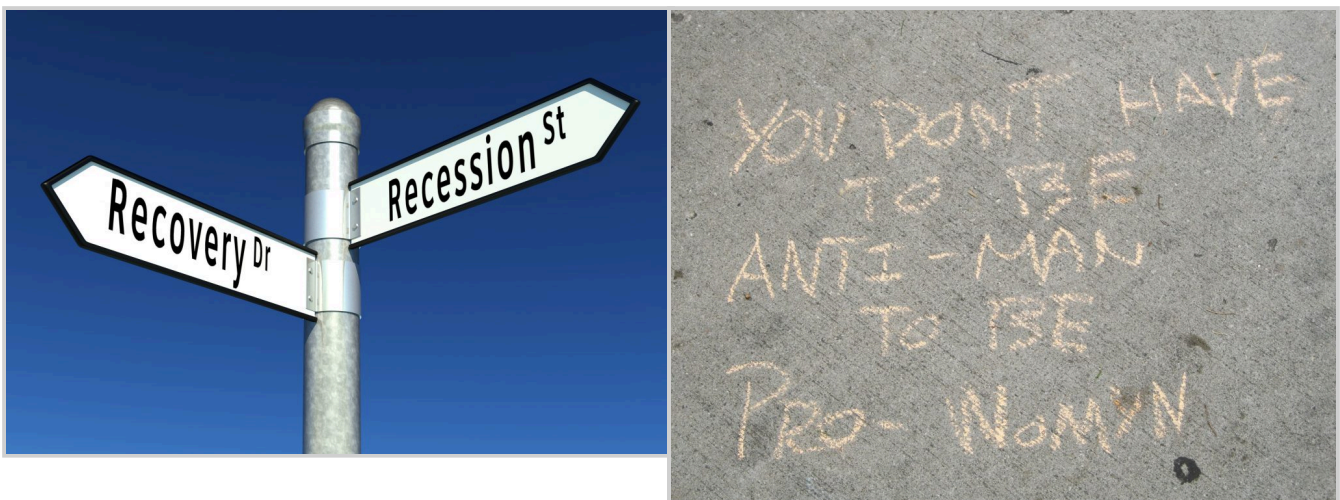

Fig. 5.10. Economic changes along with social movements and protests have a surprising effect on relationships, union formations, and break-ups.

The economy in the United States had steadily improved over centuries, but between the 1970s and the present, the country has experienced increased periods of stability and periods of recession. Social movements and technological changes in the same time frame have contributed to structural and social broadening of the role definition of partner. The Feminist Movements, Civil Rights Movements, and LGBTQ+ Movements have all influenced the ways in which individuals define themselves and therefore how we select mates. Interracial and same-sex couplings have existed long before they were openly discussed and eventually legalized. But it is clear that legal and social acceptance have increased the visibility and likely the number as well. The public changes in acceptance of relationships that are interracial and/or same-sex are important to note when it comes to the discussion of **assortative matings** above.

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7. Lewis, J. J. (2019, September 11). Separate spheres for men and women. ThoughtCo. https://www.thoughtco.com/separate-spheres-ideology-3529523

Technological advances such as the automobile, household appliances, and the computer all influence relationships. The car makes it more possible for couples to meet up and have privacy and household appliances increase time availability for other parts of life including partner, friend, and family relationships. Computers, the internet, and phones all facilitate communication and connection in a variety of ways. To read more about digital media and relationships, this article can be accessed via your LBCC account and the same article is available on Researchgate: *From Online Dating to Online Divorce: An Overview of Couple and Family Relationships Shaped through Digital Media* (2107).

Individualism and Fulfillment

The United States is an **individualistic** country and in the same time period that has seen increased social movements, we have also seen an increase in individualism that must affect our most intimate relationships. While we continue to see marriage as an economic partnership, as well as a source of romance, sex, and companionship, there is now an additional expectation on these relationships. The marriage relationship has absorbed the value of Americans finding self-fulfillment and personal happiness. This adds even more pressure to the mating partnership, and may contribute to the decrease in stability and length of marriages.[8]

The Social Exchange Theory

The **Social Exchange Theory**, as described in the Theories and Dispositions chapter, is applicable here. A person might be attracted to someone based on their first impressions, such as, "They're cute and have a sense of humor that matches mine." After observing them longer, someone might say, "But they also shirk their work in class." The Social Exchange Theory says that we evaluate relationships based on looking at the person's advantages and their costs to decide if we would want to enter a relationship with them. And what do we have to offer in exchange (our own advantages and costs)? This theory emphasizes the implicit agreements that couples exchange when they enter a relationship.

What is Traditional?

We have been socialized to think of the White middle-class **nuclear family** living the "American Dream" as the ideal representation of family within the United States. This **socially constructed** ideal has been based on heterosexual norms. This is something that should not be quickly disregarded as it has shaped and influenced people's thinking, even if they do not feel a part of these ideals.

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8. Finkel, E. J., Hui, C. M., Carswell, K. L., & Larson, G. M. (2014). The suffocation of marriage: Climbing mount maslow without enough oxygen. Psychological Inquiry, 25(1), 1–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2014.863723

Fig. 5.11. Today's couples use both traditional symbols and postmodern choices in their weddings.

What is Unique?

Social change and advances in technology make us more aware of diversity in families. But this diversity has always existed amongst Native families and the immigrant groups that have brought differing family structures and norms to the United States. American families are as diverse as the people who live here. It is important to understand that as a nation, we have many similarities in regards to our experiences, values, and expectations. We also have differences. We have described here some of the institutional forces and theoretical ideas about how individuals enter into amorous relationships, but also acknowledged that each relationship is unique, complex, and nuanced in ways that are indescribable in writing.

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A WORD ABOUT MARRIAGE

Elizabeth B. Pearce

We'd like to talk about marriage as a subset of all romantic and love relationships. And we'd like to ask you, the reader, to think about the role of marriage in society.

Fig. 5.12. Love is expressed in many ways; marriage is one expression.

Here are a set of statements about the role of marriage in the United States.

1. Marriage is a **social construction**; something that people have agreed is a unit of importance that has changed in meaning and function over time and location.
2. Marriage is a status symbol; even though people are marrying less it is still important.
3. Marriage is an institution that serves a critical function in society.
4. People marry for so many reasons and in differing ways that it is difficult to say what it means or why people marry.

Do you agree with some of these statements? Which ones and why? If you wrote your own statement about marriage and society and what would it say?

Fig. 5.13. People have different ideas about the role of marriage in the United States.

Each of these statements resonates with one of the perspectives that has been presented in this text. The first one represents the central idea of this text; that many familial operations and structures are **social constructions** that we have defined as a society and that have changed over time and could change some more. The other three statements each reflect one of the theories described in the Theories and Dispositions Chapter.

Table 5.1. is an excerpt from the table you first saw in Studying Families. Can you match statements 2, 3, and 4 to the theory it represents? Can you create a statement about marriage that represents the theory that you find most compelling?

Table 5.1. Foundational theories related to the study of families.

Theory	Major Principles
Conflict	Opposition, power, and conflict within the family and society are needed for society to develop and change
Ecological Systems	Individuals are part of a group of concentric systems that impact their development and growth.
Exchange (aka Social Exchange)	Individuals have different strengths, resources and weaknesses and enter into relationships via the evaluation of benefits and costs.
Feminism (aka Feminist)	Society is structured in a way that privileges men over women; the theory works to understand and to transform inequalities.
Functionalism	Social institutions function together in order to meet individual and group needs.
Hierarchy of Needs	Individuals meet one set of needs first in order to be motivated and able to achieve other needs.
Life Course	Significant social and historical events shape the trajectories of birth cohorts and the individuals in them.
Postmodern (aka Modernity)	Choice and individuality are emphasized in the postmodern era. Humans are able to act in the way they choose with society and within institutions.
Symbolic Interaction	This theory focuses on the changing nature of symbols and the ways we interact with one another based on those symbols. Humans see themselves through the eyes of others and this affects the roles they play.

The author of the text used previously in this class, Andrew Cherlin,[1] is an expert in marriage in the United States. He has written extensively for decades about how marriage functions in our society, and his viewpoint on the role it plays. He describes the three eras of marriage in the United States in this way:

- Marriage as an institution which was the most common among Euro-American settlers from the time of arrival in what became this country until the mid-20th century. In **institutionalized marriage** roles were clearly defined between the man and the woman in the pursuit of economic and familial stability.
- **Companionate marriage** emerged as the economy in the United States improved and one spouse (usually the man) worked away from the home and separate spheres emerged. While roles were still well defined, the importance companionship, love, affection and sex were all added to the expectation of eco-

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1. Cherlin, A. J. (2004). The deinstitutionalization of American marriage. Journal of Marriage and Family, 66(4), 848–861. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-2445.2004.00058.x

nomic stability.

- **Individualistic marriage** evolved with the continued economic growth and the increase in women's equality and the expansion of gender roles for men, women, and the **nonbinary** role.
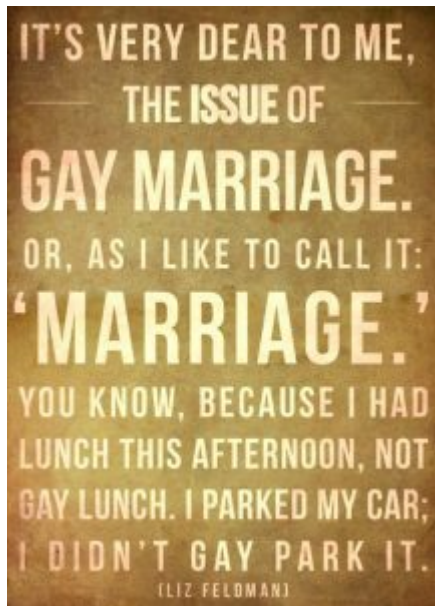

Fig. 5.14. Marriage amongst same sex couples is one example of the movement beyond institutionalized marriage.

Parenting and work within a marriage were more likely to be shared. Both partners are expected to be more expressive and communicative. The role of support and encouragement in helping your spouse to become their best selves is added to the growing list of expectations for marriage

To learn more about marriage and cohabitation currently in the United States, review this report from Pew Research Center, which reports on social and demographic trends. You can read about what the current statistics are as well as how individuals view and experience marriage and cohabitation.

Remember that marriage is one way of building a family or **kinship** group. As you continue to read this text, we encourage you to think critically about what marriage means to your own family and to society and what role it should play.

HOW DOES THE GOVERNMENT INFLUENCE UNIONS?

Elizabeth B. Pearce

As discussed in the Social Construction of Families chapter, these authors believe that each person is the master of their own social and family identities. Social institutions, however, also define "family" via rights, responsibilities, benefits, and taxes. While the federal government leaps to mind as the arbiter of family definitions for taxation and benefits purposes, state and local governments are the primary legislators of family law and mediators of familial relationships. This was an intentional decision made during the formation of the United States of America: that states and local municipalities be the governors of matters related to the family. It is only when there is enough disruption amongst the states that matters of the family rise to the national decision-making level; a good example is that when many highly differentiated laws related to same-sex marriage created **inequities** for families within states and disruption for families who moved from state to state. The **2015 Supreme Court decision**[1] that the right to marry is fundamental and must be available to all couples created consistency in marriage law.

In addition to government entities, institutions such as employers, schools, and insurance companies all have the authority to define family within certain parameters and to limit benefits such as sick leave, insurance coverage, and pension benefits. We know that these institutions impact the resources and benefits that families receive based on their structure and legal ties to one another. One question is, how do these varied definitions, policies and practices affect partner and family formation and dissolutions? Whom we connect with, love, parent, marry, and divorce affects our access to resources in ways that are inequitable. The complexity of factors in choosing a partner(s) or in forming a family is difficult to analyze and study. Here, we will talk about how institutional policies and practices may play a role in those decisions. Federal Student Aid and student loans, Medicaid and Medicare, Social Security and Income Taxes, Immigration law, Military Housing Policies and Health Care Insurance all rely on definitions of partner and family structures in order to assign taxes, rights, privileges, and benefits.

Federal Student Aid and Loans

Let's start with what might be most familiar to the reader: Federal Student Aid and loans. Whether or not you

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1. Obergefell v. Hodges, 576 U.S. 644 (2015)

have qualified for federal grants and loans, the system affects you and the authors expect that you know this quite well.

The Aid system makes some assumptions about families: first that parents will always pay for the education of their children, if the children are younger than 24 years. Conversely, they consider a child who is 24 years or older to be "independent" and that their parents will not be contributing to their education. Making this distinction leads to the government considering the parents' income and **accumulated wealth** when it comes to awarding financial aid, but only when students are younger than 24 years. Right away we can see some flaws and **inequities** in this regulation. Some parents will pay for education regardless of the child's age; others will not. Some families have accumulated wealth over generations of privilege; others may have gone without necessities to set aside savings for a health care crisis or retirement. (All wealth is not created equally). This rule does not recognize the nuances of the parent-child relationship or the privilege and oppression that contributes to the attainment of wealth and savings.

The Federal Aid system also differentiates between married couples and cohabiting or **common law** relationships. It presumes that a married couple combines their resources and that a cohabiting couple does not; so marrying a partner who has a higher income will likely lessen a financial aid award, while cohabiting with them will not.

Student debt is becoming an increasingly common issue for graduates and for people who do not complete a degree. College costs have increased dramatically in the past forty years, and student debt rates have followed. Does student debt influence the likelihood of marriage? Since many wish to be financially stable before marrying, it is possible. Anecdotal reports and news stories indicate that people are delaying marriage based on student debt loads. Studying this is complicated, but one demographic review found that women were more likely to put off marriage when they had student loans to repay.[2]

Social Security and Income Taxes

Income taxes and Social Security are heavily dependent on the institutional marriage of the mid-twentieth century, specifically the breadwinner-homemaker model. Couples were more homogeneous at that time; likely to marry early and stay married longer, with men typically earning more or much of the income. Both the federal income tax system and the Social Security systems evolved over the 20th century to correct what was considered to be the most common gender injustice: that many women made less money than their spouses.

These systems failed to take into account the racial injustice of the times; when Social Security was implemented in 1935 it excluded all domestic and farm workers who were primarily Black people and immigrants. Both groups were added in the 1950s.

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2. Bozick, R., & Estacion, A. (2014). Do student loans delay marriage? Debt repayment and family formation in young adulthood. Demographic Research, 30, 1865–1891. https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2014.30.69

Fig. 5.15. Although union formations are more diverse today, many government benefits and tax systems are based on a specific model of marriage.

Much has been discussed about the "marriage bonus" and the "marriage penalty," meaning that some couples benefit from marrying and some couples pay more taxes when they marry. The federal and state systems have changed over the years but face what is called the "trilemma" by tax experts: systems cannot simultaneously impose progressive marginal tax rates, assess equal taxes on married couples with equal earnings, and maintain marriage neutrality (meaning that married and unmarried couples pay the same amount of taxes). The net result from the trilemma is that married couples whose individual incomes are comparable pay more in taxes than a couple whose incomes are dramatically different.[3]

Both Social Security, with its survivor benefit emphasis, and Income Taxes focus on the marriage ideal from the last century: one spouse (usually male) who earns most of the family's income, and a lower-earning spouse (usually female). But this has not been the norm for over 50 years, and many argue that these systems need to

3. Alstott, A. L. (2013). Updating the welfare state: Marriage, the income tax, and social security in the age of individualism. Tax Law Review, 66, 720–22. https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss_papers/4867/

catch up. As explained by the **Postmodern Theory**, choice and individuality are emphasized in today's society. Diverse relationships are accepted more readily and marriages are less **assortative** in most ways. Marriage is declining; people wait longer to marry, are less likely to marry, and stay married for fewer years. Couples are more likely to have equal rather than disparate individual incomes. All of these factors point to the inadequacy of the current systems and raise the question about whether these policies influence people's choice to marry or otherwise partner up.

Medicaid and Medicare

Let's review general definitions of each of these programs, which are frequently confused. Medicare is federally funded health insurance for people who are aged 65 or older, some younger people with disabilities, and people with end-stage renal disease. Medicaid also provides health care coverage, in this case for eligible low-income adults, children, pregnant women, elderly adults and people with disabilities. To read about who and how to qualify, review these government websites:

- Medicare.gov
- Medicaid.gov

Like income taxes and social security, these government programs are built on a marriage model. This model presumes shared incomes and budgets for married households, and separate budgets for people who live together and are related in other ways, such as friendship, cohabitation, or blood ties.

Chronic disease and acute injuries can lead to staggering bills, even for families who have private or public health insurance, and this is a major contributor to bankruptcy, loss of home, remaining in poverty, and other financial crises. Eligibility for Medicare and Medicaid can not only save physical life, but economic and family stability. But eligibility is complicated.

To learn about a classic dilemma that a family with a health crisis faces, listen to this 19 minute interview with Carol Levine, a public health professional who faced a personal and health crisis when her husband was in a devastating car accident. As you listen, ask yourself, what would you do in a similar situation? And how does this relate to love, health equity, partnership and the institution of marriage?

Fig. 5.16. Marital status affects access to Medicare and Medicaid.

Military Policies

The branches of the military which include the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and the Coast Guard are

funded by the federal government. As the employer, the federal government has particular policies that apply to families. Two of the most well known apply to relationships, sexuality, and to marriage.

Fig. 5.17 Military recruitment poster, 2019.

For the majority of this nation's military history, members of the LGBTQ+ community have been disqualified from employment and service. This doesn't mean that they didn't serve, but they were stigmatized and hidden. The policy changed for the years between 1994 and 2011, when the infamous rule "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" (**Don't Ask, Don't Tell or DADT**) was in effect. During this time, **gay** men, **lesbian** women, and **bisexual** people were permitted to be employed as long as they did not exhibit or talk about conduct that could be identified in these ways; in addition others were prohibited from discriminating against or harassing them. The "Don't Pursue" aspect of the regulation limited the investigations by superiors of members presumed to belong to the LGBTQ+ community.

The law, which appeared to signify progress, still resulted in many members of the military experiencing stigma, stalled careers, discrimination, harassment, and violence. Multiple legal challenges were filed and it was eventually repealed. While the regulation has changed, stigma and harassment remain.

Necko L. Fanning, wrote this in the New York Times about his experience serving in the Army between 2011 and 2014.

"The second week after I arrived at Fort Drum, N.Y. — my first and only duty station with the Army — I found death threats slipped under the door of my barracks room. I noticed the colors first. Pink, blue and yellow; strangely happy colors at odds with the words written on them. Some were simple: slurs and epithets written in thick black Sharpie, pressed so hard into the paper that it bled through. "Faggot" and "queer fag," the notes read. A couple were more elaborate: detailed descriptions of what might happen to me if I was caught alone, and proclamations about the wrongness of gays in the military...

...The military is built on a foundation of earning trust and proving yourself to your peers and superiors as capable. Being new to a unit isn't unlike being a new employee at any other job. People are cautious, even wary, until you've shown you can handle the work. Perhaps it didn't help that I was an intelligence analyst in an infantryman's world — a support soldier in a combat soldier's unit. But none of that had been mentioned in the notes. My capability wasn't in question, nor was my duty position. It wasn't my effectiveness or value to the unit that elicited these noxious notes but something far removed from my control. Something that after September 2011 was supposed to be meaningless."

The military has also been known for policies that incentivize marriage. In general, single members of the armed forces live in barracks with a large group of colleagues. Married members, in contrast, live in military housing that more closely mimic suburban neighborhoods. In addition, there is a housing allowance that goes along with this privilege, resulting in married military members earning more salary and benefits. This incentive is provided by the military in order to support and stabilize families who are frequently moving and have

less predictable work schedules than other government positions. Could this contribute to marriages made for financial reasons? Anecdotally, yes, there are many stories that support this theory. When taken in combination with the prohibition of LGBTQ+ people's service, it could also serve as a double incentive: a way to avert suspicion of unsanctioned sexuality as well as a financial gain. But getting married is a complex decision and it is difficult to attribute just one aspect of life to being the primary factor in getting married.

Immigration Law

The history of immigration law is varied and complex and has favored different groups of families over time. In the most recent few years, law has changed rapidly. Here the authors will provide a few examples of the ways in which family status affects legal status and how recent and current laws affect families. For special attention to how family ties affect immigration, green card, and citizenship status, here are two good sources to read:

- The CATO Institute's definitions, summaries, and overview of the line for green cards in 2019: [Immigration Wait Times from Quotas Have Doubled: Green Card Backlogs Are Long, Growing, and Inequitable](#)
- This case study about two immigrants who are scientific researchers and their children who have legal status, but who face deportation due to the delays in processing their applications:

https://the1a.org/segments/2020-01-16-get-in-line-what-it-takes-to-legally-immigrate-to-the-united-states/

Unpredictability about laws and status may affect partners' decisions about union formation. Consider for yourself: if your partner's legal status changed, would it change your feelings about them? Would it change your plans to marry or to cohabitate? Families who have been waiting for years or decades, as described in the cases above, for their status to be resolved face ongoing uncertainty and stress related to work and family.

Consider the family that has some members who are citizens, and some who have green cards. Others may be waiting for resolution, perhaps approved for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), described in detail in the Justice chapter.

My Mom: Anonymous

My mom came to the United States accompanied by her aunt and uncle at the age of 14. She and my grandparents decided that it would be best for her to leave Mexico because

she was no longer attending school, as they could not afford it, and she was more than likely going to be stuck working at my grandpa's small farm for the rest of her life.

Once in the United States she was able to return to school and soon became the first in the family to graduate from high school but she found it impossible to further her education as there were no scholarships or loans available to undocumented folks at the time, so she went to work. She worked at a potato factory, met my dad, and had kids, including me. Right around this time DACA came around which was huge. She applied to DACA, was approved, and soon after was able to quit her factory job for a much better paying job.

Now that myself and my siblings are a little older she is considering going back to school and even buying a house but she finds herself constantly second guessing that decision as her future here in the United States is uncertain.

Official Definitions and Societal Stigma

Definitions and categories are used to assign rights, privileges, and benefits to individuals and families. Government policies grounded in these definitions are intertwined with status and stigma. For example, although same-sex and interracial marriages are now legal across the country, they still have levels of stigma associated with them, dependent on location. Cohabitation, even amongst White heterosexual couples, has less status than does marriage. Status and stigma can affect people socially and emotionally as well as economically.

Other areas that families see the effects of government definitions about partnerships and **kinship** groups include access to health care and health insurance, which is discussed in the Health Care chapter.

As we wrap up this section about the impact of institutions on personal partnerships and relationships, what other examples have you experienced or observed?

Relationship Health and Relationship Challenge

While this course and text are primarily focused on how society, institutions, and kinship groups interact, we will spend a small amount of space here discussing the health of intimate relationships and what factors predict the longevity of the relationship.

First, watch this podcast Relationships are Hard, but Why? by Therapist Stan Tatkin.
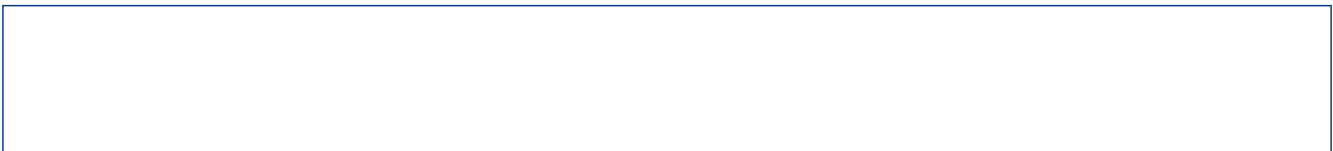
One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=855#oembed-2

He talks about how our brains contribute to falling in love, and then how our communication styles can contribute to feelings of being safe or being threatened within relationships.

The first half of 2020 has seen a confluence of world-wide events: the coronavirus and related pandemic; massive job loss, school closures and an economic downturn; and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement. These have affected families in many ways; let's look at two examples of how these trends and movements have uncovered challenges within intimate relationships.

An August 2020 letter to advice columnist Carolyn Hax, started out this way:

> My husband and I disagree about covid precautions and have reached the point where we're constantly fighting about it. I am more conservative and trying to have contact with only a few families I know are taking similar precautions. He's exposing himself and his 8-year-old son, my stepson, to a lot more people, including one family that I believe does not take covid seriously. One child in this family had cold symptoms, and they refused to have him tested and continued to expose him to other kids.
>
> At first my husband lied to me about seeing this family. After I found out, he said he won't lie anymore but is going to do what he wants...[4]

As the writer continues and Carolyn Hax responds, they both acknowledge that the extreme pandemic experience has exposed the husband's willingness to lie and to disregard her feelings and needs. Carolyn Hax emphasizes that this is not situation specific but actually uncovers a challenge in the relationship that must be addressed separately from the specific circumstance. She advises the letter writer that she has several options: couples counseling to see if the husband is willing to change this behavior, leaving the marriage, or to choose to stay knowing that she is not able to fully trust him.

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4. Hax, C. (2020, August 22). Covid-19 will one day subside, but lying is relationship cancer. Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/carolyn-hax-covid-19-will-one-day-subside-but-lying-is-relationship-cancer/2020/08/19/483e6dd2-d8e2-11ea-aff6-220dd3a14741_story.html

A very public example of a relationship challenge comes to us from the popular television franchise: *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*. Two former Bachelorette Leads, Rachel Lindsay Abasolo (Left, *The Bachelorette*, Season 13) and Becca Kufrin (Right, *The Bachelorette*, Season 14) host a podcast together, *Bachelor Happy Hour*. Lindsay met her husband on her season of the show and Kufrin met her fiancé. Both women make some portion of their livelihood as "influencers," as do each of their male partners.

As the Black Lives Matter movement gained more notice, and additional White allies emerged, Kufrin identified herself publicly as someone who wanted to become a more knowledgeable and active person in the racial justice movement. Simultaneously, her fiancé, Garrett Yrigoyen, posted Instagram images that presented his support of the competing Blue Lives Matter movement.

Fig. 5.18. Rachel Lindsay and Becca Kufrin have had lively dialogue about relationships and racism.

Kufrin discussed both her own personal development as well as the challenges she faced in her relationship on the podcast. If you'd like to listen to Rachel and Becca talk, listen to "Race, Diversity, and Bachelor Nation," the June 9, 2020 episode. As of this writing, it appears that the two year relationship between Kufrin and Yrigoyen has ended.

Families are under great pressure from the pandemic and economic stress. People of Color (**POC**) experience additional stress related to the public exposure of the disproportionate violence against Black people. In many cases, **kinship** groups are spending more time together, including those in intimate relationships. Values and belief system differences that may have been purposely hidden, or that were just implicitly undiscussable may be uncovered and affect relationships for the long-term.

If you'd like to know more about healthy relationships and which relationships are more likely to last, The Gottman Institute is a psychological research institute that studies couple interactions and nuances.

In *The Science of Love* podcast, host Julian Hueguet describes the Gottmans' work and predictors of success in the relationships that they have studied, primarily heterosexual married couples.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=855#oembed-3

While the Gottman Institute is known for its scientific research, as with many studies the majority of partic-

ipating couples are White and heterosexual. The Gottmans did participate with Dr. Robert Levenson in a twelve year study of 21 gay and 21 lesbian couples. In an effort to study underrepresented populations as well as partnerships outside of marriage, they have acknowledged this weakness and are reaching out to underrepresented people to tell their own relationship stories via a submission form on their website. You can participate here.

LOOKING AHEAD

Nyssa Cronin

We are a social species. Familial roles can be expanded beyond the perimeters of legal definitions and regarded in a much broader sense that can include friendships, sexual relationships, caregiving, social support, partnering and more. The people we interact with on a daily basis have been influenced by many factors, including where we live, our **socioeconomic status**, and the attachments that we formed in early childhood. This complicated network of influencing factors within our relationships contributes to societal disparities and **inequities**, a factor that we have strived to make more visible through this text.

Fig. 5.19. Gay Pride event

Fig. 5.20. Cuddling couple

Kinship, partnerships, and familial relationships contribute to health benefits as described in the first section of this chapter. These interactions and connections also contribute to the joy and empathy of shared experience. Families and kinship groups come together to laugh, to reminisce, to learn, to compete, to build, and to play. Facing adversity together can strengthen ties and build purpose.

Fig. 5.21. Family reunion

Fig. 5.23. Family Reunion

Fig. 5.22. Family Joy

We aspire to understand the ways that labels, definitions, and policies weaken kinship formations. Simultaneously, we celebrate and support the love and joy that families can produce, maintain, and grow.

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Figure 5.19. "Gay Pride" by Dave Pitt. License: CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Figure 5.20. "Interracial Couple" by mattradickal. License: CC BY-NC 2.0.

Figure 5.21. "BUSD Black Family Reunion 2013-14 008 by Mark Coplan's Berkeley Public School Photos. License: CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

Figure 5.22. "airtime – jumping for joy" by *vlad*. License: CC BY-NC 2.0

Figure 5.23. "Family Reunion October 2011 374" by calvinfleming. License: CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

6. VISUAL CULTURE: ART AND BEAUTY

VISUAL CULTURE PREVIEW QUESTIONS

As you read this chapter, consider the following questions:

1. What is the value of creativity, art, and beauty to American families?
2. How does art as representation affect our understanding of American history and current experiences?
3. What are the unique challenges and gifts that accompany protest and public art?
4. What is the role of the dominant culture in what is defined as "art"?
5. How do socially constructed ideas about beauty affect American families?
6. How does visual culture affect family outcomes?
7. What is the effect(s) of intersectionality on potential creators, artists, and art-lovers?

EXPERIENCE, EXPRESSION, AND EQUITY

Elizabeth B. Pearce; Christopher Byers; and Carla Medel

"If you have only two pennies, spend the first on bread and the other on hyacinths for your soul." **–Arab Proverb**

In this chapter, we will study the effects of visual culture on how families function in the United States.

You may wonder about the inclusion of art and beauty in a text that discusses the needs of families. But it can be argued that American individuals and families need art both as individuals and as a civilization. In addition, how society defines art and what is considered to be "beautiful" is relevant to equity and family outcomes.

Visual culture is described as the combination of visual events in which "information, meaning, or pleasure"[1] are communicated to the consumer.

The information that we take in through our eyes is both immense and psychologically powerful, affecting us in ways that take time and cognition to understand. It is

Figure 8.1. Outdoor mural of two boys in the natural world.

the intent of this chapter to highlight the ways in which visual culture affects families, both in the way we view ourselves, and in the ways we can access resources such as education, employment, and wealth.

Art is one way in which people share ideas, express themselves, and communicate. Consider the painting or print hanging in your doctor's office. What about the graffiti you passed on the way to the bus stop? Artistic

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1. Mirzoeff, N. (1998). What is visual culture? In N. Mirzoeff (Ed.), The visual culture reader (2nd ed., pp. 3-13). Routledge.

expression exemplifies the richness of a culture and energizes our thought processes. We are exposed to art, design, and creativity all day long, whether we realize it or not.

How and where an individual is able to access art is largely related to the values and beliefs a culture holds as a standard for determining what is desirable in a society, both by artistic and by beauty standards.

Figure 8.2. Art is one way in which people share ideas, express themselves, and communicate.

Individuals have specific, individualized beliefs, but can still share collective values. An example is the quote, "You can't be too rich or too thin." An underlying value that engenders this quote would be that being wealthy and being thin are good and desirable.

Values shape how a society views what is 'beautiful' and what kinds of art are valued. Beauty is a concept that is flexible and contains contextual significance depending on where you live and the time of where you are living. A family's access to art that speaks to their culture, interests, and imagination depends on what is available in the popular media and accessible in their geographic region. In Western Culture, art was historically housed in museums. In Indigenous cultures, art often takes the form of useful objects, such as baskets and clothing.

Today art and other imagery are easily accessible in digitized forms of technology, which are accessed through

Fig. 8.3. One representation of a family.

Fig. 8.4. Another representation of families.

Fig. 8.5. Another representation of a family.

the internet. These readily available ways that people can use and access visual culture can breed unrealistic expectations for many people.

For example, with the rise of "selfies," social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat can provide individuals outlets to shape and shift self images so that they can conform more easily to the dominant social standard of beauty.

It can be posited then that the dominant culture's expectation of physical beauty can and has been what has most heavily influenced Western Culture. The media and films portray a particular standard of beauty setting up a tension between conforming to this standard, individualistic preferences, and cultural practices that may conflict with the idealized concept of beauty.

Beauty perceptions affect family members of all ages; the bi-directional relationship of families and society

affects the parents and guardians of children, which in turn affects the kids, and the grandkids, and so on. The patterns are shown in the way we rear our children, which is the emotional connection within the **private family**. In this chapter we will discuss the ways in which art, beauty, and visual cultures affect families in the United States.

Art: An Historical Context

Expression is a fundamental need for human beings. Some human developmental theories, like the Hierarchy of Needs by Abraham Maslow, demonstrate that once humans have their basic needs such as food, water, shelter, love and nurturance, and housing, humans can begin to move into more creative avenues of self-expression and self-actualization.

Throughout history, humans have produced artworks. One would be surprised at how far back in time humans were attempting to engage in expression. Scientists have recently found shells dating back 500,000 years ago that were engraved with small geometric incisions on the surface.[2] While these shells can be debated to be considered art by historians, it's important to note that long before the concept of "art" was created, homo sapiens were trying to do it.

The question "What is art?" is one that continues to be debated. Some art historians believe that the oldest piece of art to date (March 2020) has been discovered and originated from the Late Stone Age and the Upper Paleolithic Period, from between 70,000 and 40,000 B.C.

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2. Callaway, E. (2014, December 3). Homo erectus made world's oldest doodle 500,000 years ago. Nature News. https://doi.org/10.1038/nature.2014.16477
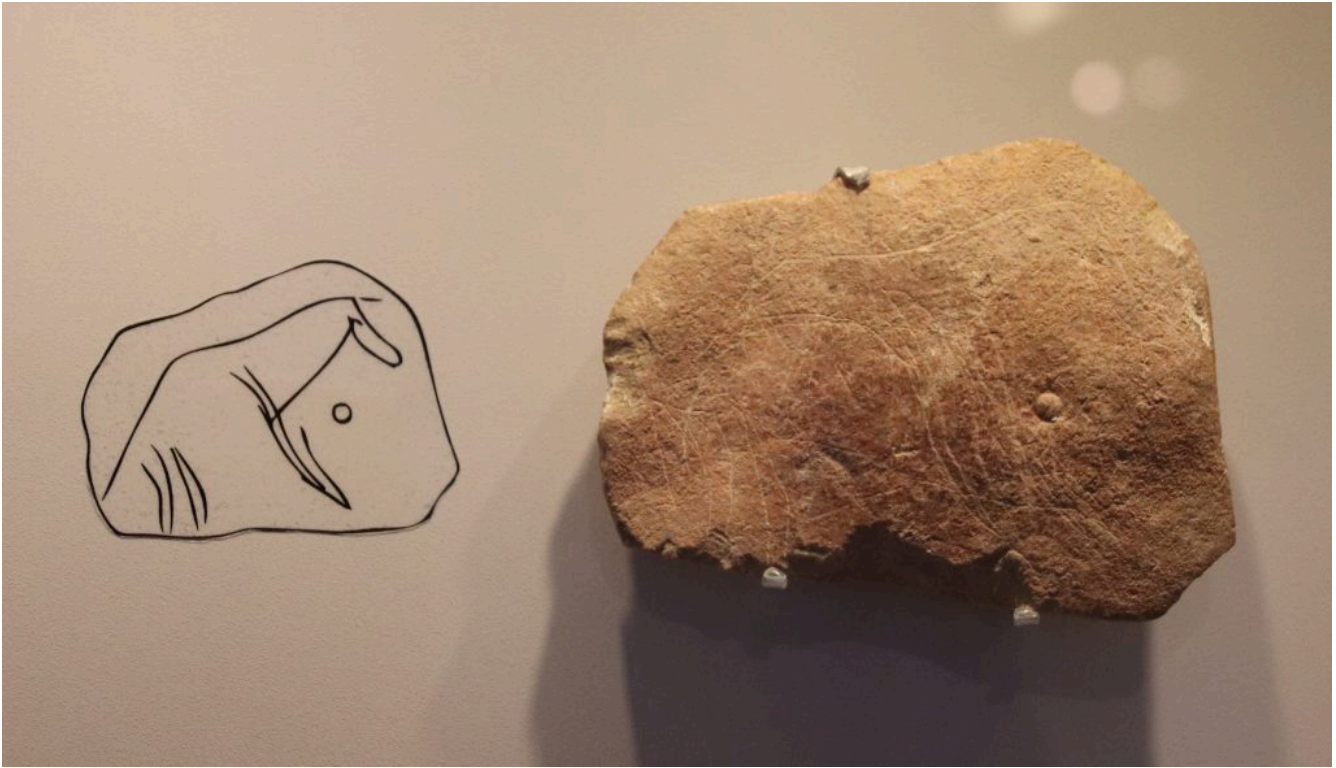
Fig. 8.6. Prehistoric art carving.

Throughout history, art has been passed down from our families, rituals, and ceremonies that are given to us by our communities and interactions with the dominant culture.[3] Do human beings have equitable access to create art now? Are there barriers that are present in the lives of individuals today that make it difficult or impossible to be able to engage in self expression? Systemic barriers that limit families in the United States from meeting basic needs also inhibit equitable access to self expression.

Using Art to Teach

Visual representations are strong; the popular saying "a picture is worth 1,000 words" speaks to this power. When it comes to teaching history in the high school setting, it has been found that art is a powerful **pedagogy** that moves students beyond the understanding that they gain from text alone. Students develop more interest in history, and the potential for examining multiple viewpoints via **artistic representation** can help students to develop critical thinking skills related to understanding history.

Younghee Suh summarizes much of the literature related to how students absorb history via artistic repre-

3. Breen, R. (2008, November 26). Towards a collective understanding of art as a commons. On the Commons. http://www.onthecommons.org/towards-collective-understanding-art-commons

sentations (visual, photographic, and musical among others) in the study, "Past Looking: Using Arts as Historical Evidence in Teaching History."[4] Suh focuses on pedagogy and notes that the way in which teachers expose students to art highly influences students' abilities to sort fiction from fact. Unfortunately, exposure to art from the past is not enough, and in fact can harm students' abilities to think critically. Teachers must also provide scaffolding to students that helps them to consider the perspective of the artist, the time in history, and the choice about which art is included in textbooks and other historical summaries. Without this guidance and contextualization, learners are left to see representations as "fact" instead of a particular viewpoint of the past.

History books (and the accompanying artistic representations) are typically presented from the viewpoint of the Euro-American settlers, also known as the conquerors, or victors. It is important that we understand the experience of all families, not just the families who belong to the culture that now dominates. In the process of establishing dominance, Indigenous families were harmed. For example, children were frequently separated from the rest of the family and sent to schools where they were harshly punished for exhibiting any native language and culture.[5] Violence against Native women was and is still perpetuated at higher rates than against other women, underreported and under prosecuted.[6]

Another example comes from Linn-Benton Community College in Albany, Oregon. A student made this observation in an art history class: "I took an art class and when my teacher was showing a painting of the Virgin Mary it seemed very normal to everyone in my class except for me, until she showed a picture of the Virgin Mary the way that Latinos are used to seeing her [the one on the left is a Mexican Virgin Mary and the one on the right is Italian]. If my teacher would have never said that it was Virgin Mary who was depicted in the art, I would've never known because that's not how I have seen Virgin Mary growing up."

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4. Suh, Y. (2013). Using arts as historical evidence in teaching history. Social Studies Research and Practice, 8(1), 135-159. http://www.socstrpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/MS_06372_Spring2013.pdf

5. Little, B. (2018, Nov. 1). How boarding schools tried to 'kill the Indian' through assimilation. History.com. https://www.history.com/news/how-boarding-schools-tried-to-kill-the-indian-through-assimilation

6. Amnesty International. (n.d.). Maze of injustice. Retrieved February 26, 2020, from https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/maze-of-injustice/

Figure 8.7. Artistic representations of the Virgin Mary.

The Virgin Mary is associated with qualities considered positively in Western Culture, which include purity and beauty. Look closely at these images to see how the expression of those characteristics are represented.

While these are topics that need greater exploration and explanation, the point of this section is to illustrate the ways in which art always has a viewpoint. While the dominant cultural viewpoint is the one most often seen, art can also be used to express other viewpoints and to initiate critical discussion about the past.

Protest

Visual art as protest is used both to promote and to express dissatisfaction with ideologies, policies, and social movements. Creative expression is used to express individual and group views, thoughts, and emotions. Because making art isn't always an expensive venture, many can participate in it. Displays of art are not limited

to inside the doors of a museum with admission fees. Anyone can access it while out and about in their daily lives; it is everywhere.

This brings us to the notion of power; when people express their thoughts and feelings on paper, on canvas, through media or other outlets, it can have a powerful effect on its audience. This kind of influence is more equitably available to people in minoritized groups and with fewer socioeconomic resources.

Fig. 8.8. Street art in Berlin, Germany of a portrait of George Floyd.

This current example (June, 2020) is a visual reminder of the number of Black men and women who have been killed by police when in helpless circumstances. The protest is not only about George Floyd's murder, but also about the overall dominant culture of the police force in the United States.

Privileged groups who have a higher distribution of resources, such as wealth, may present their views via protest but also have the means to use art to catch people's attention and promote their agendas via advertising, media, and political campaigns.

Art has a special place amongst activists and social movements because it can be used as a message to pay attention to a particular issue or injustice. It exists in part to freely express oneself and emotions, gain attention, plant a seed of thought, and inspire passion in some way, shape, or form to actively do something about the issue.

Fig. 8.9. Gay Pride parade marchers holding sign.

From pxfuel, royalty free: https://images.app.goo.gl/Ct29V6CxCbfH7DL5A

Both protest and artistic expression are fundamental rights protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. The melding of the two creates messages that can influence and empower individuals and families. Artistic expression that protests and argues for power of the underserved is expansive, subjective, and cannot fit into any one box.[7]

Public Art

Much of this chapter discusses art that has some kind of paywall: museums with entrance fees, or films and other media that require a ticket or subscription price. In this section, we will pay attention to art that may be considered "public" in one form or another. **Public art** is often defined as art that is "visually and physically

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7. Wikipedia. (n.d.). Protest art. Retrieved February 28, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protest_art

accessible to the public."[8] While it is also often described as representing universal concepts rather than those that are partisan, political, commercial or personal, these authors challenge that notion from two perspectives. The first is that the funding for and decision-making about public art is still often controlled by dominant or political groups. While efforts have been made to equalize art-making decisions, the tension between money and ideals is real. Secondly, it can be said that all art is personal. What is more personal than an artist's vision and creation? Some public art is commissioned by a public group, and this can come with restrictions or guidance for the artists. For now, we will stick with the definition that public art is art that is easily accessed by any member of society.

By its nature, public art may be viewed by anyone who can get themselves to the location it is presented. While it is more equitably accessible than art housed in museums, galleries, and media conglomerates, it is important to note that transportation, location, and resources (both time and money) prevent many families from accessing public art.

Creating and maintaining public art presents unique challenges to equity. Some citizens may hold art that is viewed and/or funded by the public to a different standard–one that emphasizes societal norms. Others may argue that some subjects are inappropriate to display publicly, in particular if children or young adults could view the display.

In Focus: Linn-Benton Community College and "Drawing the Line"

The tensions that can exist around **public art** displays was demonstrated during the 2017 exhibit "Drawing the Line" in the hallways of North Santiam Hall at Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC). Curated by LBCC Art faculty and students, the fiber art of Andrew Douglas Campbell lined the halls through which the LBCC community traversed to class, the lunch commons, and offices. Generally, Campbell explores themes of difference, connection, and identity in his work. He is an artist who merges the **mediums** of photography and fiber to focus on the response and interaction of social and narrative tensions. To read more from Campbell, view his website here.

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8. Wikipedia. (n.d.). Public art. Retrieved June 3, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_art
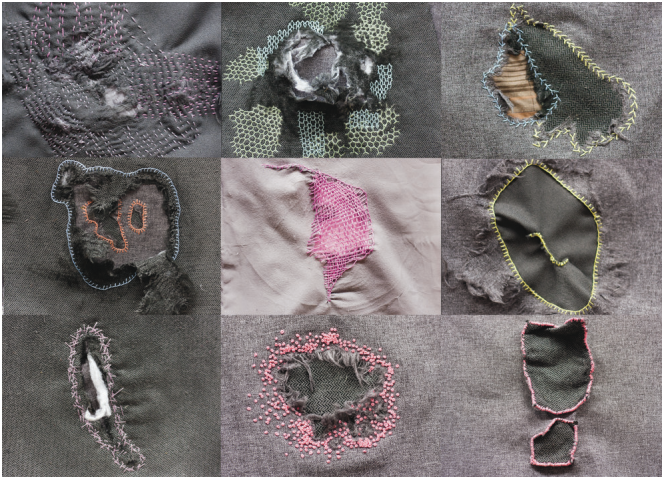
Fig. 8.10. Art quilt of abstract images made of fabric and thread. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Fig. 8.11. Abstract art piece with fabric and thread. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

The public art display at LBCC explored multiple subjects, but attention rapidly became focused on one series that examined the relationship of the porn industry and its marketing strategies to the queer community, titled "...And Then What Could Happen Bent to What Will Happen..." The series is pictured here, on Campbell's website.

Campbell describes his process: "[I was] thinking about the porn industry as a market that I personally had not yet held with the same skeptical eye as I do a lot of other economies, and so I started to look at that and part of it is true, they have tapped into a certain desire of mine. Part of it is I'm very skeptical of it," said Campbell. "It made sense to me that I should render their material sort of inconsequential; it's so fragile it can be blown away. It's important but unimportant at the same time, it's present and not present, it's solid and transparent. That's where I came up with these very loose airy images that are barely there but still very impactful."[9]

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9. Guy, S. (2017, October 25). Drawing the line: Artist Andrew Douglas Campbell speaks on behalf of his controversial work. The Linn-Benton Community College Commuter. http://lbcommuter.com/drawing-the-line-artist-andrew-douglas-campbell-speaks-on-behalf-of-his-controversial-artwork/

A local company that pays employees' tuition at LBCC, and a member of the Board of Directors of the College were most outspoken in their belief that this work should not be displayed in a setting that was publicly accessible. There were discussions about this display at every level of the college: in offices, classrooms, and the boardrooms. Ultimately, there were some alterations and adaptations to the exhibit, and it remained in place. To read more about the outcomes and to view additional photographs, read this article from the LB Commuter, the student written newspaper.

When considering the diverse structure and viewpoints of families in the United States, it is important to think about whether all families have access to viewing art that speaks to them, that represents them, that inspires them. Limiting art to the viewpoint of any dominant group limits the expression and growth of families. "Drawing the Line" is the catalyst for related questions: would similar artwork that expressed heteronormative experience have invited the same controversy? And why is sexuality considered an offensive or inappropriate subject for public artistic display, and yet scenes of conquerors, violence, and dominance are habitually displayed? Examples of and responses to the latter will be discussed in the next sections.

In Focus: Bellevue Community College Mural

In an example of the clash between the dominant culture and the portrayal of a discriminatory act at Bellevue Community College in Seattle, Washington, several administrative leaders lost their jobs when they bowed to pressure to alter the artist's statement on a public mural. This is a literal example of whitewashing history, as white-out was used to eliminate the names and racially-ethnically based actions of a prominent citizen in March 2020.
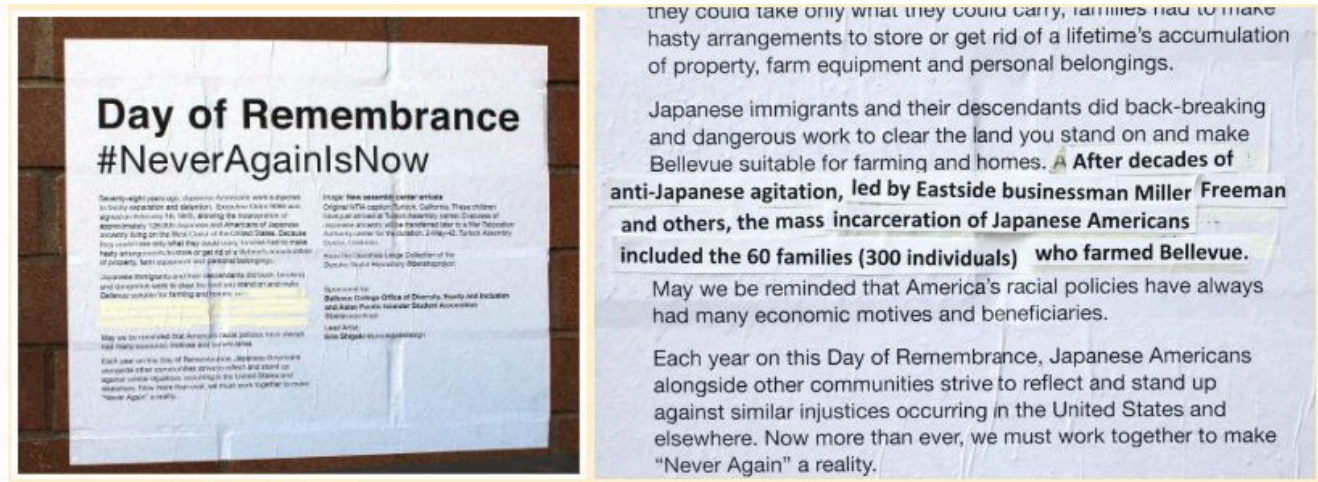
they could take only what they could carry, families had to make hasty arrangements to store or get rid of a lifetime's accumulation of property, farm equipment and personal belongings.

Japanese immigrants and their descendants did back-breaking and dangerous work to clear the land you stand on and make Bellevue suitable for farming and homes. **After decades of anti-Japanese agitation, led by Eastside businessman Miller** Freeman **and others, the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans included the 60 families (300 individuals)** who farmed Bellevue.

May we be reminded that America's racial policies have always had many economic motives and beneficiaries.

Each year on this Day of Remembrance, Japanese Americans alongside other communities strive to reflect and stand up against similar injustices occurring in the United States and elsewhere. Now more than ever, we must work together to make "Never Again" a reality.

Fig. 8.13. Images from *The Seattle Times.*

More will be written about this event in future editions of this text, but here are links to the articles describing what happened and what consequences occurred.

- [Bellevue College apologizes after administrator alters display on Japanese American incarceration](#)
- [Bellevue College president, vice president out after mural on Japanese American incarceration was altered](#)

Access to Art and Culture

Families have unequal access to viewing and experiencing visual culture. Geographical location, **socioeconomic status**, and social characteristics all influence access to art. In particular, families in rural areas, families with lower socioeconomic status, and families in minoritized groups have less opportunity to accrue wealth in the United States and have fewer opportunities. In addition, they are less likely to have influence in terms of what is considered worthy to appear in curated exhibits behind museum doors.

One way to measure equity in art is to examine the ability to view curated art. Access to art in childhood is especially important because activating the developing child and adolescent brain impacts eventual life outcomes. In 2011, a unique opportunity presented itself to study how child access to art affected adult outcomes. Alice Walton, a Walmart heir, founded the [Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art](#), a 50,000 square-foot space with an 800 million dollar endowment, in Bentonville, Arkansas. Most children in this area had little or no exposure to art or other cultural experiences.

Class visits were provided for free via the gift of a donor, demand was high, and not all groups who desired the visits could be accommodated. Scholars from the University of Arkansas set up a lottery system to determine which school groups would visit the museum. During the following months all students (those who vis-

ited and those who did not) were offered free tickets to visit the museum with their families, and were also administered a multi-dimensional survey. Nearly 11,000 students and 500 teachers participated in this study.[10]
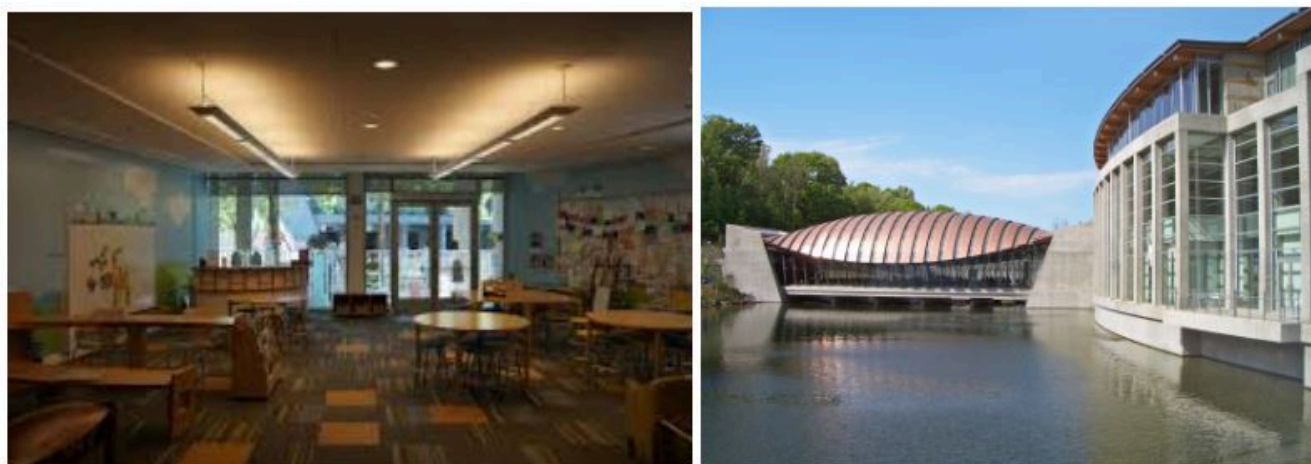

Fig. 8.14. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art; both images from Wikimedia Commons.

Students who visited the museum with their classmates demonstrated stronger critical thinking skills, displayed higher levels of social tolerance, exhibited greater historical empathy and developed a taste for art museums and cultural institutions.[11] In addition, students who had visited the Museum with their class groups were eighteen percent more likely to use the coupon to visit the Museum with their families! Importantly, this effect was stronger for minority students, rural students, and low-income students than it was for White, middle-class, suburban students. While there are additional questions to be answered, this study demonstrates the importance of exposure and access to art and cultural experiences for all children and indicates that arts education inclusion in school curricula will help students develop critical thinking, along with understanding of diverse ideas and experiences, as well as empathy with those who are different from themselves.

Licenses and Attributions

10. Green, J.P., Kisida, B., & Bowen, D.H. (2013, September 16). The educational value of field trips. Education Next, 14(1). https://www.educationnext.org/the-educational-value-of-field-trips/

11. Kisida, B., Green, J.P., & Bowen, D.H. (2013, November 23). Art makes you smart. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/24/opinion/sunday/art-makes-you-smart.html

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Figure 8.1. [Photo of street art in Medellin, Colombia](). [CC0]().

Figure 8.2. "Water lily pond" by Claude Monet. Public domain.

Figure 8.3. "['Our family' watercolor portrait]()" by [humboldthead.]() Licensed: [CC BY 2.0]().

Figure 8.4. ["Family Festival: Once Upon a Time"]() by [The Walters Art Museum.]() License: [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0]()

Figure 8.5. ["Mother & Child"]() by [gordon2208.]() License: [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0]().

Figure 8.6. "Stone Age Animal Carving, Hayonim Cave, 28000 BP" by Gary Todd (photographer). [CC0]().

Figure 8.7. Juxtaposition of two images of the Virgin Mary: "[Virgen de guadalupe]()" and "[Madonna del Granduca]()" by Raphael. Public domain.

Figure 8.8. "Mural portrait of George Floyd by Eme Street Art in Mauerpark (Berlin, Germany)" by [Singlespeedfahrer]() (photographer). [CC0]().

Figure 8.9. [Photo]() by Pxfuel. License: [Pxfuel license]().

Figure 8.14. "[The Experience Art Studio at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas (United States)]()" by [Michael Barera](). License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](). "[Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas USA, architect Moshe Safdie, photo of one of three bridge pavilions]()" by [Charvex](). [CC0]().

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Figure 8.10. ["Rend and Mend]()" (c) [Andrew Douglas Campbell](). All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Figure 8.11. "[Thresh(strand)hold]()" (c) [Andrew Douglas Campbell](). All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Figure 8.12. "[...and then what will happen bent to what could happen]()" (c) [Andrew Douglas Campbell](). All rights reserved. Used with permission.

ART AND DOMINANT CULTURE

Elizabeth B. Pearce; Jessica N. Hampton; Hannah Morelos; and Katie Niemeyer

Art has been a part of history and daily lives for centuries, but what is considered "artistic" and valuable as defined by financial worth has been shaped by the same preferences and oppression that shape other aspects of our daily life. Many individuals face discrimination and underrepresentation based on their gender, race, sexuality, or other social characteristics. Even in the 20th century, we see the perceived differences between men and women's art in the way that artists are often described in the media. Why is a woman referred to as a "female artist"? A person of color as a "Black photographer"? Or a "Latinx sculptor"? In contrast, when created by a White man, race and gender are not usually mentioned.

The topic of whiteness as the dominant culture can be an uncomfortable topic for many, while seeming quite obvious to others. Dominant culture expresses itself in the United States as the "typical" or "regular" way of being. Sometimes White people express that they don't actually have a culture. This is part of the whiteness experience. When we describe this experience, it includes the power given to a particular group of people, and oppression to another group of people, otherwise known as White privilege. "White-washed art" can be described as giving privilege to a group of people based on their social characteristics and perpetuating a system that favors Euro-Americans (mostly White people).

When we talk about whiteness in art, it allows us the opportunity to peel back a layer of denial. Western expansion and dominance of Indigenous communities is one reason that there is a preference for White and westernized art and institutions. It is interesting to note that implicit bias, "the attitudes and stereotypes that affect our actions that we aren't aware of, can affect how and what we feel and think about the word art when we hear it."[1]

What do you think of when you think of "art"? An example of implicit bias would be when an individual from Western culture is asked about art, it is a relatively common bias to think about art in the context of dominant social characteristics. For example, social characteristics such as being "male" or being "White" are dominant in Western culture, especially in the United States. The *David* statue, created by one of the most famous and revered artists of the 14th century, Michelangelo Buonarroti of Florence, Italy, is commonly recognized and is one of the most famous sculptures in the world. The *David* sculpture is created by individuals possessing dominant social characteristics have made the arts, by association, a practice that is dominantly White and male. We learn early on as children in the U.S through our experience with **social institutions**.

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1. The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity (2015). Understanding implicit bias. Retrieved February 18, 2020, from http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/

Social institutions are complex systems that both influence their members and which can be influenced by individuals as well. For example, schools and museums are both examples of institutions in which children and families participate. They are exposed to art that is, for the most part, White and male-dominated through the selection process that has occurred throughout history. Increasing awareness of these biases has led to exhibitions and mentorship of individuals in underrepresented groups related to gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, ability and other social characteristics. Individuals and allies contribute to institutions by advocating for change. Examples within this chapter show both the built-in biases and the ways in which artistic expression helps us move beyond **socially constructed** bias, preference, and ideas; this expands our definitions of art and beauty.

Art, Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

Ken Monkman is a North American artist well known for his paintings that reexamine the past. He frames his work by noting that these past experiences significantly influence the present. Monkman describes his use of visual art to examine the experience of Indigenous people in North America, both during the period of colonization and the effects on the present day families. His paintings depict the violence that European settlers acted upon Indigenous people, and the cultural beliefs that have been silenced. He creates works of art that tell the story from the perspective of those who were harmed and emphasizes the heroism of Indigenous families, the nonbinary aspect of gender they expressed, and other cultural aspects.

In the video below, Monkman describes his use of visual art to examine the experience of Indigenous people in North America, both during the period of colonization and the continued effects on the present day families.

📰 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=149#oembed-1*

Kehinde Wiley is another artist known for using his work to expose hypocrisies in the framing of European history, such as the Age of Reason, or Enlightenment period, which is known for its progress in liberty, universalism, separation of church and state, and freedom. This same time period is known for the colonialism of many Indigenous people and people of color, including Napoleon Bonaparte himself who reinstituted slavery in the French colonies a year after the famous Jacques-Louis David painting *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps* was painted.

Fig. 8.15. Two paintings of *Napoleon Leading the Army Over the Alps.* Artist Kehinde Wiley (left) and Jacques-Louis David (right).

Wiley's re-interpretation of this painting, *Napoleon Leading the Army Over the Alps*, pictures a young Black man in the same pose, but in a way that questions the heroism and softens the military masculinity portrayed in the original. He confronts and critiques the portrayal of Black people in art.

The paintings hang side-by-side in the Brooklyn Museum, through May, 2020.

Art, Sex, and Gender

Art, reflective of society, has been work dominated by men. Men's work was more likely to be sponsored, commissioned, featured, publicized and preserved. Women artists have often been seen as secondary. The well-known artist Frida Kahlo was a Mexican painter who was inspired by artifacts of her culture and used a folk art style. She explored themes of identity, postcolonialism, class, race, and gender. A prime example of marginalization taking place in Frida Kahlo's lifetime happened when she lived in Detroit, married to a male artist named Diego Rivera. In Detroit, Frida Kahlo never showed her portraits in any exhibitions; however, she did get the opportunity to be interviewed. Although she was praised for her work through this opportunity, when the article came out it was titled "Wife of the Master Mural Painter Gleefully Dabbles in Works of Art."
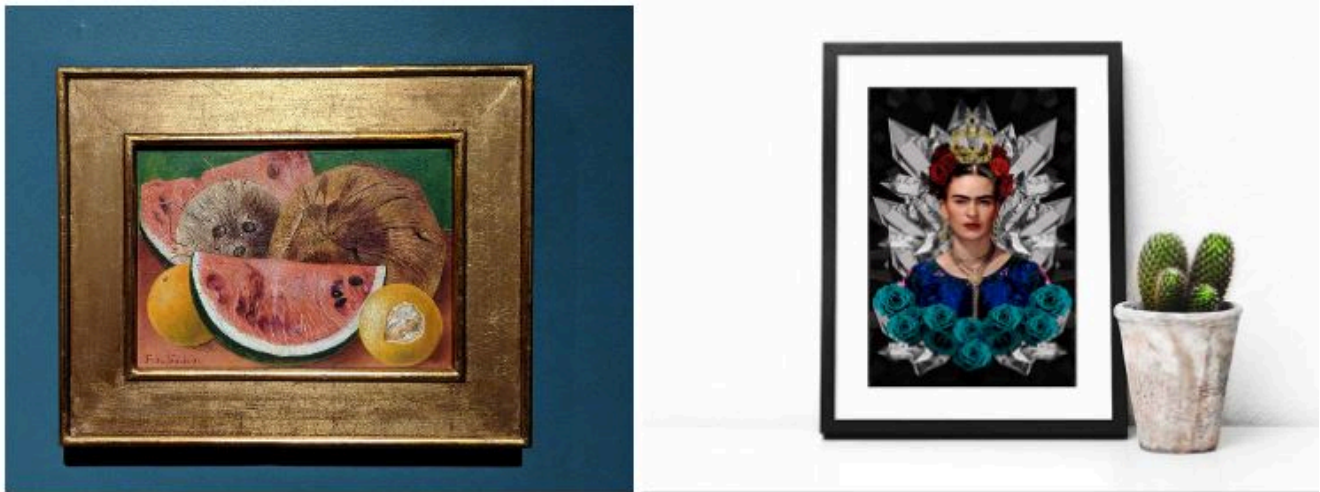
Fig. 8.16. *Los cocos* by Frida Kahlo (left) and *Poster – Frida Kahlo* by Vagner Borges (right).

Through this lens, Frida Kahlo was publicly known to her peers and the world as "Diego Rivera's wife" and not as an artist. But Kahlo's work surpassed Rivera's in terms of artistic and social recognition. Kahlo died in 1954 at age 47, and her work became best known between the 1970s and 1990s. She is regarded as an icon of the **Chicano** civil rights movement, feminism, and the LGBTQ+ community.

Many paintings considered classic representations of ancient myths and events were painted by men. Carmen McCormack, a 2019 graduate of Oregon State University's Bachelor of Fine Arts program, has recreated some works from a female, feminist, and lesbian perspective. For example, she has reinterpreted Francois Boucher's 1741 painting, *Leda and the Swan,* which tells the story of the seduction or rape of Leda by Zeus in the form of a swan.

Fig. 8.17. Painting *Leda and the Swan*, Francois Boucher (left), Carmen McCormack (right).

"I wanted to reinterpret that as a feminist, as a woman and as a contemporary painter," McCormack said in

an interview with the *Corvallis Gazette-Times*. "In the original (the women) were smiling, which is interesting for a male painter because it reinterprets the story of sexual violence — it's not a happy thing." McCormack's version shows a dark, stormy background, and the women's facial expressions and body language suggest more fear and resistance than does the original.

Centuries ago, genders were oppressed and underrepresented in their creative aspects. We can acknowledge that although there has been an improvement, there are still groups, genders, and individuals who face under-representation, discrimination, and oppression. New York is known as the hub of art and yet it is estimated that 76% to 96% of the art showcased in art galleries is by male artists. We can see that to this day there is a gender gap in the art industry that continues in the 21st century.

Film

Film, another visual **medium**, is a part of many family's daily lives. Mainstream movies are accessible to Americans via many formats. Although women and people of color are represented in audiences in greater percentages than their population base, they are vastly underrepresented in lead roles both on and off screen. In 2018, only one female, Greta Gerwig, and one person of color, Jordan Peele, were nominated for Best Director in the Oscars competition. And in an analysis of speaking roles for women in the 900 most popular films from 2007 to 2016, fewer than one third of the roles went to women. Representation is worse for nonbinary people and when intersectionality of color and gender are examined.[2]

When a child goes into the movies, they are exposed to a variety of people. What most of these actors and actresses have in common is that they are White. As of 2017, only 20% of all lead actors and actresses on screen were people of color.[3] To the children watching these movies, this is the majority demographic being represented. When they do see a prominent character that looks like them, it shows them that they can fit into societal roles.

When movies such as *Home*, *Black Panther*, or *Crazy Rich Asians* came out, people of color flocked to see them. These movies lack obvious stereotypes, and people of color play leading roles. Movies with successful people of color are important because, without them, they are pushed to the back of the mind and this reinforces the dominant culture of White as the norm. When people of color are featured, parents have the chance to bring their children to see a main character with the same skin color or hair type as their own.

Tip, in *Home*, is a young African American girl with natural hair that helps save the day and gets her mom back home. Having a strong young child of color is important. In one study, researchers found that when

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2. Tan, S. (2018, February 28). This year's Oscar nominees are more diverse, but has Hollywood really changed? Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/entertainment/diversity-in-films/

3. Statista. (2020, February 17). • Ethnicity of lead actors in movies in the U.S. 2019. Retrieved February 28, 2020, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/696850/lead-actors-films-ethnicity/

preschoolers were asked to draw a main character from a fairy tale, most of the students drew a figure with blonde hair and light skin. This implies that these children, even the children of color, saw that White skin meant a happy ending.[4] In their minds, only blonde people with white skin were allowed to save the day and be stars.

Figure 8.18. Typecasting in The Help

Figure 8.19 Typecasting in The Greenbook.

Representation in movies also pertains to how the characters are portrayed. Do they follow common, sometimes derogatory, stereotypes? Are they seen as the villain? Are they the first to be killed? While a film may have a more diverse cast, when people of color are being represented through stereotypes or type casting (when a person is repeatedly cast for the same type of character, usually based on looks), it sheds a negative light on those people.

In March, 2020, the *Washington Post* magazine featured a project in which actors of minoritized groups were asked what kind of roles they typically were cast in, and what kind of roles they would like to play.[5] This powerful series emphasizes how easily stereotypes can be embedded in our minds. You can see Haruka Sakaguchi & Griselda San Martin's full photography series at the Typecast Project.

Typecasting people contributes to the reinforcement of stereotypes of people of color and other minoritized groups; it emphasizes the centrality of White people both as the norm and as the keepers of interesting plot lines and life stories.

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4. Hurley, D. L. (2005). Seeing white: Children of color and the Disney fairy tale princess. The Journal of Negro Education, 74(3), 221–232.

5. Sakaguchi, H. & San Martin, G. (2020, March 4). How Hollywood sees me … and how I want to be seen. Washington Post Magazine. https://www.washingtonpost.com/magazine/2020/03/04/actors-color-often-get-typecast-two-photographers-asked-them-depict-their-dream-roles-instead/

Representation of People of Color

How are people of color represented in visual **mediums**? And which people of color are prominent? Notice that when leading roles are cast in visual mediums, they are often people of lighter-colored skin. This is called "**colorism**" and is distinct from racism in that it shows a preference for the visual look, as opposed to implying that there is inferiority based on race.[6] A recent example is the prominence of Jennifer Lopez (J-Lo) and Shakira in the 2020 Super-Bowl half-time show. While both women are Latina, many people of color do not feel represented by lighter-skinned people who have dyed their hair blonde.

Understanding "isms"

Another way that film can help us to understand the world is to view how an "ism" affects a group that we are not a part of, such as understanding how women experience sexism, or Black people experience racism. But how do we identify which movies can help us understand what the actual experience is for the individual, and what "isms" feel like? One of the best ways is to listen to a member of the group that experiences it. Podcasts such as the 1A Movie Club's program "'The Help' Doesn't Help" in June, 2020, can help to explain how White-centered stories about racism fail to expose the actual experience of discrimination and to teach realistically and deeply. "White-centered" refers to stories which are told primarily from the White person's point-of-view, with a lead or leads who are White, and sometimes feature what is called the "White saviour" meaning that it takes someone who is White to solve the problem, save the day, or otherwise fix some aspect of racism. Instead, the podcast hosts and guests recommend the following movies, amongst others:

- *13th* (2016)
- *Blackkklansman* (2018)
- *Get Out* (2017)
- *I Am Not Your Negro* (2016)
- *Just Mercy* (2019)
- *When They See Us* (2019)

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6. Farrow, K. (2019, January 10). How the camera sees color. National Museum of African American History & Culture. Retrieved March 9, 2020, from https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/collection/how-camera-sees-color

Fig. 8.20. The *BlacKkKlansman* table with actors Adam Driver, John David Washington and director Spike in a relaxed moment during a commercial break in the live broadcast of the 24th annual Critics' Choice Awards in January, 2019

To listen to the 1A Movie Club's lively discussion and debate about movies, Rotten Tomatoes and other movie rating systems, racism, health care, the racial empathy gap, history and current events, listen here.

https://the1a.org/segments/the-1a-movie-club-why-the-help-doesnt-help/

Employment

While our discussion has focused on representation and on the effects that lack of representation has on families, it is important to mention employment. An obvious outcome of fewer people of color or other minoritized groups in media means people in these groups have fewer employment opportunities. A person who has multiple intersectional characteristics has even fewer options. In this one-minute video, actor Rosie Perez talks about how the intersectionality of being a woman of color, weight, hotness, ethnicity, and age affects her employment. Because movies influence so many consumers, the effects on Perez also indirectly affect the individuals and families who view media.

Perez takes a blunt approach in her description of social characteristics, especially related to age and to body size. She is conveying the message that while what is deemed "less desirable" by society may be acceptable for white males, it is less acceptable to have these traits as a woman of color. Her language may be triggering to some

readers. The second video, from the group and YouTube channel "Film Courage" contains similar descriptions from actors and actresses of color.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=149#oembed-3

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=149#oembed-4

These descriptions by Rosie Perez and other actors are supported by research. Family films made between 2006 and 2009 in the United States and Canada were studied specifically for gender bias, but also included appearance and age in the assessment. Beautiful women, with unrealistic body types, exposed skin, and waists so tiny that they would leave "little room for a womb or any other internal organs" are featured in these films with 14-24% possessing these features. In addition, it is most common for women to be under the age of 39 years (about 74%) with a higher percentage of men over the age of 40 years.[7]

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Figure 8.16. "Poster – Frida Kahlo" by Vagner Borges. License: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

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7. Smith, S.L. & Choueiti, M. (n.d.). Gender disparity on Screen and behind the camera in family films. Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media. Retrieved June 2, 2020, from https://seejane.org/wp-content/uploads/full-study-gender-disparity-in-family-films-v2.pdf

Figure 8.17. "Leda and the Swan" by François Boucher. Public domain.

Figure 8.20. "Adam Driver, John David Washington, and Director Spike Lee at the 2019 Critics' Choice Awards" by Chris Miksanek. License: CC BY-SA 4.0.

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Figure 8.15. "Napoleon Leading the Army over the Alps" (c) Kehinde Wiley. Image used under fair use.

Figure 8.16. "Coconuts" by Frida Kahlo (c) Banco de México Diego Rivera & Frida Kahlo Museums Trust. Image used under fair use.

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Figure 8.19. Poster from the Green Book (c) Universal Studios. Image used under fair use.

"Shame and Prejudice: Artist Kent Monkman's story of resilience" (c) University of Toronto. License Terms: Standard Youtube license.

"Rosie Perez on Roles for Women of Color" (c) PBS. License Terms: Standard YouTube license.

WHAT IS BEAUTY?

Elizabeth B. Pearce

Although the famous saying "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" originated in the 3rd centruy BC and was revived in its current form by Margaret Wolfe Hungerford in 1878, it can also be said that society, and the media in particular, create and reinforce stereotypical ideas of beauty.

Beauty is a **social construct**. It is based on societally agreed upon ideas that have been ingrained into our systems and our psyches over time and have been accepted as the norm. These ideas of beauty slowly become embedded into our minds on a micro level, and affect the way we operate. There is a bi-directional relationship with societal forces including media, marketing, businesses, government, and other institutions. These forces influence youth, affecting appearance, cosmetics, behavior, and clothing. The media, of which 90% is controlled by four media conglomerates who are owned by predominantly White and wealthy males,[1] are responsible for creating and reinforcing preferences and biases which reinforce the dominant culture's idea of beauty.

Western society has identified particular aspects of physical appearance as being beautiful, or desirable. People with these characteristics are favored and featured. This is known as the halo effect, in which additional favorable characteristics are associated with "attractiveness." One example of this effect applies to academia. While it is acknowledged that the face's physical appearance may indicate important characteristics such as physical health, it has also been found that it is used inaccurately to predict a person's academic performance. Using the faces of university students, researchers learned that subjects inaccurately attributed competence and intelligence to more attractive faces.[2] This can have long term implications for success in education, as other research has found that teachers' expectations of learners can have a positive or negative effect on their learning.[3]

Another example from academia describes how gender, perceived attractiveness, and age intersect to affect how students' perception of physical appearance moderate their experience of the actual behavior of faculty. When students rated the perceived qualities of instructors based on appearance in a 2014 study, women's age and attractiveness were linked (older women were judged to be less attractive). Less attractiveness correlated

1. Wikipedia. (n.d.). Media conglomerate. Retrieved May 29, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_conglomerate

2. Talamas, S. N., Mavor, K. I., & Perrett, D. I. (2016). Blinded by beauty: Attractiveness bias and accurate perceptions of academic performance. PLOS ONE, 11(2), e0148284. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0148284

3. Rosenthal, R., & Jacobson, L. F. (1968). Teacher expectations for the disadvantaged. Scientific American, 218(4), 19–23.

with judgments students made about prospective faculty; that those less attractive (and older) were also less likely to be organized and/or have rapport with their students, illustrating the halo effect.[4]

There have been some insightful analyses of attractiveness and facial symmetry related to pay and job attainment in sports. The most well-known relates to "quarterback-face." Using computer measurements, economists found that while taking into account career statistics, experience, Pro Bowl appearances, and draft position, one standard deviation of symmetry of facial structure led to an eight percent increase in pay.[5] This holds true for starting quarterbacks in the National Football League (NFL), and even more strongly for back-up quarterbacks.

Beauty can and does change from place to place, from culture to culture, and from person to person. It is demonstrated via society's products, patterns, trends, wants and desires. It is influenced biologically, by pheromones and natural physical attractions. This shows us that it is a **social construction**. The threat to family well-being is when that socially constructed idea is assigned different value or worth, based on physical appearance. Bullying, fewer academic opportunities, and loss of employment can all be linked to the idealized conception of beauty. The halo effect can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy, where those who fit the social construction of attractiveness, are perceived as being more valuable members of society, which then may lead to preferential treatment and more **life chances**, thereby increasing the person's likelihood of succeeding.[6]

So what does this mean for us, the readers and writers of this text? It means that we need to be aware and pay attention to what we might call our "intuition" or "gut" feelings about who is deserving of the benefit of the doubt, or of an extra opportunity. Sometimes those instinctual feelings are masking some preference for attractiveness or an implicit bias. We can teach our children, students, peers, and colleagues the same. By making this topic discussable, we can work toward achieving equity in education, employment, and experience.

Beauty, Art, and Identity

The dominant culture is powerful. Finding ways to fit in is important and sometimes people go to extremes to fit into what is deemed desirable. For example, in the film *Crazy Rich Asians*, the movie rewards Rachel Chu for mimicking European beauty standards. She is preparing for a big wedding, and has a friend who comments how they need to get her eyelids taped, which is a popular method for East Asian and Asian Americans to remove their monolids and appear more caucasion. In this movie, whiteness is provided as the aesthetic for

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4. Wilson, J. H., Beyer, D., & Monteiro, H. (2014). Professor age affects student ratings: Halo effect for younger teachers. College Teaching, 62(1), 20–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2013.825574

5. Berri, D. J. (2008, September 16). Do pretty-boy quarterbacks make more money? The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/14/sports/playmagazine/0914play-FBALL-QBS.html

6. Wikipedia. (n.d.). Physical attractiveness. Retrieved June 3, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physical_attractiveness

beauty standards, particularly Euro-American standards. The continual reinforcement of one kind of beauty creates tension and conflict for families between this ideal, their own culture, and individuality.
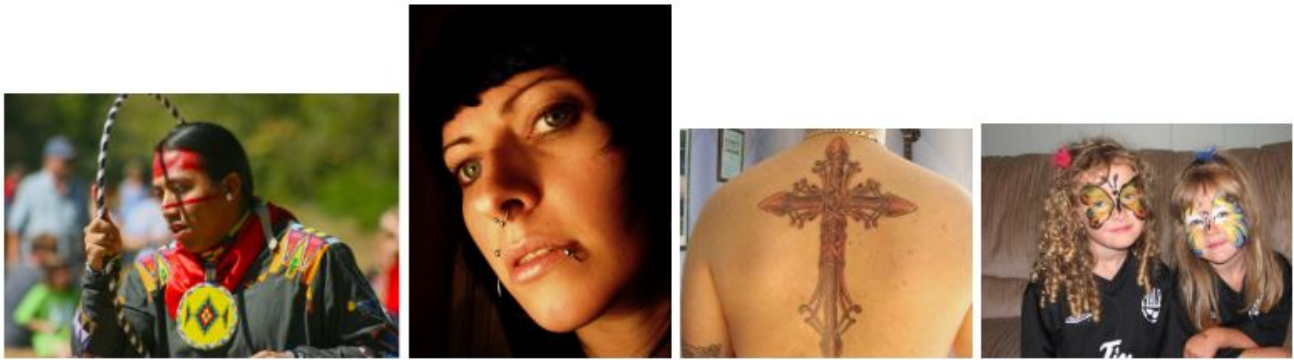

Fig. 8.21. Examples of body art.

Art and beauty matter. Make-up and facepaint reflect both culture and idealized beauty standards. Native American men use face paint to identify themselves, align with hopes and dreams, demonstrate their honor, and before battle. Paints came from a variety of natural materials and held significance related to color and pattern.[7] Drag families that form with various familiar family roles use costumes and make-up to express identity, role, and representation.[8] Tattoos and piercings have a long history of affiliation with beauty and expression and have only grown in recent decades in importance related to identity. And yet there are questions and concerns related to employment when one has tattoos; bias against those with tattoos is a worry. The complexity of how each person and family member sees oneself, influenced by the societal norms that favor certain appearances, continues to affect functionality of both families and society.

Diversity in culture can inspire people to express and reinforce their own identities whether or not they are in the dominant group. Lin-Manuel Miranda, the creator of the wildly popular Broadway musical and film, *Hamilton: An American Musical*, talks about his love of theater as an adolescent, but the limited view he had of his own expressive abilities until he saw *Rent*, the 1996 rock musical with music, lyrics and book by Jonathan Larson. *Hamilton* premiered in 2015 and has won both critical and popular acclaim, including multiple Drama Desk and Tony awards, selling out performances on Broadway, and after three national tours, was ended only by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

In an interview with Terry Gross on NPR's *Fresh Air* in June 2020, Miranda said,

Really, the only thing I saw that really gave me permission to write musicals was *Rent*, which was an

7. Gowder, P. (2011, July 21). Face painting traditions & meanings. PowWows.com. https://www.powwows.com/face-painting-traditions-among-men-of-the-plains/

8. National Center for Transgender Equality. (2017, April 28). Understanding drag. https://transequality.org/issues/resources/understanding-drag

incredibly diverse cast. And I went from being a fan of musicals to writing musicals when I saw that show because it was the thing that gave me permission...it was contemporary, and it had Latino actors and Black actors. And it told me you're allowed to write what you know into a show. No other musical had told me that...

...So it was truly the first contemporary musical I'd seen and and, I think, got me from being a kid who was in school musicals and loved them but just thought they were written by other people, like, by, like, old White people on the Upper East Side, to giving me permission. And it's been gratifying to see how these shows, *Heights* and *Hamilton* in particular, like, not only provide employment but also provide, like, permission and amplification of a lot of other voices.[9]

Miranda's statement demonstrates explicitly the importance of diverse voices being created, produced, and publicized. Identity and art are intertwined and influence individuals and families in their development, structure, and daily lives.

Conclusion

Visual culture influences family, in both the public function of caregiving and private function of emotional bonds we share with one another. Equity in access to and representation of visual culture will foster the ability of every individual and family to meet their potential. Art brings families together and simultaneously displays how we view the family at any point in time. It helps us notice the **socially constructed** nature of the family, and of our ideas of beauty. It can be a tool that is used for expression and to foster change. Visual representations depict ideas that we may not be able to put into words. After all, we are humanly wired to do this; to understand, categorize, to express, and to make sense of meaning. Visual Culture creates the avenue for both our own creativity and for us to better understand the world.

9. Miranda, L-M. (2020, June 29). *Hamilton* creator Lin-Manuel Miranda. (T. Gross, Interviewer) [podcast]. https://www.npr.org/2020/06/29/884691708/hamilton-creator-lin-manuel-miranda

Fig. 8.22. "The Learning Child" by Gilbert Ibañez

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7. REPRESENTATION AND BELONGING

REPRESENTATION AND BELONGING PREVIEW QUESTIONS

As you read this chapter, consider the following questions:

1. What formal processes exist in the United States for representation of all families?
2. What contributes to some families being represented less frequently in social processes such as voting, being elected, and participating in the Census?
3. How would more parity amongst our elected representatives make a difference?
4. What are the barriers to participation? What institutional changes could be made to increase participation? What new processes and institutions could you imagine that might lead to more equity in representation?
5. Which demographic groups are best represented? Least represented?
6. How is representation linked with equity?
7. How has the feminist movement evolved and changed over time?
8. How do social movements interact with laws, policy, and elected officials?
9. How are representation and belonging linked?

REPRESENTATION AND BELONGING

Elizabeth B. Pearce

How is **equity** for families served by representation? We can recognize **social institutions** because they serve a critical function for society and contain a structure of rules and roles. Those roles almost always include some form of representation: a way in which decision-making is streamlined and the participants are somehow "seen" and acknowledged even if they do not directly participate in leadership. Representation means that families know that they belong, that they are important, that their needs are known, and that the institution is functional. If the representation does not serve these purposes, it is unlikely that outcomes will be equitable for families.

In this chapter, we will focus on the institutions of local and national governments. As you read, consider applying these same concepts to other institutions that are important to you, your friends, or family–including K-12 schools, the college and university systems, health care and health insurance, businesses and corporations, prisons and courts, media, and others.

Your **social identities** affect your experience with representation. In other words, it is likely that you, the reader, see representation through the lens of how well you have typically been represented in this country's institutions. Any individual's social identities are multi-faceted (refer to the Social Identity Wheel in the Social Construction of Difference chapter) and each family member adds additional complexities. This is one of the beautiful and challenging aspects of family life. It is aspirational to think that we live in a country where every family has equitable access to opportunity and representation. An aspect of this belief is that our representatives "see," "listen to," and understand the needs of families that they do not know personally.

For example, this author is a member of the LGBTQ+ community, is White, and is a cis-gendered female. In many organizations, I observe that the majority of the leadership is White. I see many women decision-makers, although the percentage decreases as the level of power increases. And I see relatively few members of the LGBTQ+ community. Since this part of the population is small (about 10% or less), I do not expect a majority of leaders in any organization to be members of this group. What I hope for is that regardless of demographic, these leaders still work to understand me and my family. This is especially true of any aspect of my identity that has been marginalized; in my case, that is being a woman and being part of the LGBTQ+ community. I hope that they listen to my stories. That they "see" me. They work to educate themselves about families like mine, so that even if I don't see people like myself making the decisions that affect my family, they still represent me.

Fig. 7.1. Social identities are complex, and every family member adds additional complexities to identity.

When I think about representation from this perspective, I am not only considering the federal government. I am thinking about employers, city councils, my health care insurance and health care providers, the school board, and the local court system. All of these institutions affect families based on their identities and formations. It is important to note that all families are affected by all institutions even if they are not "included" by the institution. In fact, those left out may be most affected. In my case, I was "left out" of the social process of legal marriage, which was historically controlled by state governments and now by federal law.

For example, health care and retirement benefits are typically tied to employers, whether they are public organizations, for-profit corporations, or not-for-profit entities. Those employers will determine which members of my family qualify for benefits and may be listed as beneficiaries of pension or life insurance policies. The school board is making decisions about forms, processes, rights and responsibilities affecting my children. The local courts and judges interpret laws and make decisions about adoption, divorce, custody agreements and for foster children. In all of these cases, I want to know that the people in the decision making roles have some understanding of who my family is, and who I am, whether or not they share the same social identities. They are representing me, not just as an individual, but as a member of the community that designated them with this power.

Each one of you who reads this has your own social identities which overlap with the identities within your family. As you read this chapter, consider what representation means to you and how you would like to be represented, included, or not included within the various institutions in which you participate.

Historical Context

The Declaration of Independence is commonly quoted to demonstrate that the United States is founded on equality.

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.[1]

But as we know, this declaration did not apply to all men in the United States, but only to men who were White, and in some cases was limited to land-owners (early in the history of the United States, individual states regulated the right to vote, so there was variability about which White men had access to this form of equality). Not to mention women, at a time when the White **culture** defined sex and gender in a binary way.

Consider your own **social identity** and its overlapping characteristics. Our familial and individual social identities have a bi-directional relationship with representation. Our social identities (including how others define us) affect what kind of representation we have experienced, while representation continues to contribute to the **social construction** of identity: color, **ethnicity**, gender, sex, **socioeconomic status**, ability, age and so on. Understanding this relationship can help us increase **equity** in two ways:

- Reducing the effects of racialization and other forms of stereotyping that contribute to the marginalization of families; and
- Acknowledging the ways that families who are part of the dominant culture benefit from the stereotyping and bias of marginalized groups.

When we talk about families, we are moving far beyond the social construction of the typical family and the ways that government and other institutions define "family" for taxes, health care, and other legal rights and responsibilities. We are including all the ways that people define their own families. It is our aspirational goal to inspire readers to understand injustice more deeply via the ways that we are represented in institutions and to advocate and contribute to changes toward greater equity for families in the United States.

We will study a couple of the formal ways that families can expect to be represented in the United States, and how that representation plays out when we look at equity. This is important because governing bodies make decisions that affect all families; the definitions, laws, and regulations made by governments influence employers, business practices, schools and other public facilities such as libraries and parks.

We will look at the United States Census, a survey which attempts to count all the people (not all citizens, but all people) living in the United States and directly impacts the number of seats that a state has assigned

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1. Jefferson, T. (1776, July 4). Declaration of independence: A transcription. https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript

in the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as how federal funds are distributed. Then we will look more closely at voting and the resulting elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels. Those officials are directly responsible for the laws and justice systems that govern us. Finally, we will look at an aspect of representation outside of the formal processes: activism and social movements.

The United States Census

The United States Census is conducted every ten years with the goal of counting every person in the country, although, as described below, it is almost impossible to reach this goal. The census collects information about the race, age, and housing situation of the population. The primary purpose of the census, as established in the Constitution, is to determine the number of seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives, the legislative branch of government. Voting district boundaries must then be redrawn in states that have gained or lost seats between census years (we will take a closer look at how redistricting is done and the spatial challenges of the process in later chapters). Censuses also determine how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding are distributed for many important purposes, including education, health care, environmental protection, transportation, and other forms of federal aid to states and cities.

The first U.S. census, carried out in 1791 by sixteen U.S. marshals and 650 assistants, counted around 3.9 million people. They asked only a few questions: the number of free persons, the number of enslaved people, and the sex and race of each individual.

Fig. 7.2. Census form 1791. This form for the first census in the United States was filled out by a census taker who asked a few questions.

By 1960, with the population approaching 180 million, it was no longer feasible to have a census taker visit each household. Instead, questionnaires were mailed to every household, and temporary employees followed up in person with the households that did not respond.

Fig. 7.3. Census form 1960. This is a blank copy of the 1960 Census form that was mailed to each household to be filled out.

Questions asked of all households now include the number of persons by age, gender, **ethnicity**, homeownership, and household composition. Between 1940 and 2000, one in six households also received a more detailed "long form" survey which asked questions about a much wider range of topics including income, occupation, commute length, and military service. The Census Bureau then used this sample to estimate the characteristics of the rest of the population.

Demand for more timely social data led to the development of the American Community Survey (ACS), which replaced the long form census survey in 2010. The ACS is conducted every year in order to provide more frequent "snapshots" of demographic, economic, and housing characteristics of the population. However, only 2-3 million households receive the survey per year (less than 2% of the population), which introduces substantial statistical errors in estimates for the whole population. Data for the census and ACS are collected from each household, but in order to preserve privacy and to make the data easier to use, the Census Bureau aggregates the data to larger geographic areas.

Limitations of Census Data

The census is the most comprehensive source of demographic information available for the United States, but it still has important limitations.

The primary challenge is accuracy and undercounting. The census attempts to take a snapshot of how many people there are and where they are living on April 1st of the census year. The method for collecting data assumes that every person lives in a housing unit with a postal address and that they will respond accurately to surveys. The Census Bureau estimated that approximately 10 million people were missed in its 2010 count.

Fig. 7.4. Census 2010. The first enumeration of the 2010 Census took place in Noorvik, Alaska. An early start allows census takers to reach remote villages before residents leave to hunt and fish or travel for warm-weather jobs following the spring thaw.

Undercounting is not random because it is more prevalent in certain areas and subpopulations. Those who are **houseless** or have unstable housing at the time of the census are often missed. Those residing in remote rural areas can be hard to contact by mail or in person. The census is also less likely to receive responses from those who distrust the government, such as people fearful that their answers will be used by immigration enforcement to deport undocumented family members.

The census is only taken every ten years, and the counts have long-term consequences for states and cities. The accuracy of counts can be very contentious in cash-strapped cities. For example, Detroit challenged the findings of the 2010 census, having come up 40,000 people short of a population cutoff point for many major sources of federal funding. Since poor and marginalized populations are among the hardest to count, districts with the most need are also the most at risk of underfunding and underrepresentation.

Beyond accuracy issues, while the census and ACS provide an extensive set of social data, plenty of topics are not covered. For example, there are no questions about religion, consumer spending, or political party affiliation. The quantity and wording of questions asked in the census has changed over time, and data are not always available for all places or for all geographic areas.

Remember that there are many other social surveys which collect information about different attributes, areas, or periods. For example, the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies conducts the "Religious Congregations and Membership Study" (RCMS) every 10 years to track patterns of religious affiliation. Local governments gather data for projects in their specific region. There are also censuses conducted in countries around the world with varying levels of detail and accuracy.

Why Does the Government Care about Race?

> 🖳 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=606#oembed-1*

This video helps us understand why race was emphasized in the first census, related to the number of voters (mostly free White men over the age of 21 years) and number of elected representatives. It also describes the changes in how race and **ethnicity** have been quantified. Remember the discussion of the **social construction** of race in the first chapter of this text? The changing definitions of race within the census data are a perfect example of the socially constructed aspect of race. But social constructions have real effects on families and **kinship** groups. One of the reasons that we continue to quantify race is to track access to resources and the **equity** of experience for individuals and families.

The 2020 Census count was ended early by the Trump Administration. Originally scheduled to end December 30, 2020, all counting ceased on October 31, 2020. The Census Bureau has identified populations that are less likely to participate in the process as "Hard to Count (HTC)."[2] Have you or your family members partici-

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2. US Census Bureau. (2019, July). Counting the hard to count in a census. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2019/demo/Hard-to-Count-Populations-Brief.pdf

pated in the Census? Perhaps your family falls into a group that the Census Bureau identifies as hard to locate, contact, persuade, and/or interview. It is likely that fewer people, primarily in the "hard to count" groups, participated in the 2020 census due to its shortened timeline.

Current events affect participation; increased efforts to limit immigration and other quickly changing laws and policies related to immigrants in recent years may reduce the number of immigrants willing to participate. For example, the Trump administration fought in several legal forums to have a question about citizenship added to the 2020 Census, but this question was not added. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic may affect the number of college students who respond to the Census. The main dates for the mailing of census forms was between April 1 and May 13, 2020, at a time when many college students abandoned their regular place of residence (such as dormitory or apartment building in a college town) and went to live with parents or other family members. Towns with large universities may be affected by lower census counts because of this pattern.

The first set of 2020 census results were not ready by the December 31, 2020 deadline. Delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic and last-minute changes by the Trump administration contributed to the inability of the government to submit these numbers that will determine electoral college and Congressional representation for the next decade. The official Census website contains only approximate date estimates for meeting these requirements as of January 2020; you can check the website here for updates.

We Count Oregon is an organization and website that has been developed to persuade everyone to participate. Why? The more people who participate will lead to more federal funding for hospitals, Medicaid, Head Start, parks, roads, and other programs. Oregon is one of five states (Arizona, Colorado, Florida and North Carolina are the others) predicted to earn an additional seat in the House of Representatives. We Count Oregon identifies HTC communities as including "people of color, children under five, renters, immigrants, people with limited English proficiency, multiple-family homes, Native tribal and urban communities, disabled people, and LGBTQ individuals."[3] If you and your family are wondering if you can make a difference by filling out the Census, check out their website here. It is an opportunity to be more fully represented. Even if you missed the 2020 Census, the American Community Survey (which samples a much smaller part of the population) is an opportunity to be counted each year. If you are selected, it is an opportunity to have your family represented to the many scholars, groups, and decision-makers in the United States.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=606#oembed-2

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3. We Count Oregon. (n.d.). About #WeCountOregon. Retrieved July 14, 2020, from https://wecountoregon.com/

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DECISION-MAKING AND POWER

Elizabeth B. Pearce

Much of the decision-making in the United States is executed by elected officials via legislation that passes through several branches of government. While most are elected by popular vote, the President is elected through the electoral college and some leaders, including the President, have the authority to appoint other decision-making officials such as judges and cabinet secretaries. People who have the right to vote, and who choose to vote, have some influence on who gets elected. Voting is important and is one aspect of representation, a potential equalizer in a country in which some decisions are made via direct democracy (each individual has a vote) and others are made by representative democracy (elected representatives).

As we will explore in this section, however, there are complicating factors that affect elections and **equity**.

Who votes?

There are a variety of reasons that people don't vote in local, state, and national elections. Thomas Jefferson is known for saying, "We do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate." Ironically, Jefferson was a part of the legislature that limited which people in the United States actually had the right to vote. In fact, what he could have said was, "We do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority of people whom we have allowed to vote and who participate." This text aims to examine how institutions still limit voting rights both explicitly and implicitly.

Voter Registration Across the United States

Elections are state-by-state contests. They include general elections for president and statewide offices (e.g., governor and U.S. senator), and they are often organized and paid for by the states. Because political **cultures** vary from state to state, the process of voter registration also varies. For example, suppose an 85-year-old retiree with an expired driver's license wants to register to vote. He or she might be able to register quickly in California or Florida, but a current government ID might be required prior to registration in Texas or Indiana.

The varied registration and voting laws across the United States have long caused controversy. In the aftermath of the Civil War, southern states enacted literacy tests, grandfather clauses, and other requirements intended to disenfranchise Black voters in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi. Literacy tests were long and detailed exams on local and national politics, history, and more. They were often administered arbitrarily with

more Blacks required to take them than Whites.[1] Consider this along with the practice of providing schooling only to White children. Poll taxes required voters to pay a fee to vote. Grandfather clauses exempted individuals from taking literacy tests or paying poll taxes if they or their fathers or grandfathers had been permitted to vote prior to a certain point in time. While the Supreme Court determined that grandfather clauses were unconstitutional in 1915, states continued to use poll taxes and literacy tests to deter potential voters from registering.[2] States also ignored instances of violence and intimidation against African Americans wanting to register or vote.[3]

The ratification of the Twenty-Fourth Amendment in 1964 ended poll taxes, but the passage of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) in 1965 had a more profound effect. The act protected the rights of minority voters by prohibiting state laws that denied voting rights based on race. The VRA gave the attorney general of the United States authority to order federal examiners to areas with a history of discrimination. These examiners had the power to oversee and monitor voter registration and elections. States found to violate provisions of the VRA were required to get any changes in their election laws approved by the U.S. attorney general or by going through the court system. However, in Shelby County v. Holder (2013), the Supreme Court, in a 5–4 decision, threw out the standards and process of the VRA, effectively gutting the landmark legislation.[4] This decision effectively pushed decision-making and discretion for election policy in VRA states to the state and local level. Several such states subsequently made changes to their voter ID laws and North Carolina changed its plans for how many polling places were available in certain areas. Texas also restricted voting based on photo identification; these changes often do not have a neutral effect. In fact, when the U.S. Court of Appeals struck down one North Carolina law in 2016, they found that it targeted "African Americans with almost surgical precision."

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1. Medvic, S. (2014). Campaigns and elections: Players and processes (2nd ed). Routledge.

2. Guinn v. United States, 238 U.S. 347 (1915).

3. Medvic, S. (2014). Campaigns and elections: Players and processes (2nd ed). Routledge.

4. Shelby County v. Holder, 570 U.S. ___ (2013).

Fig. 7.5. The Voting Rights Act (a) was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson (b, left) on August 6, 1965, in the presence of major figures of the civil rights movement, including Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. (b, center).

The effects of the VRA were visible almost immediately. In Mississippi, only 6.7 percent of Blacks were registered to vote in 1965; however, by the fall of 1967, nearly 60 percent were registered. Alabama experienced similar effects, with African American registration increasing from 19.3 percent to 51.6 percent. Voter turnout across these two states similarly increased. Mississippi went from 33.9 percent turnout to 53.2 percent, while Alabama increased from 35.9 percent to 52.7 percent between the 1964 and 1968 presidential elections.[5]

Following the implementation of the VRA, many states have sought other methods of increasing voter registration. Several states make registering to vote relatively easy for citizens who have government documentation. Oregon has few requirements for registering and registers many of its voters automatically. North Dakota has no registration at all. In 2002, Arizona was the first state to offer online voter registration, which allowed citizens with a driver's license to register to vote without any paper application or signature. The system matches the information on the application to information stored at the Department of Motor Vehicles, to ensure each citizen is registering to vote in the right precinct. Citizens without a driver's license still need to file a paper application. More than eighteen states have moved to online registration or passed laws to begin doing so. The National Conference of State Legislatures estimates, however, that adopting an online voter registration system can initially cost a state between $250,000 and $750,000.[6]

5. Grofman, B., Handley, L., ^ Niemi, R. G. (1992). Minority representation and the quest for voting equality. Cambridge University Press, p. 25.

6. National Conference of State Legislatures. (2014, April). Online voter registration grows in 2014. The Canvass, 48. https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/states-and-election-reform-the-canvass-april-2014.aspx

Other states have decided against online registration due to concerns about voter fraud and security. Legislators also argue that online registration makes it difficult to ensure that only citizens are registering and that they are registering in the correct precincts. As technology continues to update other areas of state recordkeeping, online registration may become easier and safer. In some areas, citizens have pressured the states and pushed the process along. A bill to move registration online in Florida stalled for over a year in the legislature, based on security concerns. With strong citizen support, however, it was passed and signed in 2015, despite the governor's lingering concerns. In other states, such as Texas, some are concerned about identity fraud, so traditional paper registration has been preferred until the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has renewed interest in voting methods other than in-person.

Voting by Mail

Oregon was the first state to enact postal voting, or "vote-by mail" in the United States, in 1998. Voter turnout dramatically increased with this adaptation, and Oregon continues to have one of the highest participation rates in the country. Of course, absentee and early voting has long been available for military families and for individuals by request. As of 2020, Colorado, Hawaii, Washington, and Utah have all converted to vote-by-mail elections. The coronavirus pandemic has raised concerns about people visiting crowded polling places in person during 2020, and 46 states are loosening restrictions on vote-by-mail. To view the voting status of individual states for the 2020 election, check out ballotpedia; to investigate overall voting information, consult this usa.gov website.

Research repeatedly shows that allowing people to vote by mail increases participation. A draft working paper of a Stanford University study found that postal voting in Colorado increased voter participation by ten percent. Notably, turnout amongst groups less likely to vote increased even more: 16 percentage points among young people, 13% among African-Americans, 11% among Asian-Americans, and 10 percentage points amongst Latinx Americans, blue-collar workers, those without a high school diploma, and those with less than $10,000 of wealth.[7]

President Donald Trump has stated that postal voting is vulnerable to fraud, but other Republican lawmakers are divided on the issue, while Democratic lawmakers generally support this effort. Experts, including researchers and political science professors, do not believe that voting by mail is likely to increase fraud. Voting continues to be a state responsibility, which means it varies a great deal. In the November 2020 election, that variance became a point of legal and social debate. Not only did states already have differing processes, but the legislators' efforts to ensure that as many people as possible could vote given the social distancing required

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7. Bonica, A., Grumbach, J. M., Hill, C., & Jefferson, H. (2020, May 4). All-mail voting in Colorado increases turnout and reduces turnout inequality [draft working paper]. Retrieved September 12, 2020, from http://voteath-ome.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CO-VAH-research-Hill-et-al.pdf

by the pandemic, created greater discrepancies and differences in voting rules. While President Trump and many other individuals questioned the validity of these processes in four states that had close presidential vote counts, the courts and the officials of those states consistently verified the results.

Barriers to Voting

Although the right to vote is more **equitably** distributed than in the past, institutional and societal factors still influence who actually votes. If there were times that you didn't vote, what got in the way? A busy life might keep you from voting.

Socioeconomic Status

When voting is limited to one day (e.g. twelve hours in November), people who have more restrictive work, school, parenting, childcare, or other schedules will have more challenges in getting to the polling location during the limited time. Workers in jobs with less autonomy (e.g. retail, clerical, and blue-collar workers) have less flexibility on voting day than those in managerial or professional positions. Transportation can be a factor; personal vehicles provide the most efficiency in a busy life. Using shared vehicles, public transportation, bicycles, and walking (while more cost and energy effective) all take longer.

If you are a working parent faced with choosing between getting food on the table for your two young children or transporting them, and waiting in line to vote in the election, which do you choose? If you need to race home from work so that your partner can use your shared vehicle to get to their evening shift, do you then go take a bus to vote? Families with a lower **socioeconomic status** are more likely to have a combination of these factors that contribute to having less flexibility and less time. Families who have more resources in general have more resources related to political activity and are more likely to participate in voting in person. Those who are unemployed are the least likely to vote.

Fig. 7.6. Families with a lower socioeconomic status face more barriers getting to polling stations.

People with Disabilities

People with disabilities vote at a 6% lower rate than people who do not have disabilities and share other demographic characteristics, as measured by Rutgers University in the

2016 election.[8] Why might that be? One factor may be the polling places themselves. The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) observed 178 polling places during that same election. They found that 60% of the polling places had some kind of physical impediment between the parking lot and the entry to the buildings. Of the 137 that could be observed inside, 65% had polling stations that could impede someone casting their votes independently.[9]
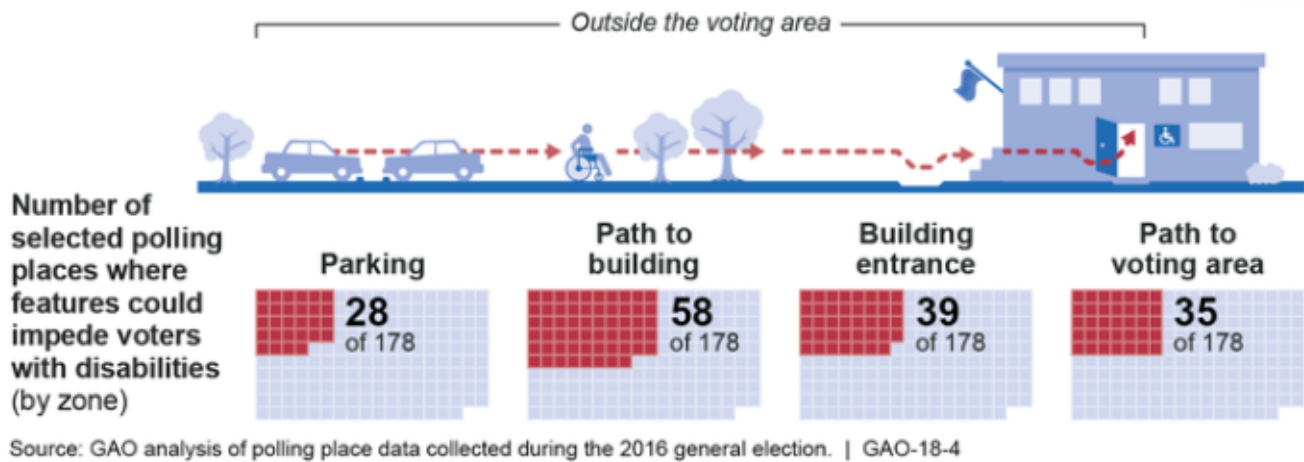
Fig. 7.7. Voters with disabilities often face physical barriers to voting, including inaccessible parking, paths, and entrances.

There are efforts underway to improve access to and participation in voting amongst people with disabilities. The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) is working in selected states to increase voter registration and turnout. REVUP (Register, Educate, Vote, Use your Power) has shown a 1% increase in the voting participation of people with disabilities in REVUP states compared with non-REVUP states between 2014 and 2018.[10] This is a small increase in a very large sample and it is difficult to say if REVUP is the main factor. If you are interested in REVUP's work, click here.

8. Schur, L. & Kruse, D. (2017, July). Fact sheet: Disability and voter turnout in the 2016 elections. Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations. Program for Disability Research Publications. https://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/documents/PressReleases/kruse_and_schur_-_2016_disability_turnout.pdf

9. U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2017, November 2). Voters with disabilities: Observations on polling place accessibility and related federal guidance. https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-18-4

10. Schur, L. & Kruse, D. (July 2019). Fact sheet: Estimating the effect of the REVUP campaign on disability turnout. https://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/revup_factsheet.pdf

People Who have been Convicted of Crimes

The majority of states in the United States limit people who have been convicted of felonies from voting, at least during the time that they are incarcerated. (The exceptions are Maine and Vermont.) Variances amongst states include whether rights are lost just while incarcerated, while still serving parole and/or probation or whether rights are restored automatically after release. Oregon is one of sixteen states plus the District of Columbia that automatically restore rights.[11]

Fig. 7.8. Bedford, NY jail cell in use as of 2008.

There are eleven states that have additional restrictions including the payment of fees, fines, and restitution before voting rights are restored. These kinds of restrictions treat families unevenly; individuals who have lower income and no accumulated wealth will be less likely to be able to access their voting rights than will people with wealth and means. In July, 2020, the Supreme Court of the United States left in place a lower-court order that means that hundreds of thousands of people with felonies who owe fines, fees, and restitution in Florida will be unable to vote in elections. This ruling appears to conflict with a 2018 citizen vote with bipartisan support to amend the constitution and allow felons to vote in Florida.

Generally, the trend over the last few decades by states is to restore voting rights to felons once they are released. There are variations state by state as these movements go forward. What is your viewpoint about the right to vote and how it overlaps with people who have committed crimes? Do you think that people serving time should be able to vote? What about those who have rehabilitated and/or paid a debt to society? What about those same people whether they are poor or rich? Should **socioeconomic status** affect the right to vote?

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11. National Council of State Legislatures. (2019, October 14). Felon voting rights. Retrieved July 17, 2020, from https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/felon-voting-rights.aspx

Younger, Less Educated, and Latinx

In general, voter turnout in the United States is higher during presidential elections which occur every four years. In measurements between 1984 through 2016, people who are older, non-Hispanic, and more educated are most likely to vote. Those who are 60+ years old vote the most, followed by those aged 45-59 years, then by those aged 30-44 years, and with 18- to 29-year-olds having the lowest likelihood of voting with more than double 60+ year-old voting (65%) compared with 31% of 18- to 29-year-olds voting in the 2018 election. It could be argued that the youngest citizens have the most at stake and could have the greatest impact on the future of the United States

Fig. 7.9. People who are older, non-Hispanic, and more educated are most likely to vote

and yet they are voting less. In your viewpoint, what is behind the numbers that indicate younger, less educated, and Latinx people are voting less?

Feeling Disenfranchised

There are times when people feel so disconnected from the process of democracy and representation that voting seems hopeless. If elected officials repeatedly fail to discuss issues of importance to a person or their family, or if the decision outcomes are consistently inadequate, people may develop apathy toward the voting process. Growing up in a family where the parent(s) don't vote or who express cynicism or distrust toward representatives and the voting process also impacts children's view of the system and participation. As discussed at length in this chapter, there has been a great deal of effort made to limit people of color, the poor, and immigrants from voting in at least some states. It's hard to think that you belong and that your vote matters when institutions work against your voting rights.

Fig. 7.10. Wendy McElroy, a Canadian individualist feminist and anarcho-capitalist writer, speaking in Springfield, Illinois, 2006.

"Voting is not an act of political freedom. It is an act of political conformity. Those who refuse to vote are not expressing silence. They are screaming in the politician's ear: 'You do not represent me. This is not a process in which my voice matters. I do not believe you'." – Wendy McElroy.

In some states, one political party (Democratic or Republican) has such a majority position that if you are a member of the other dominant party or of an alternative party, it may not seem "worth it" to vote. They may feel that their vote doesn't make a difference or that the election is not a competitive one.

Influencing elections: Money and Technology

It's no secret that there is a lot of money involved in elections in the United States; it is one of a handful of countries that allows both unlimited donations to campaigns and unlimited spending. This both favors the wealthy who can run for office and who can influence elections via donations from their own pockets and from their connections. It also means that candidates who are pursuing office can never stop fundraising; as long as they know that their opponent can raise more money, they must also stay in the race for dollars. We will look at how money impacts both local and national elections.

First, consider those elections that don't get much media attention. Does your city have an elected council? How about your school board? Are judges elected or appointed in your area? Is there a County Board of Commissioners? Take a minute to think about what you know about how those folx get those jobs. Are those paid jobs? Do they pay enough to support an individual or family? Many of them are elected positions, although they are not paid. For example, in Corvallis, Oregon neither the school board nor the City Council are paid positions. The Benton County Commissioner positions (of which Corvallis is a part) are paid; three Commissioners each make between $84,000 and $94,100 in 2019.[12] Typically, salaries of public employees are public information and you can find it via an internet search on the entity's website or in a newspaper report on salary negotiations.

We ask these questions for several reasons. First, those decision-makers affect all of our lives. If you question whether or not a school board member affects your daily life, consider those board members who are now deciding how and if school will be held during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consider the recent national and

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12. Hall, B. (2019, August 5). No pay hike for commissioners. Corvallis Gazette-Times. https://www.gazettetimes.com/news/local/no-pay-hike-for-commissioners/article_23d1e7ea-23ce-50b2-9a06-86d17774f68b.amp.html

local debates about what kinds of bathrooms and locker rooms students can access, and who determines which students will use which bathrooms. Many of these local positions are unpaid. If they are not not paid, but require many hours of work each week, consider who is most likely to have the time available for such a position. Corvallis School Board Members are expected to devote time to reading policies, citizen input, budget documents, and related research as well as participating in trainings, committee discussions, and formal meetings. The time commitment varies from five to twenty hours per week and is unpredictable. This time commitment is similar for City Council members; remember that both positions are unpaid.

Given this context, it is likely that people who have a high enough income or accumulated wealth, a career that allows flexibility in work hours, or who are retired will be more likely to be able to afford the time and to dominate these boards. It is important to appreciate these public servants, their volunteer commitment, and their efforts to listen to all of their constituents. It is also important to acknowledge that these decision-makers are more likely to be older, have greater income and wealth, and more education. How do you think this might influence the discussions the groups have and the decisions that they make? How would families benefit from a system that is more representative of the communities served? What systemic changes could be made to include voices that more fully represent the population?

Now let's look at the elections that get more attention in the media: state and federal elections. While local elections fundraise, the big money is in state and federal competitions. And as a 2014 article on PBS.org headlines, <u>"Money is pretty good predictor of who will win elections."</u> [13] This is not an absolute, but it does happen most of the time: the campaign that raises the most money is most likely to win. Since candidates can spend as much of their own money as they want, being rich makes a difference. In the 2014 national election, 94 percent of biggest House race spenders won and 82 percent of biggest Senate race spenders won. While it is not true that the richest candidate always wins (for example Michael Bloomberg, a candidate for the Presidential Democratic nomination, is exponentially more wealthy with a 61.8 billion dollar net worth than Joe Biden, the winner of the nomination with a 9 million dollar net worth)[14] It is true that most people who are able to devote the time it takes to run for national office are very wealthy.

What does it mean that the folx that debate and decide national policy are among the most wealthy in the country? It is estimated that about half of the members of the U.S. Congress and Senate have a net worth of a million dollars.[15] (Remember that wealth is different than income; the average salary is $174,000/ year so having a net worth this high implies accumulated and inherited wealth). <u>A chart here shows how the wealth is dis-</u>

13. Montanaro, D., Wellford, R., & Pathe, S. (2014, November 11). Money is pretty good predictor of who will win elections. PBS. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/money-pretty-good-predictor-will-win-elections

14. Alexander, D. (2019, August 14). The net worth of every 2020 presidential candidate. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/danalexander/2019/08/14/heres-the-net-worth-of-every-2020-presidential-candidate/

15. Evers-Hillstrom, K. (2020, April 23). Majority of lawmakers in 116th Congress are millionaires. https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2020/04/majority-of-lawmakers-millionaires/

tributed among Senators and Congressional Representatives. It is ironic to have these same lawmakers limiting unemployment benefits and criticizing the lowest income earners in the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. Senator Ted Cruz (R- Texas) was quoted on the television show *Face the Nation*, saying, "The problem is, for 68% of people receiving it right now, they are being paid more on unemployment than they made in their job. And I'll tell you, I've spoken to small business owners all over the state of Texas who are trying to reopen and they're calling their- their waiters and waitresses … they're calling their busboys, and they won't come back. And, of course, they won't come back because the federal government is paying them, in some instances, twice as much money to stay home."

Fig. 7.11. People responsible for childcare may experience barriers to voting.

Fig. 7.12. People with inflexible work schedules may have a hard time voting.

This is a complex issue and it is important to note that people who are working as servers, child care teachers, grocery store and retail workers are less likely to have accumulated wealth to sustain them, second homes to go to in less populated areas, and are also more at risk due to increased exposure to the virus. To attribute their work/life motivation to one cause (an unemployment check) lacks the understanding of the complicated life circumstances that families are facing.

Fig. 7.13. The internet has enabled candidates to reach out to anyone who uses social media and the internet.

Technology and money have become even more important in elections in the United States in the past decade. Specifically the internet has become a very effective tool in fundraising. This has enabled candidates to reach out to anyone who uses social media and the internet via any device: phone, laptop or desk computer. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, both former candidates for the Presidential Democratic nomination, are known for their large campaign funds built entirely on smaller dollar donations. President Donald Trump, the Republican nominee, is also known for his success in this area, but he has not limited his campaign to small donations or events.

Large donors have also increased their power, primarily due to the 2010 Supreme Court decision in the case Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, summarized here. Resulting from this decision, corporations and other organizations such as labor unions are permitted to spend without limits on elections. Because donations and spending are unlimited, there has been a dramatic increase in the spending by Super Political Action Committees (PACs), which pool donations from individuals and are not required to report the names of donors. This has led to a dramatic increase in untraceable campaign advertisements and mailings, sometimes called "dark" or "gray" money.

While it is complicated to track how much money is donated and spent in state and national elections, FollowTheMoney.org has attempted to do so since three regional groups joined together in 1999. If you are interested in reviewing data about spending or finding links to recent news articles, this site is updated daily. Here is the July 2020 look at the total money spent in the last three national elections.
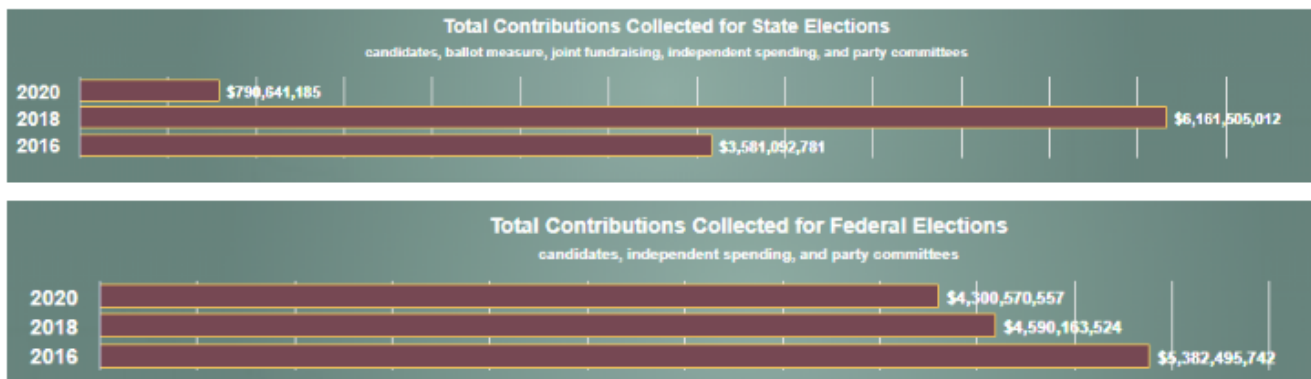
Fig. 7.14. Total contributions collected for State and Federal elections as of July 2020.

Do Demographics Matter?

Ask yourself, how do **social characteristics** that make up **social identity** matter when it comes to who represents all families in the decision-making spaces of this country? This is a good time to remind yourself of the Social Identity Wheel from the Introductory Chapter of this text. When we talk about demographics, we are looking at the statistical data related to social identities.
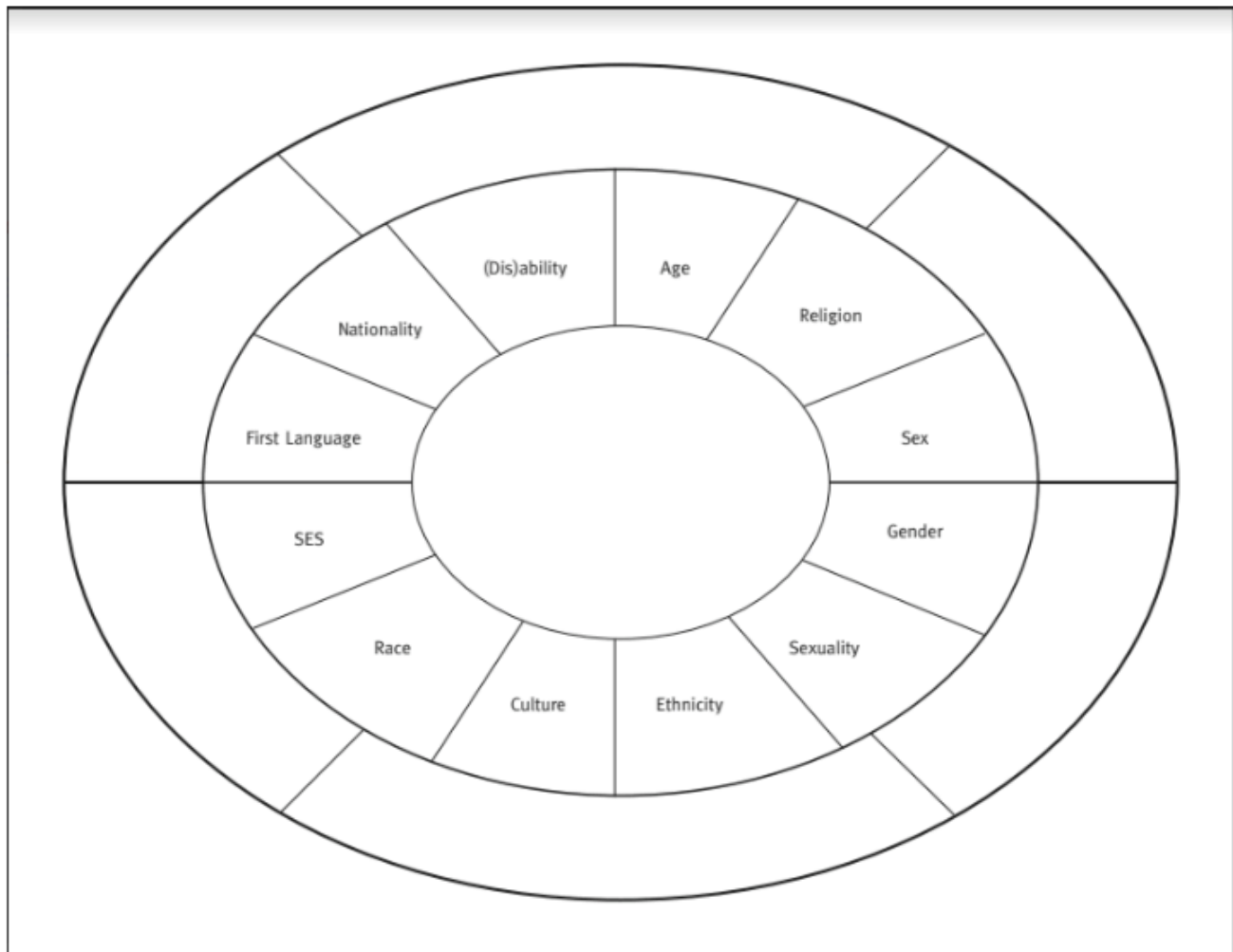
Fig. 7.15. When we talk about demographics, we are looking at the statistical data related to social identities.

Let's look at some of the demographics that are reported most frequently: race and gender. This very short (under two minutes) video from wholeads.us compares the demographics of the population in the United States with those of elected officials.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=611#oembed-1

When the demographics are so skewed, we must ask ourselves whether those who are less represented via social identity are being treated **equitably**. Not just in the past, but right now.

For example, in 1989, Representative John Conyers, Jr. (D-Michigan) introduced House Resolution (H.R.) 40 to the United States Congress for the first time. (The number "40" refers to the unfulfilled promise made that when slavery ended, every freed family would be allotted plots of land no larger than 40 acres, plus a mule. This proclamation was reversed by President Andrew Johnson after President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated.)

H.R. 40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act, proposes that a group be formed to study the continuing effects of slavery on living African Americans and society and the ways in which the federal and state governments have participated in discrimination. Representative Conyers, who died in 2019, proposed H.R. 40 a total of 28 times, once per year from 1989 until 2017. It was proposed again by Representative Sheila Jackson Lee with 23 colleagues as co-sponsors in 2019, and received a subcommittee hearing that June, but has not seen any other action since that time. There are 140 co-sponsors of this bill, including 15 representatives who have committed between May and July 2020, during

Fig. 7.16. Representative John Conyers, Jr. (D-Michigan) introduced House Resolution 40, to study the effects of slavery, 28 times. It has still not been passed.

the time that the Black Lives Matter movement has seen increased broad support across the country. Senator Cory Booker is the sponsor of a companion bill in the U.S. Senate.

Which laws and policies would be moved forward, voted on, and passed if Black people had greater representation amongst elected officials? What if the system supported the employment of people of a lower **socioeconomic status** in decision-making roles? How would this affect the inequality that families experience in the United States? Could you imagine how housing, health care, and employment might be different? These authors believe that more equitable representation, while not the only needed change, will lead to equitable access to education, health care, housing, food and water. This will benefit all families, regardless of race, **ethnicity**, or gender. Have more equitable representation among decision-makers when it comes to socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, and indeed all **social characteristics** such as ability, sexuality, religion, and more could lead to different systems and structures so that all families could meet their basic needs.

There is some progress toward more diverse representation in our elected officials. Pew Research reports that the racial and ethnic diversity of the U.S. Congress has grown gradually between 2001 and 2019. Currently, 116 members of the House of Representatives are non-White (including Black, Latinx, Asians/Pacific Islanders and Native Americans), which is an 84% increase over the 107th Congress of 2001.[16] When it comes to gender parity, while the number of women who are participating in elected positions is increasing in the United States, it is increasing at a slower level than the rest of the world. While we ranked 48th in the world for elected gender parity in 2000 (out of 192 countries), twenty years later we have sunk to 82nd in the world as measured by Represent Women's research. To use the interactive map below, learn more about their methodology, and see how individual states within the United States compare with one another, click here.
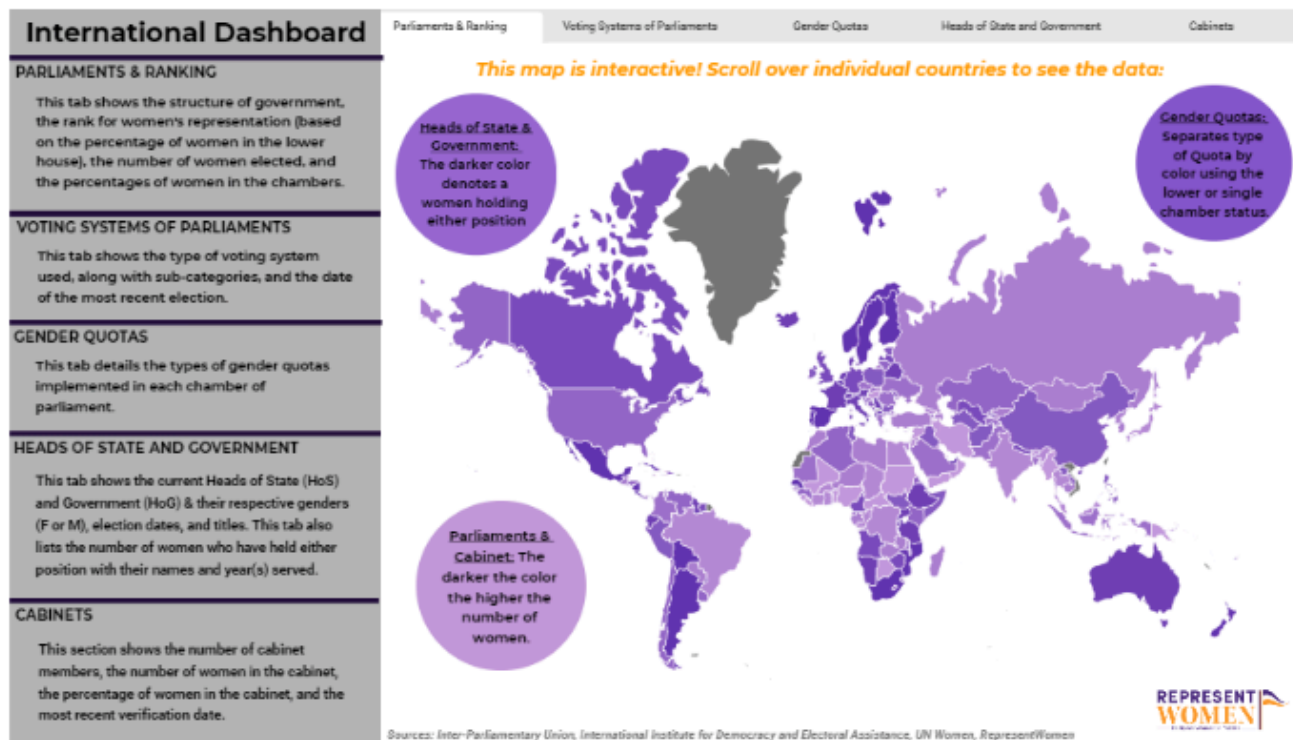
Fig. 7.17. While the number of women who are participating in elected positions is increasing in the United States, it is increasing at a slower level than the rest of the world.

16. Bialik, K. (2019, February 8). For the fifth time in a row, the new Congress is the most racially and ethnically diverse ever. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/02/08/for-the-fifth-time-in-a-row-the-new-congress-is-the-most-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-ever/

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WORKING OUTSIDE OF THE SYSTEM: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND ACTIVISM

Author's Note

We've spent a large portion of this chapter focused on historical and current aspects of the way social processes work in this country: the census, voting, representation, the courts and elected officials. We have attempted to uncover some of the flaws, gaps, and structures that lead to unequal representation and treatment of families. Change within these processes is possible, but sometimes challenging because the existing structures favor some groups and reinforce negative bias and inequality toward others. Working outside of the systems to push for change is an alternative for people whom the systems have marginalized.

With the exception of brief introductory paragraphs, this section is drawn from two other openly licensed texts, demonstrating the power of shared resources.

–Elizabeth B. Pearce

Social Movements

A social movement may be defined as an organized effort by a large number of people to bring about or impede social, political, economic, or cultural change. Defined in this way, social movements might sound similar to special-interest groups, and they do have some things in common. But a major difference between social movements and special-interest groups lies in the nature of their actions. Special-interest groups normally work within the system via conventional political activities such as lobbying and election campaigning. In contrast, social movements often work outside the system by engaging in various kinds of protest, including demonstrations, picket lines, sit-ins, and sometimes outright violence.

Fig. 7.18. Social movements are organized efforts by large numbers of people to bring about or impede social change. Often they try to do so by engaging in various kinds of protest, such as the march depicted here.

Conceived in this way, the efforts of social movements amount to "politics by other means," with these "other means" made necessary because movements lack the resources and access to the political system that interest groups typically enjoy.[1]

Sociologists identify several types of social movements according to the nature and extent of the change they seek. This typology helps us understand the differences among the many kinds of social movements that existed in the past and continue to exist today.[2]

One of the most common and important types of social movements is the reform movement, which seeks limited, though still significant, changes in some aspect of a nation's political, economic, or social systems. It does not try to overthrow the existing government but rather works to improve conditions within the existing regime. Some of the most important social movements in U.S. history have been reform movements. These include the abolitionist movement preceding the Civil War, the women's suffrage movement that followed the

1. Gamson, W. A. (1990). The strategy of social protest (2nd ed.). Wadsworth.
2. Snow, D. A., & Soule, S. A. (2010). A primer on social movements. W. W. Norton.

Civil War, the labor movement, the Southern civil rights movement, the Vietnam era's antiwar movement, the contemporary women's movement, the gay rights movement, and the environmental movement.

A revolutionary movement goes one large step further than a reform movement in seeking to overthrow the existing government and to bring about a new one and even a new way of life. Revolutionary movements were common in the past and were responsible for dramatic changes in Russia, China, and several other nations. Reform and revolutionary movements are often referred to as political movements because the changes they seek are political in nature.

Another type of political movement is the reactionary movement, so named because it tries to block social change or to reverse social changes that have already been achieved. The antiabortion movement is a contemporary example of a reactionary movement, as it arose after the U.S. Supreme Court legalized most abortions in Roe v. Wade (1973) and seeks to limit or eliminate the legality of abortion.

In Focus: Feminism and Intersectionality

While many social movements deserve attention, we would like to focus here on one social movement that emphasizes a key theme of this text: our multiple **social identities** and intersectionality. Women are 51% of the population in the United States[3] and have advocated for over 100 years for **equality**. The in-depth essay that follows is an excerpt from the text *Introduction to Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies* authored by Miliann Kang, Donovan Lessard, and Laura Heston at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I am very grateful to be able to use this analysis to illustrate the importance of and the It illustrates the complexity working toward **equity** while focused on one **social characteristic** (in this case, being female). How does this social movement navigate the intersections of race, **ethnicity**, parenthood, employee status, and sexuality? By studying the feminist movement over time, we can see the multiple dimensions, weaknesses, and strengths of communities advocating for change.

Introduction: Feminist Movements

"History is also everybody talking at once, multiple rhythms being played simultaneously. The events and people we write about did not occur in isolation but in dialogue with a myriad of other people and events. In fact, at any given moment millions of people are all talking at once. As historians we try to isolate one conversation and

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3. US Census. (2020, April 29). Age and sex composition in the United States: 2019 [table]. Retrieved August 6, 2020, from https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2019/demo/age-and-sex/2019-age-sex-composition.html

to explore it, but the trick is then how to put that conversation in a context which makes evident its dialogue with so many others—how to make this one lyric stand alone and at the same time be in connection with all the other lyrics being sung."

—Elsa Barkley Brown, "'What has happened here,'" pp. 297-298.

Feminist historian Elsa Barkley Brown reminds us that social movements and identities are not separate from each other, as we often imagine they are in contemporary society. She argues that we must have a relational understanding of social movements and identities within and between social movements—an understanding of the ways in which privilege and oppression are linked and how the stories of people of color and feminists fighting for justice have been historically linked through overlapping and sometimes conflicting social movements. In this chapter, we use a relational lens to discuss and make sense of feminist movements, beginning in the 19th Century up to the present time. Although we use the terms "first wave," "second wave," and "third wave," characterizing feminist resistance in these "waves" is problematic, as it figures distinct "waves" of activism as prioritizing distinct issues in each time period, obscuring histories of feminist organizing in locations and around issues not discussed in the dominant "waves" narratives. Indeed, these "waves" are not mutually exclusive or totally separate from each other. In fact, they inform each other, not only in the way that contemporary feminist work has in many ways been made possible by earlier feminist activism, but also in the way that contemporary feminist activism informs the way we think of past feminist activism and feminisms. Nonetheless, understanding that the "wave" language has historical meaning, we use it throughout this section. Relatedly, although a focus on prominent leaders and events can obscure the many people and actions involved in everyday resistance and community organizing, we focus on the most well known figures, political events, and social movements, understanding that doing so advances one particular lens of history.

Additionally, feminist movements have generated, made possible, and nurtured feminist theories and feminist academic knowledge. In this way, feminist movements are fantastic examples of praxis—that is, they use critical reflection about the world to change it. It is because of various social movements—feminist activism, workers' activism, and civil rights activism throughout the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries—that "feminist history" is a viable field of study today. Feminist history is part of a larger historical project that draws on the experiences of traditionally ignored and disempowered groups (e.g., factory workers, immigrants, people of color, **lesbians**) to re-think and challenge the histories that have been traditionally written from the experiences and points of view of the powerful (e.g., colonizers, representatives of the state, the wealthy)—the histories we typically learn in high school textbooks.

19th Century Feminist Movements

What has come to be called the first wave of the feminist movement began in the mid 19th century and lasted until the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, which gave women the right to vote. White middle-class

first wave feminists in the 19th century to early 20th century, such as suffragist leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, primarily focused on women's suffrage (the right to vote), striking down coverture laws, and gaining access to education and employment. These goals are famously enshrined in the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments, which is the resulting document of the first women's rights convention in the United States in 1848.

Fig. 7.19. White, middle-class, first-wave feminists fought for the right to vote, own property, and access education and employment.

Demanding women's enfranchisement, the abolition of coverture, and access to employment and education were quite radical demands at the time. These demands confronted the ideology of the cult of true womanhood, summarized in four key tenets—piety, purity, submission and domesticity—which held that White women were rightfully and naturally located in the private sphere of the household and not fit for public, political participation or labor in the waged economy. However, this emphasis on confronting the ideology of the cult of true womanhood was shaped by the White middle-class standpoint of the leaders of the movement. As we discussed in Chapter 3, the cult of true womanhood was an ideology of White womanhood that system-

atically denied Black and working-class women access to the category of "women," because working-class and Black women, by necessity, had to labor outside of the home.

The White middle-class leadership of the first wave movement shaped the priorities of the movement, often excluding the concerns and participation of working-class women and women of color. For example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony formed the National Women Suffrage Association (NWSA) in order to break from other suffragists who supported the passage of the 15th Amendment, which would give African American men the right to vote before women. Stanton and Anthony privileged White women's rights instead of creating solidarities across race and class groups. Accordingly, they saw women's suffrage as the central goal of the women's rights movement. For example, in the first issue of her newspaper, *The Revolution*, Susan B. Anthony wrote, "We shall show that the ballot will secure for woman equal place and equal wages in the world of work; that it will open to her the schools, colleges, professions, and all the opportunities and advantages of life; that in her hand it will be a moral power to stay the tide of crime and misery on every side."[4] Meanwhile, working-class women and women of color knew that mere access to voting did not overturn class and race inequalities. As feminist activist and scholar Angela Davis writes, working-class women "...were seldom moved by the suffragists' promise that the vote would permit them to become equal to their men—their exploited, suffering men."[5] Furthermore, the largest suffrage organization, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)—a descendent of the National Women Suffrage Association—barred the participation of Black women suffragists in its organization.

Although the first wave movement was largely defined and led by middle class White women, there was significant overlap between it and the abolitionist movement—which sought to end slavery—and the racial justice movement following the end of the Civil War. Historian Nancy Cott[6] argues that, in some ways, both movements were largely about having self-ownership and control over one's body. For enslaved people, that meant the freedom from lifelong, unpaid, forced labor, as well as freedom from the sexual assault that many enslaved Black women suffered from their masters. For married White women, it meant recognition as people in the face of the law and the ability to refuse their husbands' sexual advances. White middle-class abolitionists often made analogies between slavery and marriage, as abolitionist Antoinette Brown wrote in 1853 that, "The wife owes service and labor to her husband as much and as absolutely as the slave does to his master."[7] This analogy between marriage and slavery had historical resonance at the time, but it problematically conflated the

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4. As quoted in Davis, A. (1981). Working women, Black women and the history of the suffrage movement, in A. Avakian and A. Deschamps (Eds.) A Transdisciplinary Introduction to Women's Studies (pp. 73-78). Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, p. 73.

5. Davis, A. (1981). Working women, Black women and the history of the suffrage movement, in A. Avakian and A. Deschamps (Eds.) A Transdisciplinary Introduction to Women's Studies (pp. 73-78). Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, pp. 74-75.

6. Cott, N. (2000). Public vows: A History of marriage and the nation. Harvard University Press.

7. As quoted in Cott, N. (2000). Public vows: A History of marriage and the nation. Harvard University Press, p. 64.

unique experience of the racialized oppression of slavery that African American women faced with a very different type of oppression that White women faced under coverture. This illustrates quite well Angela Davis'[8] argument that while White women abolitionists and feminists of the time made important contributions to anti-slavery campaigns, they often failed to understand the uniqueness and severity of enslaved women's lives and the complex system of chattel slavery.

Black activists, writers, newspaper publishers, and academics moved between the racial justice and feminist movements, arguing for inclusion in the first wave feminist movement and condemning slavery and Jim Crow laws that maintained racial segregation. Sojourner Truth's famous "Ain't I a Woman?" speech, which has been attributed to the Akron Women's Convention in 1851, captured this contentious linkage between the first wave women's movement and the abolitionist movement well. In her speech, she critiqued the exclusion of Black women from the women's movement while simultaneously condemning the injustices of slavery:

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me!....I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

Feminist historian Nell Painter[9] has questioned the validity of this representation of the speech, arguing that White suffragists dramatically changed its content and title. This illustrates that certain social actors with power can construct the story and possibly misrepresent actors with less power and social movements.

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8. Davis, A. (1983). Women, race, class. Random House.
9. Painter, N. (1996). Sojourner Truth: A life, a symbol. W.W. Norton.

Fig. 7.20. Ida B. Wells was a founding member of the NAACP and a journalist who exposed the lynchings of thousands of African Americans.

Despite their marginalization, Black women emerged as passionate and powerful leaders. Ida B. Wells , a particularly influential activist who participated in the movement for women's suffrage, was a founding member of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a journalist, and the author of numerous pamphlets and articles exposing the violent lynching of thousands of African Americans in the Reconstruction period (the period following the Civil War). Wells argued that lynching in the Reconstruction Period was a systematic attempt to maintain racial inequality, despite the passage of the 14th Amendment in 1868 (which held that African Americans were citizens and could not be discriminated against based on their race).[10] Additionally, thousands of African American women were members of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, which was pro-suffrage, but did not receive recognition from the predominantly middle-class, White National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).

The passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920 provided a test for the argument that the granting of women's right to vote would give them unfettered access to the institutions they had been denied from, as well as **equality** with men. Quite plainly, this argument was proven wrong, as had been the case with the passage of the 18th Amendment followed by a period of backlash. The formal legal endorsement of the doctrine of "separate but equal" with Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896, the complex of Jim Crow laws in states across the country, and the unchecked violence of the Ku Klux Klan, prevented Black women and men from access to voting, education, employment, and public facilities. While equal rights existed in the abstract realm of the law under the 18th and 19th amendments, the on-the-ground reality of continued racial and gender inequality was quite different.

Early to Late 20th Century Feminist Movements

Social movements are not static entities; they change according to movement gains or losses, and these gains or losses are often quite dependent on the political and social contexts they take place within. Following women's suffrage in 1920, feminist activists channeled their energy into institutionalized legal and political channels for effecting changes in labor laws and attacking discrimination against women in the workplace. The Women's Bureau—a federal agency created to craft policy according to women workers' needs—was established in 1920, and the YWCA, the American Association of University Women (AAUW), and the National Federation of

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10. Wells, I. B. (1893). Lynch law. https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/wells/exposition/exposition.html#IV

Business and Professional Women (BPW) lobbied government officials to pass legislation that would legally prohibit discrimination against women in the workplace.

These organizations, however, did not necessarily agree on what **equality** looked like and how that would be achieved. For example, the BPW supported the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which they argued would effectively end employment discrimination against women. Meanwhile, the Women's Bureau and the YWCA opposed the ERA, arguing that it would damage the gains that organized labor had made already. The disagreement clearly brought into relief the competing agendas of defining working women first and foremost as women (who are also workers), versus defining working women first and foremost as workers (who are also women). Nearly a century after suffrage, the ERA has yet to be passed, and debate about its desirability even within the feminist movement continues.

While millions of women were already working in the United States at the beginning of World War II, labor shortages during World War II allowed millions of women to move into higher-paying factory jobs that had previously been occupied by men. Simultaneously, nearly 125,000 African American men fought in segregated units in World War II, often being sent on the front guard of the most dangerous missions.[11] Japanese Americans whose families were interned also fought in the segregated units that had the war's highest casualty rates.[12][13] Following the end of the war, both the women who had worked in high-paying jobs in factories and the African American men who had fought in the war returned to a society that was still deeply segregated, and they were expected to return to their previous subordinate positions. Despite the conservative political climate of the 1950s, civil rights organizers began to challenge both the de jure segregation of Jim Crow laws and the de facto segregation experienced by African Americans on a daily basis. The landmark Brown v. Board of Education ruling of 1954, which made "separate but equal" educational facilities illegal, provided an essential legal basis for activism against the institutionalized racism of Jim Crow laws. Eventually, the Black Freedom Movement, also known now as the civil rights movement, would fundamentally change US society and inspire the second wave feminist movement and the radical political movements of the New Left (e.g., gay liberationism, Black nationalism, socialist and anarchist activism, the environmentalist movement) in the late 1960s.

11. Zinn, H. (2003). A people's history of the United States: 1492-present. HarperCollins.

12. Odo, F. (2017). How a segregated regiment of Japanese Americans became one of WWII's most decorated. New America.https://www.newamerica.org/weekly/edition-150/how-segregated-regiment-japanese-americans-became-one-wwiis-most-decorated/

13. Takaki, R. (2001). Double victory: A multicultural history of America in World War II. Back Bay Books.

Although the stories and lives of the leaders of the civil rights movement are centered in popular representations, this grassroots mass movement was composed of working class African American men and women, White and African American students, and clergy that utilized the tactics of non-violent direct action (e.g., sit-ins, marches, and vigils) to demand full legal equality for African Americans in US society. For example, Rosa Parks—famous for refusing to give up her seat at the front of a Montgomery bus to a White passenger in December, 1955 and beginning the Montgomery Bus Boycott—was not acting as an isolated, frustrated woman when she refused to give up her seat at the front of the bus (as the typical narrative goes).

According to feminist historians Ellen Debois and Lynn Dumenil, Parks "had been active in the local NAACP for fifteen years, and her decision to make this stand against segregation was part of a lifelong commitment to racial justice. For some time NAACP leaders had wanted to find a good test case to challenge Montgomery's bus segregation in courts."[14] Furthermore, the bus boycott that ensued after Parks' arrest and lasted for 381 days, until its success, was an organized political action involving both working-class African American and White women activists. The working-class Black women who relied on public transportation to go to their jobs as domestic servants in White households refused to use the bus system, and either walked to work or relied on rides to work from a carpool organized by women activists. Furthermore, the Women's Political Caucus of Montgomery distributed fliers promoting the boycott and had provided the groundwork and planning to execute the boycott before it began.

Fig. 7.21. Rosa Parks's decision to stand up to segregation was part of a lifelong commitment to racial justice.

Additionally, the sit-in movement was sparked by the Greensboro sit-ins, when four African American students in Greensboro, North Carolina, sat at and refused to leave a segregated lunch counter at a Woolworth's store in February of 1960. The number of students participating in the sit-ins increased as the days and weeks went on, and the sit-ins began to receive national media attention. Networks of student activists began sharing the successes of the tactic of the nonviolent sit-in, and began doing sit-ins in their own cities and towns around the country throughout the early 1960s.

14. Debois, E. & Dumenil, L. (2005). Through women's eyes: An American history with documents. St. Martin Press, p. 576.

Fig. 7.22. Ella Baker initiated the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.

Importantly, the sit-in movement led to the formation of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), initiated by Ella Baker shortly after the first sit-in strikes in Greensboro. The student activists of SNCC took part in the Freedom Rides of 1961, with African American and White men and women participants, and sought to challenge the Jim Crow laws of the south, which the Interstate Commerce Commission had ruled to be unconstitutional. The freedom riders experienced brutal mob violence in Birmingham and were jailed, but the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and SNCC kept sending riders to fill the jails of Birmingham. SNCC also participated in Freedom Summer in 1964, which was a campaign that brought mostly White students from the north down to the south to support the work of Black southern civil rights activists for voting rights for African Americans. Once again, Freedom Summer activists faced mob violence, but succeeded in bringing national attention to southern states' foot-dragging in terms of allowing African Americans the legal rights they had won through activism and grassroots organizing.

Fig. 7.23. Bull Connor, head of Birmingham's police, made a pact with the Klan that the police would stay away from Birmingham's bus terminal for fifteen minutes after the Freedom Riders arrived, enough time to severely beat James Peck, and others, into the hospital. This picture was reclaimed from a local journalist who also was beaten and whose camera was smashed.

SNCC's non-hierarchical structure gave women chances to participate in the civil rights movement in ways previously blocked to them. However, the deeply embedded sexism of the surrounding **culture** still seeped into civil rights organizations, including SNCC. Although women played pivotal roles as organizers and activists throughout the civil rights movement, men occupied the majority of formal leadership roles in the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), the NAACP, and CORE. Working with SNCC, Black women activists such as Fannie Lou Hamer and Diane Nash became noted activists and leaders within the civil rights movement in the early 1960s. Despite this, women within SNCC were often expected to do "women's work" (i.e., housework and secretarial work). White women SNCC activists Casey Hayden and Mary King critiqued this reproduction of gendered roles within the movement and called for dialogue about sexism within the civil rights movement in a memo that circulated through SNCC in 1965, titled "Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo." The memo became an influential document for the birth of the second wave feminist movement, a movement

focused generally on fighting patriarchal structures of power, and specifically on combating occupational sex segregation in employment and fighting for reproductive rights for women. However, this was not the only source of second wave feminism, and White women were not the only women spearheading feminist movements. As historian Becky Thompson[15] argues, in the mid and late 1960s, Latina women, African American women, and Asian American women were developing multiracial feminist organizations that would become important players within the U.S. second wave feminist movement.

In many ways, the second wave feminist movement was influenced and facilitated by the activist tools provided by the civil rights movement. Drawing on the stories of women who participated in the civil rights movement, historians Ellen Debois and Lynn Dumenil[16] argue that women's participation in the civil rights movement allowed them to challenge gender norms that held that women belonged in the private sphere, and not in politics or activism. Not only did many women who were involved in the civil rights movement become activists in the second wave feminist movement, they also employed tactics that the civil rights movement had used, including marches and non-violent direct action. Additionally, the Civil Rights Act of 1964—a major legal victory for the civil rights movement—not only prohibited employment discrimination based on race, but Title VII of the Act also prohibited sex discrimination. When the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)—the federal agency created to enforce Title VII—largely ignored women's complaints of employment discrimination, 15 women and one man organized to form the National Organization of Women (NOW), which was modeled after the NAACP. NOW focused its attention and organizing on passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), fighting sex discrimination in education, and defending Roe v. Wade—the Supreme Court decision of 1973 that struck down state laws that prohibited abortion within the first three months of pregnancy.

15. Thompson, B. (2002). Multiracial feminism: Recasting the chronology of second wave feminism, Feminist Studies 28(2): 337-360.
16. Debois, E. & Dumenil, L. (2005). Through women's eyes: An American history with documents. St. Martin Press.

Fig. 7.24. Black feminist bell hooks argues that you can't fight sexism without fighting racism, classism, and homophobia.

Although the second wave feminist movement challenged gendered inequalities and brought women's issues to the forefront of national politics in the late 1960s and 1970s, the movement also reproduced race and sex inequalities. Black women writers and activists such as Alice Walker, bell hooks, and Patricia Hill Collins developed Black feminist thought as a critique of the ways in which second wave feminists often ignored racism and class oppression and how they uniquely impact women and men of color and working-class people. One of the first formal Black feminist organizations was the Combahee River Collective, formed in 1974. Black feminist bell hooks[17] argued that feminism cannot just be a fight to make women equal with men, because such a fight does not acknowledge that all men are not equal in a capitalist, racist, and homophobic society. Thus, hooks and other Black feminists argued that sexism cannot be separated from racism, classism and homophobia, and that these systems of domination overlap and reinforce each other. Therefore, she argued, you cannot fight sexism without fighting racism, classism, and homophobia. Importantly, Black feminism argues that an intersectional perspective that makes visible and critiques multiple sources of oppression and inequality also inspires coalitional activism that brings people together across race, class, gender, and sexual identity lines.

Third Wave and Queer Feminist Movements

"We are living in a world for which old forms of activism are not enough and today's activism is about creating coalitions between communities."

—Angela Davis, cited by Hernandez and Rehman in Colonize This!

Third wave feminism is, in many ways, a hybrid creature. It is influenced by second wave feminism, Black feminisms, transnational feminisms, Global South feminisms, and queer feminism. This hybridity of third wave activism comes directly out of the experiences of feminists in the late 20th and early 21st centuries who have grown up in a world that supposedly does not need social movements because "equal rights" for racial minorities, sexual minorities, and women have been guaranteed by law in most countries. The gap between law and reality—between the abstract proclamations of states and concrete lived experience—however, reveals the necessity of both old and new forms of activism. In a country where women are paid only 81% of what men

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17. hooks, b. (1984). Feminist theory: From margin to center (2nd ed.). South End Press.

are paid for the same labor,[18] where police violence in Black communities occurs at much higher rates than in other communities, where 58% of transgender people surveyed experienced mistreatment from police officers in the past year,[19] where 40% of homeless youth organizations' clientele are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender,[20] where people of color—on average—make less income and have considerably lower amounts of wealth than White people, and where the military is the most funded institution by the government, feminists have increasingly realized that a coalitional politics that organizes with other groups based on their shared (but differing) experiences of oppression, rather than their specific identity, is absolutely necessary. Thus, Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake argue that a crucial goal for the third wave is "the development of modes of thinking that can come to terms with the multiple, constantly shifting bases of oppression in relation to the multiple, interpenetrating axes of identity, and the creation of a coalitional politics based on these understandings."[21]

18. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019, November). Highlights of women's earnings in 2018. https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-earnings/2018/home.htm

19. James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Ana , M. (2016). The report of the 2015 U.S. transgender survey. National Center for Transgender Equality. https://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/USTS-Full-Report-FINAL.PDF

20. Durso, L.E., & Gates, G.J. (2012). Serving Our youth: Findings from a national survey of service providers working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The Williams Institute with True Colors Fund and The Palette Fund. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/80x75033

21. Heywood, L. and J. Drake. (1997). Third wave agenda: Being feminist, doing feminism. University of Minnesota Press, p. 3.

Fig. 7.25. The ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) began organizing to press an unwilling US government and medical establishment to develop affordable drugs for people with HIV/AID.

In the 1980s and 1990s, third wave feminists took up activism in a number of forms. Beginning in the mid 1980s, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) began organizing to press an unwilling US government and medical establishment to develop affordable drugs for people with HIV/AIDS. In the latter part of the 1980s, a more radical subset of individuals began to articulate a queer politics, explicitly reclaiming a derogatory term often used against **gay** men and **lesbians**, and distancing themselves from the gay and lesbian rights movement, which they felt mainly reflected the interests of White, middle-class gay men and lesbians. As discussed at the beginning of this text, queer also described anti-categorical sexualities. The queer turn sought to develop more radical political perspectives and more inclusive sexual cultures and communities, which aimed to welcome and support **transgender** and gender non-conforming people and people of color. This was motivated by an intersectional critique of the existing hierarchies within sexual liberation movements,

which marginalized individuals within already sexually marginalized groups. In this vein, Lisa Duggan[22] coined the term homonormativity, which describes the normalization and depoliticization of gay men and lesbians through their assimilation into capitalist economic systems and domesticity—individuals who were previously constructed as "other." These individuals thus gained entrance into social life at the expense and continued marginalization of queers who were non-White, disabled, trans, single or non-monogamous, middle-class, or non-western. Critiques of homonormativity were also critiques of gay identity politics, which left out concerns of many gay individuals who were marginalized within gay groups. Akin to homonormativity, Jasbir Puar coined the term homonationalism, which describes the White nationalism taken up by queers, which sustains racist and xenophobic discourses by constructing immigrants, especially Muslims, as homophobic.[23] Identity politics refers to organizing politically around the experiences and needs of people who share a particular identity. The move from political association with others who share a particular identity to political association with those who have differing identities, but share similar, but differing experiences of oppression (coalitional politics), can be said to be a defining characteristic of the third wave.

22. Duggan, L. (2002). The new homonormativity: The sexual politics of neoliberalism. In R. Castronovo & D. Nelson (Eds.), Materializing democracy (pp. 175-194). Duke University Press.
23. Puar, J. (2007). Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times. Duke University Press.

Another defining characteristic of the third wave is the development of new tactics to politicize feminist issues and demands. For instance, ACT UP began to use powerful street theater that brought the death and suffering of people with HIV/AIDS to the streets and to the politicians and pharmaceutical companies that did not seem to care that thousands and thousands of people were dying. They staged die-ins, inflated massive condoms, and occupied politicians' and pharmaceutical executives' offices. Their confrontational tactics would be emulated and picked up by anti-globalization activists and the radical Left throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Queer Nation was formed in 1990 by ACT UP activists, and used the tactics developed by ACT UP in order to challenge homophobic violence and heterosexism in mainstream US society.

Fig. 7.26. A mass "die-in" on the lawn of Bldg. 1 closed the demonstration as ranks of uniformed officers, some on horseback, protected NIH headquarters during the "Storm the NIH" demonstration on May 21, 1990.

Around the same time as ACT UP was beginning to organize in the mid-1980s, sex-positive feminism came into currency among feminist activists and theorists. Amidst what is known now as the "Feminist Sex Wars" of the 1980s, sex-positive feminists argued that sexual liberation, within a sex-positive **culture** that values consent between partners, would liberate not only women, but also men. Drawing from a social constructionist perspective, sex-positive feminists such as cultural anthropologist Gayle Rubin[24] argued that no sexual act has an inherent meaning, and that not all sex, or all representations of sex, were inherently degrading to women. In fact, they argued, sexual politics and sexual liberation are key sites of struggle for White women, women of color, gay men, lesbians, queers, and **transgender** people—groups of people who have historically been stigmatized for their sexual identities or sexual practices. Therefore, a key aspect of queer and feminist subcultures is to create sex-positive spaces and communities that not only valorize sexualities that are often stigmatized in the broader culture, but also place sexual consent at the center of sex-positive spaces and communities. Part of this project of creating sex-positive, feminist and queer spaces is creating media messaging that attempts to both consolidate feminist communities and create knowledge from and for oppressed groups.

In a media-savvy generation, it is not surprising that cultural production is a main avenue of activism taken by contemporary activists. Although some commentators have deemed the third wave to be "post-feminist" or "not feminist" because it often does not utilize the activist forms (e.g., marches, vigils, and policy change) of the second wave movement,[25] the creation of alternative forms of culture in the face of a massive corporate

24. Rubin, G. (1984). Thinking sex: Notes for a radical theory of the politics of sexuality. In C. Vance, (Ed)., Pleasure and danger. Routledge

25. Sommers, C. H. (1994). Who stole feminism? How women have betrayed women. Doubleday.

media industry can be understood as quite political. For example, the Riot Grrrl movement, based in the Pacific Northwest of the US in the early 1990s, consisted of do-it-yourself bands predominantly composed of women, the creation of independent record labels, feminist 'zines, and art. Their lyrics often addressed gendered sexual violence, sexual liberationism, heteronormativity, gender normativity, police brutality, and war. Feminist news websites and magazines have also become important sources of feminist analysis on current events and issues. Magazines such as Bitch and Ms., as well as online blog collectives such as Feministing and the Feminist Wire function as alternative sources of feminist knowledge production. If we consider the creation of lives on our own terms and the struggle for autonomy as fundamental feminist acts of resistance, then creating alternative culture on our own terms should be considered a feminist act of resistance as well.

As we have mentioned earlier, feminist activism and theorizing by people outside the US context has broadened the feminist frameworks for analysis and action. In a world characterized by global capitalism, transnational immigration, and a history of colonialism that has still has effects today, transnational feminism is a body of theory and activism that highlights the connections between sexism, racism, classism, and imperialism. In "Under Western Eyes," an article by transnational feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty,[26] Mohanty critiques the way in which much feminist activism and theory has been created from a White, North American standpoint that has often exoticized "3rd world" women or ignored the needs and political situations of women in the Global South. Transnational feminists argue that Western feminist projects to "save" women in another region do not actually liberate these women, since this approach constructs the women as passive victims devoid of agency to save themselves. These "saving" projects are especially problematic when they are accompanied by Western military intervention. For instance, in the war on Afghanistan, begun shortly after 9/11 in 2001, U.S. military leaders and George Bush often claimed to be waging the war to "save" Afghani women from their patriarchal and domineering men. This crucially ignores the role of the West—and the US in particular—in supporting Islamic fundamentalist regimes in the 1980s. Furthermore, it positions women in Afghanistan as passive victims in need of Western intervention—in a way strikingly similar to the victimizing rhetoric often used to talk about "victims" of gendered violence (discussed in an earlier section). Therefore, transnational feminists challenge the notion—held by many feminists in the West—that any area of the world is inherently more patriarchal or sexist than the West because of its culture or religion through arguing that we need to understand how Western imperialism, global capitalism, militarism, sexism, and racism have created conditions of inequality for women around the world.

In conclusion, third wave feminism is a vibrant mix of differing activist and theoretical traditions. Third wave feminism's insistence on grappling with multiple points-of-view, as well as its persistent refusal to be pinned down as representing just one group of people or one perspective, may be its greatest strong point. Similar to how queer activists and theorists have insisted that "queer" is and should be open-ended and never set to

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26. Mohanty, C. T. (1991). Under western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. In d. C. T. Mohanty, A. Russo, & L. Torres (Eds.), Third world women and the politics of feminism. Indiana University Press

mean one thing, third wave feminism's complexity, nuance, and adaptability become assets in a world marked by rapidly shifting political situations. The third wave's insistence on coalitional politics as an alternative to identity-based politics is a crucial project in a world that is marked by fluid, multiple, overlapping inequalities.

This unit has developed a relational analysis of feminist social movements, from the first wave to the third wave, while understanding the limitations of categorizing resistance efforts within an oversimplified framework of three distinct "waves." With such a relational lens, we are better situated to understand how the tactics and activities of one social movement can influence others. This lens also facilitates an understanding of how racialized, gendered, and classed exclusions and privileges lead to the splintering of social movements and social movement organizations. This type of intersectional analysis is at the heart not only of feminist activism but of feminist scholarship. The vibrancy and longevity of feminist movements might even be attributed to this intersectional reflexivity—or, the critique of race, class, and gender dynamics in feminist movements. The emphasis on coalitional politics and making connections between several movements is another crucial contribution of feminist activism and scholarship. In the 21st century, feminist movements confront an array of structures of power: global capitalism, the prison system, war, racism, ableism, heterosexism, and transphobia, among others. What kind of world do we wish to create and live in? What alliances and coalitions will be necessary to challenge these structures of power? How do feminists, queers, people of color, trans people, disabled people, and working-class people go about challenging these structures of power? These are among some of the questions that feminist activists are grappling with now, and their actions point toward a deepening commitment to an intersectional politics of social justice and praxis.

Figure 7.22. "Ella Baker" by The Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. License: CC BY 3.0

Figure 7.23. "Freedom Riders attacked" by Tommy Langston, Birmingham Post-Herald/FBI. Public domain.

Figure 7.24. "bell hooks" by Cmongirl. Public domain.

Figure 7.25. "ACT UP Demonstration at NIH" by NIH History Office. Public domain.

Figure 7.26. "ACT UP Demonstration on the lawn of Building 1" by NIH History Office. Public domain.

LOOKING AHEAD

Elizabeth B. Pearce

People who have experienced marginalization in this country continue to work to raise their families, to ensure their children have better lives, and to work toward **equity**. While there are a multitude of individual, organized, and grass roots efforts that work both outside and inside the representative system, we have looked most closely at the analysis of the feminist movement and the ways it intersects with other needs and activism.

The United States has been focused on the Black Lives Matter social movement more fully in 2020 than ever before. Black people have been actively seeking change for hundreds of years. The year 2020 saw increased activity both amongst Black people and among individuals who are not Black. Nationally, there is increased understanding of the **discrimination** and bias that Black people continue to experience. This is a time of enlightenment and understanding, and rapid change. The authors encourage readers to continue to understand how past and current practices affect the experiences of Black and multi-racial families.

One aspect of the current Black Lives Matter movement is the increased involvement of people from other races and **ethnicities**. Called "allies," people who do not have a Black or **person of color** identity, who work to support and advocate for equity, come to this position through a variety of experiences and observations. Often it is an interaction with a close friend or family member who experiences racism that impacts allies. But others may not have close experience with people of color. **"Listening"** to stories, whether through music, the news, novels, or podcasts, is critical to understanding someone else's lived experience. In this podcast, you can hear about one ally, a young Korean American, who surprised himself by speaking up.

https://www.npr.org/2020/07/20/892974604/one-korean-americans-reckoning

Allyship is critical to changing systems of bias, dissemination, and the corresponding privilege that other groups experience. The focus of the story should continue to be Black individuals who have experienced ongoing systemic harm to their families. They have continued to advocate for understanding of their experience, representation, belonging, and an equal opportunity to participate in society and institutions.

You have likely heard of Dr. Martin Luther King Junior's "I Have Dream" speech delivered in Washington, D.C. on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963. Maybe you have heard these famous lines,

> I say to you today, my friends [applause], so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow (Uh-huh), I still have a dream. (Yes) It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. (Yes)
>
> I have a dream (Mhm) that one day (Yes) this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed (Hah): "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." (Yeah, Uh-huh, Hear hear) [applause]
>
> I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia (Yes, Talk), the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.
>
> I have a dream (Yes) [applause] that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of

injustice (Yeah), sweltering with the heat of oppression (Mhm), will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream (Yeah) [applause] that my four little children (Well) will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. (My Lord) I have a dream today. [enthusiastic applause]"

You can read the full text here, at the King Institute's website.

You can watch the whole speech here, with subtitles (although there are occasional places where the audio has been lost).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=615#oembed-1*

It's worth reading and listening to, and reflecting on your viewpoint about whether and how the country has progressed and changed since this speech in 1963. Even as we reflect, we must keep in mind our own **social identities**. This author, a White person, has not experienced the negative effects of racialization; in fact I have benefitted from it, even when I didn't realize it. So, reflect. And a part of that reflection must be the willingness to hear the experience and viewpoint of those whose social identities put them most at risk for structural and individualized discrimination.

Fig. 7.27. Bubba (Darrell) Wallace, Jr. called on NASCAR to ban displays of the Confederate flag.

Fig. 7.28. Former Senator Kamala Harris was elected Vice President in the 2020 election.

There are many Black leaders who are changing the way that representation is expressed and experienced. Bubba (Darrell) Wallace, a successful National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) driver made significant headlines by calling on the organiza-

tion to ban the display of Confederate flags. Within 48 hours, the flags were banned, and he had his race car painted with a Black Lives Matter theme. This famous athlete used his personal influence combined with the ongoing social movement and the current national focus to address a longtime problematic symbol of oppression.

The Black Lives Matter movement has a website and if you've heard the media characterize what Black Lives Matter means, read here. For example, you've probably heard something about "defunding the police." Before assuming what that means to this movement, take the time to read about it.

Senator Kamala Harris, a woman of Black and South Asian (Indian) ancestry was elected Vice President in the national 2020 election. Her nomination and election highlights her education and work accomplishments as well as the importance of representation at the national level. The election of one Black leader does not solve the **inequities** that many people of color experience, but it is one step along the way.

We have looked closely at several ways that representation affects families in the United States. As you continue your education in this class, and in the future, pay attention to the ways in which you see representation making a difference, and the potential for changes in representation.

8. JUSTICE

AUTHOR'S NOTE AND PREVIEW QUESTIONS

Elizabeth B. Pearce

This chapter was created with selected essays by three student authors: Alexis Castenada-Perez, Christopher Byers, and Carla Medel. The balance of the book consists of either collaborative writing among student authors and myself or my individual writing based on substantive brainstorming and research conducted by the research librarian, Michaela Willi-Hooper, the student authors, and myself. But when it comes to justice, I wanted you to read directly the words of students and what matters to them. Going forward, I will add to this chapter with additions by other students. You will read my introduction and then each of the individual students will speak to a meaningful aspect of justice, their experience writing the text, and their developing understanding of social justice.

–Elizabeth B. Pearce

Preview Questions

1. How is justice typically defined? How does it apply to families in the United States?
2. How do race, ethnicity, gender, immigration, and socioeconomic status intersect to create differing experiences with justice?
3. What do the founding documents of our country tell us about justice?
4. In what ways has your family experienced justice and injustice? What topics would you add to this chapter?

JUSTICE: AN INTRODUCTION

Elizabeth B. Pearce

> It's up to all of us—Black, white, everyone—no matter how well-meaning we think we might be, to do the honest, uncomfortable work of rooting it out. It starts with self-examination and listening to those whose lives are different from our own. It ends with justice, compassion, and empathy that manifests in our lives and on our streets.
> **–Michelle Obama, J.D.**

Your **social identity** affects your experience with justice, how you understand what justice is, and how you will respond to this chapter, and this textbook, which is written with an **equity** lens. It is appealing to think that we live in a country where every family has equitable access to opportunity, representation, and justice, but we must recognize the ways in which justice is distributed unevenly. Justice is typically defined as equal access or opportunity, equal treatment, and equal rights.

It is the intent of this chapter, and of this text, to uncover the ways in which representation and justice contribute to **inequity** in family experiences in the United States. When we talk about families, we are moving far beyond the social construction of the typical family and the ways that government and other institutions define "family" for taxes, health care, and other legal rights and responsibilities. We are including all the ways that people define their own families. It is our aspirational goal to inspire readers to understand injustice more deeply and to advocate and contribute to changes toward greater equity for families in the United States.

The Social Construction of Justice and Criminality

Flowing from the representation via elected officials is the common law system of justice generally in use in the United States. Common law (aka case law) is law that is derived primarily from the court system, meaning that when a case is tried and decided in a court it can affect civil law, those laws that are created by governing bodies such as state legislatures and the federal congress.

The level a particular court holds will affect whether counties, states, or the whole country will see a change in law based on the decision. Who makes those court decisions? While juries are involved in some cases, judges are the ultimate arbiters, as they make many decisions before a case even appears before a jury, as well as deci-

sions all along the way about what evidence, witnesses, and motions will be allowed. Many cases are decided by a single judge or a panel of judges, without a jury. This is true to the United States Supreme Court, the Regional Appeals Courts, and many lower-level courts. Who judges are, their experiences, their beliefs, and their backgrounds have a big impact on all citizens of the United States. Judges in the United States must meet requirements such as having a Juris Doctorate (law degree), passing the bar exam, and practicing law. Judges may be elected or appointed depending on the governing regulations of the county, state, circuit, or federal system. Appointments are made by elected officials (e.g. the President of the United States appoints federal justices and then The Senate must confirm that appointment in order for it to be official). As you can see, the system of common law comes back to elected officials, and participation of residents in the United States.

Fig. 8.1. The Roberts Court, November 30, 2018. Seated, from left to right: Justices Stephen G. Breyer and Clarence Thomas, Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., and Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Samuel A. Alito. Standing, from left to right: Justices Neil M. Gorsuch, Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan, and Brett M. Kavanaugh. Photograph by Fred Schilling, Supreme Court Curator's Office. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the United States; decisions made by this court affect civil laws and all existing related case law in the country.

We will discuss the social construction of justice and criminality in the United States, and we will include aspects of the court system, the government, and the criminal justice system for our examples. If you would like to more clearly understand the structure and interrelationships of these systems, these openly licensed and free texts are useful:

- [American Government – 2e from the University of Oklahoma](#)
- [Introduction to the American Criminal Justice System from Southern Oregon University](#)

Like every system created by human beings, the justice system, and what is considered to be criminal, is a **social construction**. We have created and defined structures, roles, and institutions that we tacitly agree to abide by. Ideas such as "justice" "rehabilitation," "debt to society," and "criminality" all have definitions that have changed over time and location. For example, let's look briefly at the plant marijuana which is frequently dried to be smoked, has oil extracted, or is otherwise ingested or applied. Is it a valuable medicine? Is it an illegal drug? Is it bad for you? Is it a comparable form of recreation to alcohol? Is it an essential service in the time of COVID-19? Are you a criminal if you use it? The answers to these questions vary based on location (federal, state, and county laws) and over time. They vary based on your profession and employer. Currently, it is legal in 33 states to use marijuana for medical purposes, and it is also legal for recreational purposes in 11 states, including Oregon.[1] But its use is also considered to be criminal; cannabis over 0.3% THC continues to be completely illegal under the federal Controlled Substances Act of 1970. The increased legislative activity around marijuana between 2009 and the present day illustrates the very complicated relationship between federal and state governments and that the **social construction** of marijuana is in contention. For recent history and up-to-date changes, consult the [Cannabis in the United States Wikipedia page here](#).

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1. National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics. (2019). Marijuana Incarceration Statistics. Retrieved July 17, 2020, from https://drugabusestatistics.org/marijuana-incarceration/

Fig. 8.2. Marijuana plant

Fig. 8.3. A dried flower bud of the Cannabis plant.

Cannabis flowers contain many different psychoactive compounds that are used for recreational or medicinal purposes. The plant goes by many different names: marijuana, pot, weed, dope, Mary Jane, etc. The bud is usually either crumbled up and smoked or mixed with food into an edible.

From this example, you can see how a social construction can determine whether something (in this case, a plant) is perceived to be criminal, medicinal, or recreational. The most common use of marijuana for medical reasons is for chronic pain control which has been found to be effective for millions of Americans.[2] Based on location, someone who uses this plant medicinally may be branded a criminal rather than a patient treating a medical problem. We will extend this idea to people: how social constructions such as gender, race, poverty, and sexuality translate into justice being interpreted and applied unevenly to different people based on **implicit bias** and the **socially constructed difference** of identities.

Race, Legal, and Extralegal Justice

We know that the original construction of **equality** in the United States actually referred to equality amongst White male landowners (as described at the start of this chapter). The purpose of this textbook is to examine the needs and experiences of current American families, and some exploration of history is helpful for context. There exists a disparity in the United States currently related to criminality and justice. This can be traced back to the poverty, bias, and institutional **discrimination** that Black people have faced not just during slavery, but through post-emancipation Jim Crow Laws, the racial caste system that limited income, wealth accumulation, and rights of African Americans. For example, Black people were limited from using bathrooms, drinking from water fountains, sitting in certain seats in restaurants and transportation, and generally segregated to separate

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2. Grinspoon, P. (2020, April 10). Medical marijuana. Harvard Health Publishing. https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/medical-marijuana-2018011513085

locations in public spaces including libraries and schools. These laws lasted for about 100 years until the Civil Rights Act was signed in 1968.

Fig. 8.4. Many spaces and services were explicitly or implicitly segregated.

A result of these laws was the criminalization of everyday actions by Black people, performed in spaces that were either explicitly or implicitly for White people. This resulted in both formal punishment, such as imprisonment, but also the beating and lynching of Black people. Families continued to be broken up, not through slavery, but now through violence, imprisonment, and death for the **socially constructed** criminality of being in the wrong place or talking with the wrong person. Multiracial interactions were stigmatized, and Black men

were consistently punished for any interaction with a White woman. Class, gender, and race intersected in a way that often led to Black men being killed or imprisoned by legal or extralegal means.

In February 2020, Ahmaud Arbery was killed while out jogging. Three men believed that he looked "suspicious" and similar to someone who committed a burglary weeks earlier, armed themselves with a shotgun and a handgun, chased him, and shot him dead. In the *New York Times*, many Black people who jog to stay fit and relieve stress wrote about the dangers of "running while Black." They describe staying in parks rather than running on neighborhood streets, wearing brightly colored shirts and shoes to signify that they are joggers, avoiding new areas, and taking care to call out "hello" or "excuse me" in order to signal to people that they are friendly. These actions are intended to keep people from harassing or harming them.[3]

Fig. 8.5. Silhouettes of three runners on a city street

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3. Futterman, M. & Minsberg, T. (2020, May 8). After a killing, "running while black" stirs even more anxiety. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/08/sports/Ahmaud-Arbery-running.html

Socioeconomic Status and Incarceration

Organizations such as the American Bar Association and media outlets like *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* have all written extensively about the criminalization of poverty. Many crimes are punished by fees and fines in addition to some kind of incarceration (jail, prison, probation and/or parole sentences). Incarceration affects individuals and families by the loss of autonomy, parenting and family connections, as well as loss of income. Many people will lose their jobs, so that even when they finish a sentence, they are unemployed. Finding employment and housing is more difficult with a criminal record. Add on top of this, there is the payment of fines and fees.

Fig. 8.6. About half of the adults in the U.S. have had a family member incarcerated for one or more nights in prison.

Families with accumulated wealth and higher incomes will be able to pay these fees and fines more quickly than a family that has not accumulated wealth or has a low-paying job. In some states, if interest and additional fees accrue, it can lead to additional incarceration, loss of a driving license, or loss of an occupational license, making it more difficult to earn money with which to pay the fines. This affects the financial, physical, and mental health of families. Examples such as a 12-month sentence for stealing a can of beer, three days in jail for catching a fish off-season, and 22 days in jail for not having enough money to pay fees when appearing in court are cited by the National Public Radio investigation into court fees and the incarceration of poor people who cannot pay them. You can listen to the twelve-minute report here: As Court Fees Rise, The Poor are Paying the Price.

Approximately half of all adults in the United States have had an immediate family member incarcerated for one or more nights in prison, raising incarceration in the United States to the level of a **social problem**. Incarceration disproportionately impacts low-income families and people of color. Compared to White adults, Black adults are three times more likely to have had a family member incarcerated and Latinx adults are 1.7 times more likely to have had a family member incarcerated for more than one year. Adults with lower household incomes (less than $25,000) are three times more likely than adults with a household income of $100,000 or more to have a family member incarcerated for a year or more.

In the following essay, Human Services major Heather Denherder describes her experience with working through her addiction-associated criminal background and toward her career passion of working with families. Along the way, she uncovered realizations about the role that race plays in her journey.

Career, Criminality, and Race

By Heather Denherder, A.S. in HDFS Human Services Option, LBCC, 2020

During my Human Services practicum class, I worked with Justice-involved students (people who have experience with jail, prison, parole, or probation) and I have seen a trend of discrimination. This comes not from anyone working at my site, but their experience when they tell their stories about not being able to find work, housing, and some not being able to go into the field they are interested in because they have a criminal record. Even though they have changed the law and can no longer ask if you have a criminal record on work applications, it still sometimes comes up in the interview.

I myself have a criminal record and when I was deciding what I wanted to do for a career I received a lot of flak not only from people just looking in from the outside, but also from people like my drug counselor who informed me I would never be allowed or certified by the state to work with children, even if I had a degree. I struggled with the thought of getting my degree and then not being able to work in the field I wanted not because I wasn't equipped to, but because of my bad decision when I was young.

I not only have been able to complete a degree in the field I want to work but I also am approved by the state of Oregon to work with children. Currently, I am working with an educator that has been involved with the justice system. I believe that this has been possible for both of us not just through our own hard work and determination but also because we are White because in the society we live in today we are still the "power" race. I am lucky enough to be working at a site that treats everyone equally and they just want to help everyone no matter what your race is or what your background looks like they want to teach/guide you in being successful as not only a college student but also as a functioning member of society once they have a certificate.

My mentor believes that everyone is capable of change as long as they have the correct tools, support, and know-how to use the tools they have been given. I was listening to one of the students talking about how hard it is for her to even decide what field of study to go into because of her criminal history and that she was told she would never be able to get a job in that field because of her history; she couldn't decide what or if she even wanted to continue with school, she was crying and felt defeated.

I could definitely relate with her for that was me when I first came back to school I often felt defeated because I felt that the "felon" label was going to follow me the rest of my life. What I know now is even if we are labeled and there is a stigma around the label society has given us that through hard work and determination it can be overcome.

When I was trying to find a placement for the Human Services practicum I could not find one and not because I wasn't qualified or even because of my felonies but because my release date off parole hadn't been long enough ago and once again I felt completely defeated. Being open and honest about my past put me right where I needed to be. If you are a minority with a label it can be more difficult to overcome such stigmas. It is all too often that being White has become the most powerful race not only in the workplace but also in the eyes of the law. It is prevalent in the legal system. How many times have you seen or heard about a person of privilege "a White person" committing a crime. I have very rarely heard it was a "White person" that attacked me, instead I hear it was a "person" whereas people of color are usually called out by race or ethnicity, such as a "Black person" attacked me.

In 2009 the statistics for individuals incarcerated as Blacks were six times higher than White males. I know that even though I have been to prison there is a higher chance of me being able to find a job in any field than a minority with the same criminal history as me being able to work. I think that social media and the news do a great job at highlighting the crimes of minorities while brushing the crimes of Whites under the rug. How many serial killers have you seen that are anything but White? I personally can not think of one that isn't White yet when we think of a murder we think of people of minority and why is that? Social media and the news are huge indicators of what society is going to see and know about. It is sometimes hard for White people to acknowledge that they are in the power position when it comes to race. Being in college, talking with others, and doing research helped me see that White people hold the power in most situations.

The intersections of our **social identities** will overlap with the identities of those who make the policies and laws, those who enforce them, and those who make the judgments that impact incarceration, parole, probation, and future experiences. Paying attention to these overlaps and attempting to overhaul our systems to correct discrimination that is built into our psyches and our systems will create more equitable opportunity, treatment, and rights for all families.

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THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF JUSTICE

Alexis Castaneda-Perez

Preface

As a psychology major, I was surprised to find myself contributing and writing for an HDFS open textbook. "What does any of this have to do with the human psyche?" was something I was asking myself before I started research and writing. While we learned of **intersectionality** in HDFS 201, I didn't really start to fully grasp the concept until I started writing for this project. It's not just sociology and psychology that comes into play when we talk about social justice, but instead a strong cooperation of multiple disciplines are involved in understanding how inequality and injustice occur. Everything is connected whether we realize it or not.

After the events that happened during the spring and summer of 2020, it feels very gratifying to try and help educate others on topics and ideas that I myself didn't fully understand when I began writing. I don't necessarily consider myself a great writer, but challenging myself to do this project has only made me a better student. If there's anything that I would like for someone to take away from this reading, it's this: for some, it is easy to deny that many of the ideas discussed (such as intersectionality and institutional racism) exist. Human civilization and society stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. Many modern institutions and values in the United States were founded on the antiquated idea that those pertaining to a certain class and race were superior to others. Context matters and it shouldn't be ignored.

With that being said, I want to thank everyone who collaborated on this project for being some of the most open-minded and friendly people I've met!

Following is a series of short essays that explore various groups who experience injustice and the ways that **social identities** overlap with the justice system.

What does Justice look like?

The last few words of the United States Pledge of Allegiance are "with liberty and justice for all." It's part of our nation's identity. The unfortunate reality is that our justice system wasn't ever made to be fair. The first form of police in the southern part of the United States were slave patrols.[1] Their purpose was to capture escaped

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1. Potter, G. The history of policing in the United States. EKU Online. https://plsonline.eku.edu/sites/plsonline.eku.edu/files/the-history-of-policing-in-us.pdf

enslaved people, to prevent further escape, and to discipline those enslaved. For hundreds of years in the United States the justice system's job was to enforce the idea of White supremacy, and to limit the rights of women and people of color. This can be seen in Supreme Court cases such as Dredd Scott Vs Sanford, where the Supreme Court ruled that anyone with African ancestry could never become a citizen of the United States, and therefore not be able to sue in federal court. The Supreme Court also seized this opportunity to rule that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional. This meant that the federal government couldn't prevent slavery in certain territories. This decision was unsurprising to many Americans, because seven of the nine Supreme Court justices at the time of the Dredd Scott decision had been appointed by pro-slavery presidents.[2] Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, who authored the majority opinion for the Dredd Scott case, wrote in reference to the legal status of African Americans, "They are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word 'citizens' in the Constitution, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States."[3]

While there may not be laws, rules, and regulations that explicitly target people of color (**POC**) today, there do exist many that their entire origins are based on racism and prejudice (See Housing Chapter: Redlining). In many cases, those whose duty is to exercise the law simply choose to ignore crimes that are being committed against POC. For example: 37 percent of cases involving missing/disappeared Native American women are dismissed by the US Attorney's Office.[4] To learn about the search for missing and murdered Indigenous women, listen to this 1A podcast.

https://the1a.org/segments/search-missing-murdered-indigenous-women/

This is a pattern that goes back to at least the 1920s when local law enforcement neglected to properly investigate murdered Native Americans during the infamous Osage Indian Murders. The Osage Indian Murders show one of the more blatant attempts of a government trying to circumvent justice in order to oppress and marginalize a group of minorities. The Osage people of Kansas were relocated to a reservation in Oklahoma around 1870. It later became known that the Osage reservation is located on top of one of the largest oil deposits in the country. As a result of this, the Osage people saw an extraordinary increase in wealth. The United States Congress eventually passed a law requiring a guardian to assume control of every Osage's finances until they were deemed 'competent'. The guardians were of course always White males, who usually didn't have the best interests of the Osage in mind, often defrauding them.

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2. PBS. (n.d.). Dred Scott's fight for freedom. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2932.html

3. Brewer, R. M., & Heitzeg, N. A. (2008). The racialization of crime and punishment: Criminal justice, color-blind racism, and the political economy of the prison industrial complex. American Behavioral Scientist, 51(5), 625–644. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764207307745

4. National Indian Council on Aging. (2019, January 21). Inadequate data on missing, murdered indigenous women and girls. https://www.nicoa.org/inadequate-data-on-missing-murdered-indigenous-women-and-girls/

"Justice" Depends on Race

There currently exists a disparity in the United States that has been rapidly increasing particularly within the last two decades. African Americans face harsher punishments than a White person would for committing the exact same crime. If you compared the sentence of a Black person and a White person for a similar crime, Black people serve sentences around 19% longer than White people do on average. Not only do Black people serve longer sentences, but the more Afrocentric features someone has the more likely they are to be sentenced to death.[5] This recent disparity while having many causes, can largely be attributed to the Supreme Court ruling on the case of United States vs Booker. The Supreme Court ruled that judges didn't have to strictly adhere to mandatory sentencing regulations that were created in 1984 under the Sentencing Reform Act, a bipartisan bill that aimed to increase fairness and consistency of sentences (whether this reform actually worked could be debated as well, because the Reagan administration doubled down on Nixon's War on Drugs during his presidency; the policies introduced during this time disproportionately targeted **POC**). Instead, the federal government found that the United States vs Booker ruling actually has been counterproductive to the Sentencing Reform Act, and actually created more sentences inconsistent with regulations, and a greater racial disparity as well.[6] Since judges can use the regulations as just advisory, their biases and preconceived notions of people of color have a much larger role in the sentencing of minorities than they did before 1984.

The War on Drugs

Originally coined by former president Richard Nixon, the War on Drugs was first started as a campaign by the Nixon administration. Although it wasn't known as "the War on Drugs" until 1971, drug reform in the United states dates back many years all the way to the beginning of the 20th century when the first drug prohibition policies were being passed. The Harrison Narcotics Tax of 1914 was one of the first federal laws to regulate drugs.[7] On paper the aims of the Nixon campaign were to try and shrink the drug trade in the United States and prevent new addicts through various policies,[8] which includes the creation of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), and giving increased funding to law enforcement agencies (LEA) to actively seek out drug charges.

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5. United States Sentencing Commission. (2017, November). Demographic differences in sentencing: An update to the 2012 Booker Report. https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/research-and-publications/research-publications/2017/20171114_Demographics.pdf

6. Department of Justice. (2006, March 15). The impact of United States v. Booker on federal sentencing [fact sheet]. https://www.justice.gov/archive/opa/docs/United_States_v_Booker_Fact_Sheet.pdf

7. PBS. Opium through history. Frontline. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/heroin/etc/history.html

8. Nixon, R. M.(1971, June 17). President Nixon declares "war on drugs." The American Presidency Project. https://www.encyclopedia.com/science/medical-magazines/president-nixon-declares-war-drugs

Drug crime was so low on the priority list for most LEAs when the 'war' started, that many agencies did not try to enforce the new policy. To try and get all LEA to participate in the war, the federal government provided them with a few incentives. Firstly, they could compete to receive federal cash grants. This allowed many agencies to expand their number of officers and to start a new narcotics task force in order to increase the number of arrests. Simply put, more arrests and convictions equals more money for the agency. In addition to giving money to LEA, the federal government also provided cooperating agencies with Intelligence, special training, and equipment in order to carry out the war. To top it all off the government let agencies keep almost all of the money that they seized in drug raids.[9] Overall this system has led to issues such as the militarization of the police and an increase of **POC** in prison for nonviolent crimes. Even one of [Richard Nixon's own aides has admitted that the War on Drugs was used as a means to incarcerate Black people.]

The Militarization of Police

As a direct result of the War on Drugs, the police in the United States are given more freedom and weaponry than ever before. Concerns have been raised recently regarding what is called "Warrior Culture" that is present in many police departments, where officers are encouraged to take a "warrior's mindset" This sometimes is in contrast to academy training and is instead encouraged by fellow officers, but not always. The warrior mindset can also be understood as an "Us vs Them" form of thinking. Police are being taught that they live in a hostile environment that is out to get them.[10] Rookie officers are told constantly that their lives are in danger and that they should be scared or else they could die. Many departments say that their first and immediate goal is to make sure officers are unharmed and get home safely; this tends to foster fear in officers and causes overestimation of danger. As a result, officers are more likely to treat ordinary citizens as a threat and to escalate the situation entirely. This counter-intuitively raises the risk of death for both police officers and citizens. In order to benefit our communities to the best of their ability, police must work closely with the communities that they are serving. A heavily armed and paranoid police force does not mesh well with people who are growing ever more distrustful of police. For many decades, national confidence and trust in the police have remained at around 60%[11]. Unsurprisingly trust and confidence for the police are much lower in minority communities. African Americans' trust of the police sits at just 31%.[12][/footnote] While minority communities could greatly

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9. Alexander, M. (2020). The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness. New Press.

10. Stoughton, S. (2015, April 10). Law enforcement's "warrior" problem. Harvard Law Review, 128(6). https://harvard-lawreview.org/2015/04/law-enforcements-warrior-problem/

11. Tyler, T. R. (2011). Trust and legitimacy: Policing in the Usa and Europe. European Journal of Criminology, 8(4), 254–266. https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370811411462

12. [footnote]Tyler, T. R. (2005). Policing in black and white: Ethnic group differences in trust and confidence in the police. Police Quarterly, 8(3), 322–342. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611104271105

benefit from a well-trained police presence, they are often disproportionately arrested, harassed, disrespected, and made victims of police brutality.

Police Brutality

"… the senseless acts of killings of these young boys out there … This is reality, this is my world, this is what I talk about in my music. You can't delude that. Me being on a cop car, that's a performance piece after these senseless acts … Hip-hop is not the problem. Our reality is the problem of the situation. This is our music. This is us expressing ourselves."   – Kendrick Lamar to TMZ

Fig. 8.7. Kendrick Lamar sees hip hop as an expression of the problem of racism, not part of the problem itself.

During the 2015 BET awards Kendrick Lamar performed his hit song "Alright" off of his album *To Pimp a*

Butterfly, whose lyrics have been praised by critics for being politically-charged and a socially relevant commentary on the struggles of the modern African American. At some point in the performance, Lamar stood on top of a police car that has been vandalized, a symbolic statement for many viewers showcasing his support for those protesting the killing of unarmed Black men and condemning the police for their actions. In 2014 and 2015, many high profile cases of police brutality emerged. To name a few: Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Walter Scott, and Freddie Gray. There were over 1,059 known police killings in the United States in 2014,[13] many of whom were unarmed. It was during this year that the Black Lives Matter movement gained large traction. Lamar faced backlash from those critical of the Black Lives Matter movement. Lyrics such as "… and we hate po-po, wanna kill us dead in the streets fo-sho" got the attention of Fox News pundit Geraldo Rivera, who said "This is why I say that hip-hop has done more damage to young African-Americans than racism in recent years. This is exactly the wrong message." Lamar responded by saying, "Hip-hop is not the problem. Our reality is the problem of the situation. This is us expressing ourselves."

People of Color are more likely than White people to be victims of police brutality, African American men, American Indian/Alaskan Native women, and Latino men to be more specific. African American men are the most likely out of all races to be victims. Black men face a 1 in 1000 chance of being killed by police throughout their lifetime.[14] The blame for all of this is all too often placed on minorities. Kendrick Lamar's words are affirming for many young people. Lamar's words still ring true today. With the recent death of George Floyd as well as Breonna Taylor, the United States has seen a surge of protest across all 50 states.[15] There are many parallels that can be drawn from the civil rights movement of the 1960's as well as the 1992 Los Angeles riots, but there is also unique history happening right in front of our eyes. With the relatively recent rise of smartphone cameras, people can now capture police brutality with relative ease, as well as being able to upload it straight to the internet as it happens. While some would hurry to dismiss the problem of police abusing their power as just ' a few bad apples,' we can now see that police brutality isn't a rare or isolated incident. There is a clear pattern of abuse, one that has been occurring in this country for centuries. It is clear that police brutality is a systemic problem in the United States.

13. Mapping Police Violence. About the data. (n.d.). Retrieved September 20, 2020 from https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/aboutthedata

14. Edwards, F., Lee, H., & Esposito, M. (2019). Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States by age, race–ethnicity, and sex. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 116(34), 16793–16798. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1821204116

15. Burch, A. D. S., Cai, W., Gianordoli, G., McCarthy, M., & Patel, J. K. (2020, June 13). How Black Lives Matter reached every corner of America. New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/13/us/george-floyd-protests-cities-photos.html?auth=login-google

Gender, Underrepresentation, and Intersectionality

With many of the high profile cases of police brutality being about men, women of color are often forgotten in the discussion. Due to this there unfortunately are not many studies particularly focusing on the experiences of minority women. The most oppressed voices are usually the least heard. Women of color are at the intersection of gender and race and are victims of police violence just as much as men of color. Physical violence isn't the only way women suffer at hands of the police, they are also more likely to face sexual assault as well. Sexual assault is the second most reported form of police misconduct in the United States.[16][17] **Transgender** women are most vulnerable to sexual violence by the police. Fifteen percent of transgender women report being sexually assaulted while in police custody, while African American transgender women report an astounding 32% assault rate.[18] Some of these instances of sexual violence occur during 'searches' where officers look for narcotics or other paraphernalia. Black men are also often victims of police sexual violence as well.[19] During an investigation by Associated Press News on police sexual misconduct, it was discovered that over 1,000 police officers lost their jobs over a six-year period for sex-related crimes.[20] The [Say Her Name](#) movement was started to bring light to the issues women of color face. We can quickly see a pattern forming. The more instances of **intersectionality** in your life, the more likely you are to be a victim of violence and systematic oppression.

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Figure 8.7. [Kendrick Lamar](#) by Andrew Stephenson for [The Come Up Show](#). License: [CC BY-ND 2.0](#).

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16. Bennett, K. (2018, June 14). Say her name: Recognizing police brutality against Black women. ACLU. https://www.aclu.org/blog/criminal-law-reform/reforming-police/say-her-name-recognizing-police-brutality-against-black

17. National Police Misconduct Statistics and Reporting Project. (2010). Police misconduct statistical report. CATO Institute. https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Session/77th2013/Exhibits/Assembly/JUD/AJUD338L.pdf

18. Office of Justice Programs. (2014, June). The numbers. https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/pubs/forge/sexual_numbers.html

19. Chan, S. (2007, August 9). The Abner Louima case, 10 years later. New York Times. https://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/08/09/the-abner-louima-case-10-years-later/

20. Sedensky, M. (2015, October 31). Hundreds of officers lose licenses over sex misconduct. AP News. https://apnews.com/fd1d4d05e561462a85abe50e7eaed4ec

TREATMENT, JAIL, OR JUSTICE?

Christopher Byers

Preface

I always thought of myself as someone who has been the underdog in life. From my sister's death, to homelessness to drug addiction, I thought I had it worse than anyone in the world. My negative experiences played a role in shaping my belief systems about myself and the world around me and in a way, encapsulated my thinking by keeping me "unique." But then, that all began to change for me. It all started with a class. A Human Development and Family Sciences class at LBCC, where I was introduced to a concept that altered my perception of the world and how I fit into it in a significant way. I began to learn how maybe after all these years of believing I had a hard life and everyone had it easy, this was not the case. I learned about concepts such as "Privilege," **Sociological Imagination**, **Equity**, Social Constructivism, and many other concepts like those that helped me to slowly and sometimes painfully open my eyes to the reality of life. When I learned about Privilege, I had the hardest time wrapping my head around that one. Me, someone whose sister died, experienced homelessness and drug addiction be privileged? I thought at first that it didn't apply to me. But through much internal reflection and writing and processing with people in my life and with my professor, I began to slowly understand what Privilege means. That concept alone was a catalyst for me to dive further into researching injustice in the U.S., and really inspired me to do a lot of deep reflective work on my own **social identity** and what it means to be who I am in the United States. This work has become some of the most important work I have ever done in my life, I see it as a path of healing not only for myself, but for many of us who choose to seek it.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Humans have been ingesting drugs for thousands of years. And throughout recorded time, significant numbers of nearly every society on earth have used one or more drugs to achieve certain desired physical or mental states. Drug use comes close to being a universal, both worldwide and throughout history. –Sociologist Erich Goode

To the extent that social inequality, social interaction, and drug culture contribute to substance use, it is a mis-

take to contribute substance use only to biological and psychological factors. While these factors do play a role, it would be a mistake to ignore the social environments in which people participate in substance use. The role that the family plays in substance abuse potential in members is vastly underestimated. Weak family bonds and school connections are often seen as a major role in the development of substance use in adolescents. Weak bonds to family members prompt adolescents to be less likely to conform to conventional norms and more likely to engage in using drugs and other deviant behavior. Healthy family bonds, coping with trauma, learning how to identify feelings, and open communication all play a positive role in the reduction and prevention of potential substance use of family members in the future.

Mental Health

So what exactly is Mental Health? And how is it defined today? Well, first, lets shine a brief but illuminating light on its history in the U.S. The mentally ill have been treated very poorly for hundreds of years. In the 1800s, it was believed that mental illness was caused by demonic possession, witchcraft, or an angry god. For example, in medieval times, abnormal behaviors were viewed as a sign that a person was possessed by demons. Actually, most people who displayed abnormal behavior were viewed as being possessed by demons. This was not an uncommon societal belief in the 1700s. The idea that mental illness was the result of demonic possession by either an evil spirit or an evil god incorrectly attributed all inexpiable phenomena to deities deemed either good or evil.[1] As a result of these prevailing theories of psychopathology, derived from folklore and inadequate scientific beliefs, these systems are still perpetuated today. Although science has shed a light to a better understanding of mental health, it is still common for stigma, **discrimination**, and ignorance to be the deciding factors in how people with mental health are cared for and treated.

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1. Lumen Learning. (n.d.). The state, law, and the prison system. Retrieved September 3, 2020, from https://courses.lumen-learning.com/suny-introwgss/chapter/the-state-law-and-the-prison-system/

Fig. 8.8. Mental health is a part of our overall health.

Psychological disorders are very common in the U.S, yet there is still a great deal of **inequity** that encompasses mental health issues. Stigma, labeling, ignorance, discrimination and judgement are all still very prevalent and harsh realities in our society today. The biological, sociological, physiological and cultural determinants of mental health disorders vary from case to case and most mental health issues are still often difficult to understand, since the roots of mental illness are often misunderstood. We mentioned the DSM-5 earlier, which is another tool that psychologists and psychiatrists and Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselors (CADC) often use to diagnose mental health and substance use disorders. Our society has made a lot of progress in understanding how some operate, but we still have a ways to go until we as a society can see mental health through a collective, compassionate lens. It is important to remember that those who struggle with psychological disor-

ders are not their disorder. It is something they have, through no fault of their own. As with cancer and diabetes, these people who have psychological disorders often suffer from debilitating, often painful conditions through no choice of their own. These individuals deserve to be treated and viewed with compassion, dignity, and understanding.

Substance Abuse

So what exactly is the relationship between substance abuse and mental health? Substance abuse and mental health are interconnecting and overlapping systems. There has been years and years of stigma, **discrimination**, and misunderstanding with people who both have mental health issues and substance abuse issues. Many people who suffer from substance abuse often have undealt-with trauma, depression, anxiety, and environmental and genetic factors that contribute to the use of substances as a way to self-medicate and cope with how they feel, regardless of the negative consequences that might happen as a result of using. For example, conduct disorder and antisocial personality disorder are strongly associated with the development of both substance use and serious mental illness such as major depression and bipolar disorder. Some substance abuse can even mimic mental health issues, making a diagnosis difficult without dealing with the substance abuse issues first. Psychopharmacological reactions to withdrawal can also induce psychiatric symptoms and exacerbate underlying mental health issues for people as well.

Mental health issues are interconnected with substance abuse. Most people who practice counseling often deal with the substance abuse issues with a client and then proceed to determine if that individual is suffering from mental health issues after the substance abuse is addressed.

Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and the Criminalization of Drugs

Although slavery has been abolished, and the Jim Crow Laws are no longer legal, the systems that have oppressed people of color and marginalized communities from 300 years ago are perpetuated still to this day. It can be argued that the criminal justice system and the legislation and policies that were created to punish drug users and drug crimes were designed to perpetuate **discrimination** and oppression of people of color at disproportionate rates.

A significant aspect of the War on Drugs, a piece of legislation that disproportionately affected people of color in the United States, was that it imposed mandatory minimum sentencing laws that sent non-violent drug offenders to prison, rather than enrolling them in treatment programs. Seventy percent of inmates in the United States are non-White—a figure that surpasses the percentage of non-Whites in US society, which is approximately 23%, according to the 2015 US census. That means that non-White prisoners are far over-represented in the US criminal justice system. The United States has the highest incarceration rates for drug-related crimes. This figure based on the article "[The Black/White marijuana arrest gap, in in nine charts,](#)" demonstrates the **implicit bias** our justice system still has for people of color in the United States.

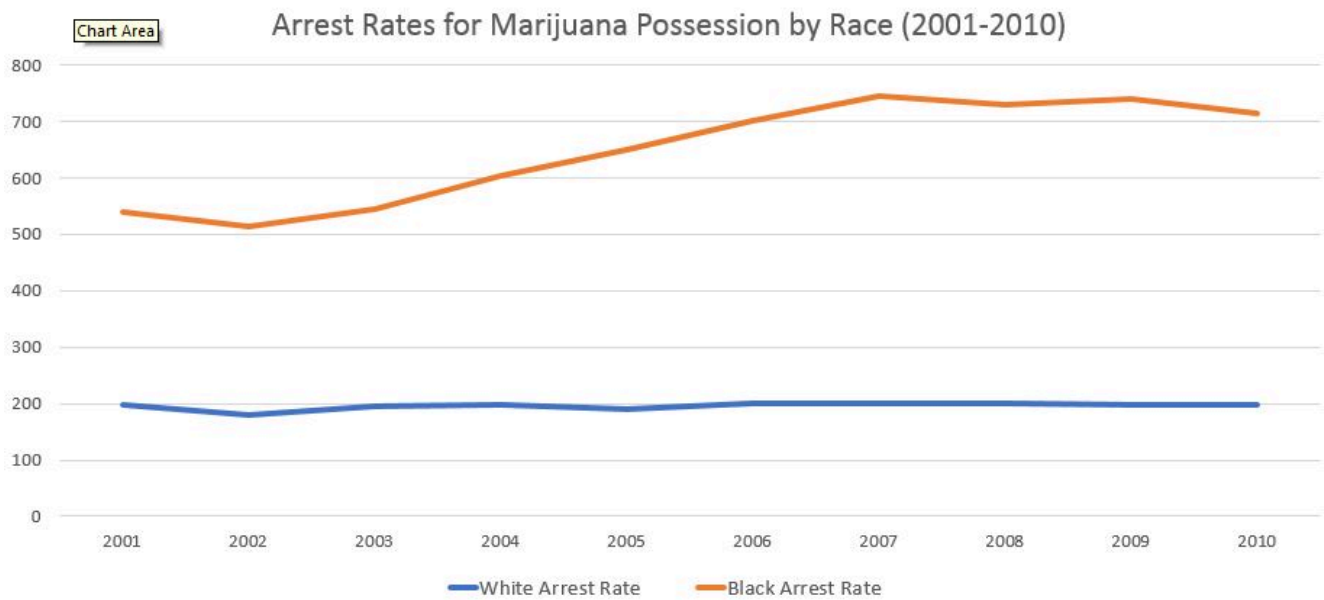Arrest Rates for Marijuana Possession by Race (2001-2010)

Figure 8.9 Black people are disproportionately arrested for marijuana compared to White people.

It is a very sad and common societal view that addicts and substance abuse users as lesser human beings, a lower standard of individual than the rest of society. This is known as stigma. This overarching and negative view on people who struggle with substance abuse plays a role in the passing of policies and criminalization of millions of people every year in the United States, most importantly, affecting families of color. When people of color are targeted for nonviolent drug-related crimes, they are more likely to receive harsher punishments than White people. This has absolutely deleterious consequences for people of color and their families, with the head of households usually being the ones who receive these harsher punishments.

Women of color have been arrested at rates far higher than White women, even though they use drugs at a rate equal to or lower than White women. Furthermore, according to Bureau of Justice statistics from 2007, nearly two-thirds of US women prisoners had children under 18 years of age. Before incarceration, disproportionately, these women were the primary caregivers to their children and other family members so the impact on children, families, and communities is substantial when women are imprisoned. Finally, inmates often engage in prison labor for less than minimum wage. When these individuals are incarcerated, corporations contract prison labor that produces millions of dollars in profit. Therefore, the incarceration of millions of people artificially deflates the unemployment rate (something politicians benefit from) and creates a cheap labor force that generates millions of dollars in profit for private corporations. How do we make sense of this? What does this say about the state of democracy in the United States? When seen through an **equity** lens, we can establish some interesting points. One is that the rates that people of color and White people use drugs are about the same, but one important factor plays a role in the disproportionate rates that **POC** are incarcerated. This is **implicit bias**. People have subconscious ideas about who uses drugs in the United States. These ideas

are based on false narratives derived from implicit biases that perpetuate the **inequitable** incarceration of people of color. And two, the War on Drugs focused and funneled money into the punishment of and incarceration for drug-related offenses.

A question to ponder is this: What would society look like if instead of punishment and criminalizing drug use and drug users, we used that money to focus on treatment, recovery centers, and social services?

REAL LAWS, REAL FAMILIES

Carla Medel

Preface

Now going into my last year in undergrad and looking into graduate school for programs in counseling, specifically designed for children and families, I would like to thank Liz for allowing me to be a part of this project. It has been one of the best experiences so far in my academic career. I think that at first it doesn't really make sense as to why I would be so passionate about something like this, but I'll explain. All I have ever wanted is to see myself reflected in the things that I partake in, part of that being academic materials. As a Latinx woman and daughter of immigrants, I have never really gotten that, and it can truly take a toll on the way you view yourself and your people.

Because of the privilege I have of being able to make it into higher ed and be a part of this project, I wanted to use that to write about people like me, my parents, and my family so that more children don't see themselves as an 'other,' a little section of the text that no one really goes over. Things haven't been and aren't fair for those who identify as immigrants, but people like me have been a part of the United States before this land was even named and we are here to stay so it's time for our stories to be told too. Here I'd like to explain several of the laws that affect not just families like mine, but tangentially all families in the United States.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals aka DACA

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, better known as DACA is a policy created under the Obama administration on June 15, 2012, and it officially started to accept applications on August 15, 2012. Individuals who meet the following criteria are eligible for DACA:

- are under 31 years of age as of June 15, 2012;
- came to the U.S. while under the age of 16;
- have continuously resided in the U.S. from June 15, 2007, to the present;
- entered the U.S. without inspection or fell out of lawful visa status before June 15, 2012;
- were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making the request for consideration of DACA with USCIS;
- are currently in school, have graduated from high school, have obtained a GED, or have been honorably discharged from the Coast Guard or armed forces;

- have not been convicted of a felony offense, a significant misdemeanor, or more than three misdemeanors of any kind; and
- do not pose a threat to national security or public safety.

Applicants will have to provide evidence of the above criteria. In addition, every applicant must complete and pass a biographic and biometric background check. An applicant who is granted DACA is not considered to have legal status but will not be deemed to be accruing unlawful presence in the U.S. during the time period when their DACA is in effect. DACA allows for individuals to live in the U.S. without fear of deportation and with work authorization. DACA is temporary as it only lasts 2 years; every 2 years the individual will need to reapply which means submitting an application, getting biometrics done, and paying a fee of 495 dollars.

At its peak there were up to about 800,000 people who were DACA recipients but those numbers dramatically declined during the Trump Administration, due to fear of what would happen to the DACA program. The number of people on DACA now is closer to 600,000 total.

DACA has been on the line since Donald Trump took presidency, having DACA recipients live in limbo unsure of what their future will look like. Even after waiting years for the Supreme Court to make a decision on DACA during this presidency, that decision is not being respected. The Supreme Court decided in July of 2020 that Donald Trump's decision to rescind DACA was made without the proper steps. Because of this decision, DACA should have been restored to its original form, open to new applicants and advance parole, with a special permit for international travel available to current recipients–but the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has declared that they will reject all initial DACA requests who have not previously been granted DACA. We thought we had a win but not soon after the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a new memorandum limiting the DACA program. This memorandum eliminates DACA eligibility for applicants who have not received DACA in the past, stating that all initial requests will be rejected. It also eliminates the possibility for DACA recipients to be granted advance parole and lastly, requests for renewal, was changed from a two-year period to a one-year period.[1] Not even the highest of courts has been able to protect these young dreamers.

Here is one of many stories from the website of the <u>National Immigration Law Center.</u>[2] This website offers many resources for immigrants. In addition, it contains valuable resources for educators and others who are working with immigrant families.

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1. National Immigration Law Center. Immigrant Legal Resource Center. (2020, August). DACA frequently asked questions. DHS July 2020 memorandum. https://www.ilrc.org/sites/default/files/resources/nilc_ilrc_daca_faq_august_2020.pdf
2. National Immigration Law Center. (n.d.) Stories in defense of deferred action for childhood arrivals. https://www.nilc.org/issues/daca/daca-fifth-anniversary-stories/

Esmeralda

I am a current DACA recipient. Given that I am a member of a multi–[immigration] status family, DACA has allowed me to do more for my family, financially and emotionally.

In regards to education, DACA gave me access to the resources I could never afford prior. Having to experience these hardships, I dedicated my life to support the diverse population of students in California, from pre-K to higher education.

DACA allowed me to complete my A.A. and transfer to a four-year institution. I was finally able to complete my bachelor's degree. After ten long years, this past May, I graduated with a master's and would love to continue on to a Ph.D.

DACA gave me access to a humane job with a living wage. DACA allowed me to have a driver's license. Having an actual identity in this country gave me life. I could live without my everyday fear of being deported or having to drive without a license.

DACA gave me access to open a bank account with a credit line, and I would love to one day do something with that credit, like invest in the country I consider my home: the U.S.

DACA changed my life for the best: being able to legally drive, travel to other states in the country, finish my degrees, have a fulfilling job, and give back to my community.

Most importantly, DACA gave me life.

DREAM Act

The DREAM Act[3] was a bill brought forward in 2017 which also, unfortunately, died that same year. This is what most DREAMers (young undocumented immigrants) are fighting for. This bill would provide DREAMers protection from deportation and an opportunity to obtain legal status if they meet certain requirements.

The DREAM Act would create a conditional permanent resident status valid for up to eight years for young

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3. National Immigration Forum. (2017, July 21). DREAM Act of 2017 bill summary. https://immigrationforum.org/article/dream-act-2017-bill-summary/

undocumented immigrants that would protect them from deportation, allow them to work legally in the U.S., and permit them to travel outside the country. To qualify for conditional permanent resident status, young undocumented immigrants would need to meet the following requirements:

- Through documentation described in the bill, establish that they were brought to the U.S. at age 17 or younger and have lived continuously in the U.S. for at least four years prior to the bill's enactment;
- Pass a government background check, demonstrate "good moral character" with no felony or multiple misdemeanor convictions, submit biometric and biographic data and undergo a biometric and medical exam;
- Demonstrate they have been admitted to a college or university, have earned a high school diploma, or are in the process of earning a high school diploma or an equivalent; and
- Pay a fee.[4]

The bill would automatically grant conditional permanent resident status to DACA recipients who still meet the requirements needed to obtain DACA. Conditional permanent resident status can be changed to lawful permanent resident status by:

- Maintaining continuous residence in the U.S.;
- Meeting one of the following three requirements:

  1. Completion of at least two years of military service,
  2. Graduation from a college or university or completion of at least two years of a bachelor's or higher degree program in the U.S., or
  3. Employment for a period totaling at least three years;

- Demonstrating an ability to read, write and speak English and an understanding of American history, principles, and form of government;
- Passing a government background check, continuing to demonstrate "good moral character" without felony or multiple misdemeanor convictions, submitting biometric and biographic data and undergoing a biometric and medical exam; and
- Paying a fee.

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4. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2020, August 12). Green card eligibility categories. Retrieved September 20, 2020 from https://www.uscis.gov/green-card/green-card-eligibility-categories
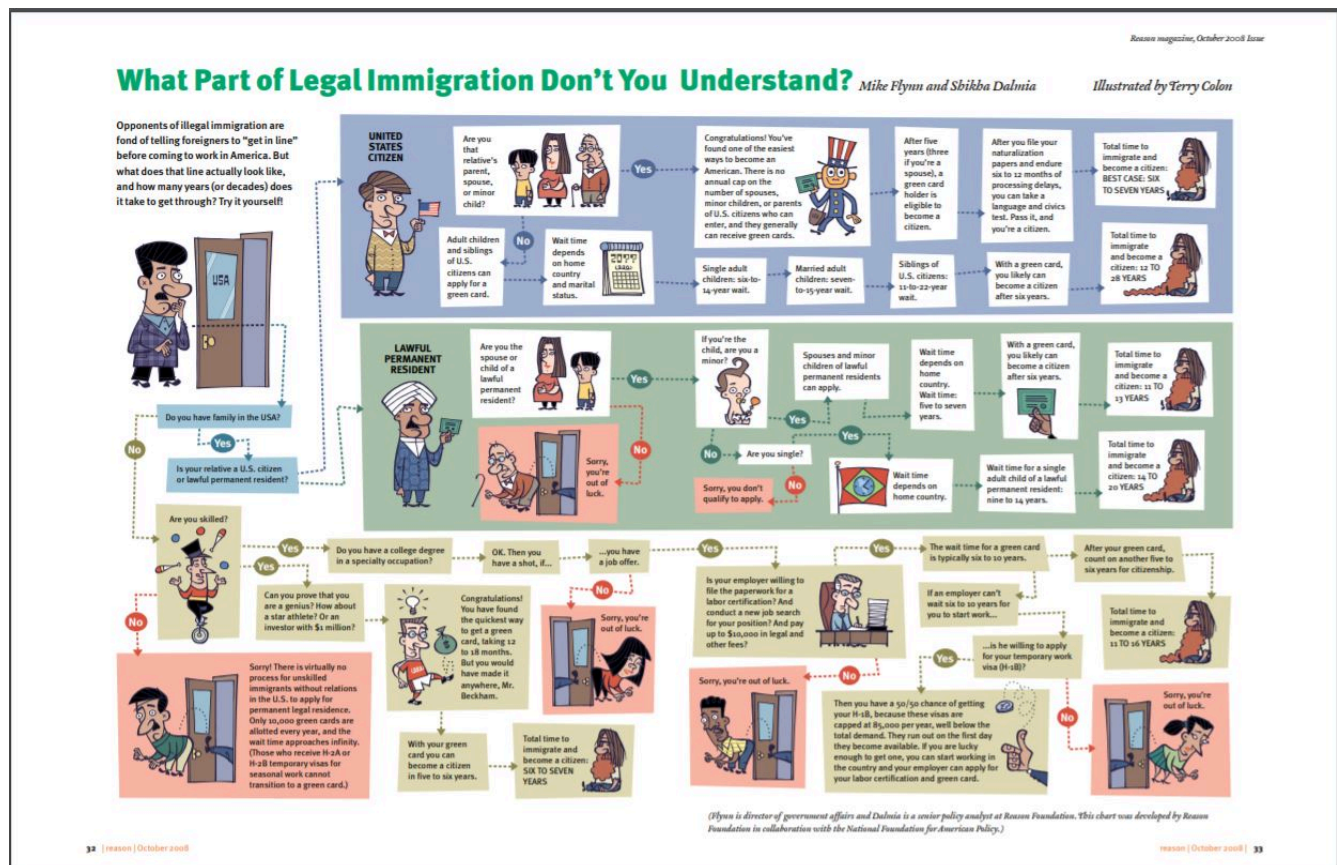
The Legal Process

Figure 8.10. The line that immigrants can get into legally is actually very complicated and long. Larger version.

"Just come here legally" is one of my most disliked phrases because the process to do so is not as easy as the general public thinks. Immigrants just like everyone else seek out to move because where they currently are isn't providing them what is needed to succeed. Unlike here in the United States, they cannot just move from one state to another to seek out those opportunities, as they do not exist there either, instead they need to leave the country. Some people have the time and money needed to try and apply for a visa or have a family member who is a United States citizen or legal permanent resident sponsor them to become a legal permanent resident and are able to come to the United States that way. This could take anywhere from 6 to 28 years and will cost anywhere from $750 to $1,225,[5] so it's obvious that there could be a lack of the money needed to take this route and even worse for others their current situation might be more urgent, and they don't have the time to wait.

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5. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2020, May 15). I-485, Application to register permanent residence or adjust status. Retrieved September 20, 2020 from https://www.uscis.gov/i-485

If legal immigration was easy, accessible, and fast, it's very unlikely that people would risk their lives entering the United States without documentation and living in the United States without documentation.

Fig. 8.11. Many people have died while waiting for hearings while in ICE custody.

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Figure 8.10. "The Legal Process" (c) Terry Colon, Mike Flynn, Shikha Dalmia, Reason Magazine. Used under fair use.

Figure 8.11. "Rest in Power" boxes (c) @unitedwedream. Arranged by Carla Medel. Used under fair use.

REAL NEEDS, ALL FAMILIES

Elizabeth B. Pearce

There is a great deal of discussion in this country about the politics, legality, and ethics of our immigration practices. In this text, we discuss some of the aspects that directly affect immigrant families and their descendants who are living in the United States right now. As discussed in the Social Constructions chapter, laws have primarily been designed to foster inexpensive labor (the immigrants) to benefit the existing landowners, business owners, and consumers already residing in the country. Regardless of employment status, wage, and purpose for coming to this country, these families have the same needs as other residents. In addition, they are navigating new structures such as the health care and insurance system, differing government practices, and perhaps a new language at the same time as they are caring for their children, accessing schooling, finding a place to live, and fostering healthy family routines.

Fig. 8.12. Vietnamese members speak to Representative at Washington state capitol

The authors view all families, regardless of documentation status, as "contemporary families in the United States," the subjects of this course and this textbook. We believe that the well-being of each family in the U.S. is of value in and of itself. In addition, every family affects all the other families within the spheres of the neighborhood, the places of worship, the retail establishments, schools, parks, and employment. As we discuss the laws that affect immigrant families, and the ways in which employment and citizenship practices reflect a lack of justice, think about these families' needs and rights just as you would for any other family.

It is not only laws that work institutionally to foster immigration, but also businesses and corporations. In this excerpt of an article from The Conversation, applied research demonstrates how undocumented labor practices are encouraged.

A Preference for the Undocumented

by Lise Nelson, Associate Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Associate Professor of Geography, Pennsylvania State University

My colleagues and I have conducted research in U.S. communities where undocumented Latino immigrants live and work, including interviews with their employers. We focused on small businesses in rural Colorado and Georgia. We investigated how and why entrepreneurs in construction, landscaping, and low-wage service industries began actively seeking to hire undocumented Latino immigrants starting in the mid-1990s even though immigrant workers were largely absent from these places prior to that time.

What started for many as a short-term solution to fill a labor gap turned into a preference for hiring undocumented workers. Recruitment efforts thus intensified, causing a significant growth in the Latino immigrant population in both places. In a rural Georgia county, the Latino population increased 1,760 percent between 1990 and 2010, due to the increase in these recruitment efforts by businesses involved in construction, landscaping, cleaning, and food provision.

Why did businesses that rely on low-wage workers develop a preference for immigrants and particularly undocumented ones?

In interviews, employers describe the undocumented Latino immigrants they hire as among the most reliable, honest, and hardworking employees they have ever had. As one Georgia employer described it:

> "I think about, if I had to get rid of the nine Hispanics that I've got tomorrow and replace them with locals, to get the same amount of output, I would have to hire fifteen instead of nine and I'd probably have to pay them $1 an hour more each, and that figures up quick. And there's sometimes that you just can't find people to do the work."

Most employers we interviewed began by the late 1990s to organize their businesses around the productivity and discipline offered by an undocumented immigrant workforce.

When we talk about how immigrant families affect other families in the United States we must understand that immigrant families are deeply interwoven into communities, schools, for-profit businesses, services, and all aspects of society. **Kinship** groups themselves can be mixed, made up of recent immigrants, second-generation citizens, indigenous, and citizens whose families have lived in the United States for hundreds of years. It's difficult to unwind the complexity of these relationships, but it is critical to understand that we are intertwined and to continue to educate ourselves about these economic, familial, and societal relationships.

Fig. 8.13. Interwoven patterns are fascinating to study and complicated to understand.

9. FOOD AND WATER

FOOD AND WATER CHAPTER PREVIEW QUESTIONS

As you read this chapter, consider the following questions:

1. How is the production of food tied to equity?
2. What role do government crop subsidies play in nutrition?
3. What role do tax breaks and food banks play in food insecurity?
4. How do food costs and the poverty line interact?
5. What influences a family's food purchases? How does what you've read relate to your own family's experience with food?
6. What are the factors that affect a family's access to safe water and sanitation?
7. What role does the government play in the water and sanitation system?
8. Are safe water and sanitation a human right?

FOOD

Elizabeth B. Pearce and Amy Huskey

> **"I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits." Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Survivalists have a rule of three: you can survive without food for three weeks, without water for three days, without shelter from a harsh environment for three hours, and without air for three minutes.[1] If a human goes without any of these resources for a long enough time, death will eventually be the result. It stands to reason that when we talk about American families' needs, we would talk about all of these; in this chapter we will look at both food and water.

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory (1943) describes these physiological needs as being a key motivator in human behavior.[2] Obtaining food, water, shelter, sleep and oxygen to survive consumes a large amount of our time and resources both directly and indirectly. Think about how much time your family spends working to pay

Fig. 9.1 Some of the healthiest foods are most difficult for families to access.

1. Rule of threes (survival). (2020, February 2). Retrieved February 10, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_threes_(survival)
2. Maslow's hierarchy of needs. (2020, February 6). Retrieved February 10, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow's_hierarchy_of_needs

for food. In general, families pay a smaller percentage of their income for food than they did 50 years ago. That's not because food expenses have decreased, but because other costs, primarily shelter and health care, have increased. We discuss shelter (housing and living environments) in the Housing chapter. Now consider your family's access to water. While we may not think about paying for it as a percentage of our incomes, access to plentiful, clean, safe water is influenced by where we live. The financial resources that are invested into our community infrastructure, which includes water and sanitation, impact our safety and overall health. Where we live matters when it comes to having available and safe water.

Personal finances are only one part of the cost, benefits, and societal dynamics that play into meeting these basic needs. We must pay attention to where foods come from, business and government investment in food production, and the business of food charity. Time is another cost of food; families decide how much time is spent purchasing, preparing, eating, and cleaning up meals. Turning on a faucet to access clean, toxin free drinking water requires building, maintaining, and monitoring water and sanitation systems, and this comes at a cost that not all municipalities can afford. While the federal government has invested in water infrastructure, there is not an ongoing commitment, so these needs must be balanced with competing needs such as schools, parks, police, and libraries. There are variations and influences on how food and water needs are met, but ultimately they must be met in some way.

Producing Food

Prior to the formation of the United States, families found food in a variety of ways, including foraging, hunting, fishing, and growing food. As the country progressed toward a formal organizational structure managed by the Euro-American settlers, Native Americans were restricted to designated reservations, often on land that was not as fertile for farming. Food production via farms became a major economic factor. Industrialization created more efficiencies and more wealth for landowners.

It is important to note that these new ways of sourcing food would not have been possible without three institutional structures:

1. Oppression of the way of life that Native Americans had established here for thousands of years;
2. Enslavement of African immigrants brought to this country for the explicit purpose of free labor without attention to their rights and needs;
3. Laws that controlled immigrants from other countries by limiting who could immigrate by gender, familial, and employment status; laws that discriminate based on nationality and immigration status related to wage, housing options, and kind of employment.

These structures affected the functionality of all families in the United States, favoring White families, especially those who owned land. Which of these structures affect families today? If you answered all three, you are correct. Native Americans are still fighting for rights related to their family needs that have been disrupted and

restricted; the aftereffects of slavery, including the restrictions of wealth attainment on Black people, affects both the families who were able to accumulate wealth and the ones who were not; and current immigration laws still place the needs of the employers first.

Black Farmers

Black farmers in America have had a long and arduous struggle to own land and to operate independently. For more than a century after the Civil War, deficient civil rights and various economic and social barriers were applied to maintaining a system where many Blacks worked as farm operators with a limited and often total lack of opportunity to achieve ownership and operating independence. Although some formerly enslaved people were deeded land in the famous "Forty Acres and a Mule" division of lands in 1868, the same land was later deeded back to the original Confederate owners and the Black families became sharecroppers rather than owners. Other Black farm owners saw their properties diminished throughout the 20th century as described in this fifteen-minute video.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=714#oembed-1

These personal stories help us understand how families that worked hard still were treated unjustly. Black farmers often ended up working for landowners once again. Even as employees, they received less protection than factory and office workers. When Social Security and Unemployment laws meant to protect workers were passed, they excluded people who worked on farms or as domestic help, of which the majority were immigrants and minoritized groups, including African Americans. Diminished civil rights also limited collective action strategies, such as cooperatives and unions.

It is tempting to think that these past laws and practices do not affect us today. Many of the structures survive, however, in both subtle and obvious ways. In addition, because these structures limited access and land ownership in proximity to the vital resources of food and water, Euro-Americans were able to build wealth more quickly and easily than any other group of families. We discuss the institutional factors related to housing, location, and wealth in the Housing chapter.

Farm and Field Workers

Farm workers are and have been an essential part of the United States economy and food system. They come in varying immigration statuses, United States citizens or residents, folx on guest worker visas, or they could be undocumented workers. The following USDA table describes the demographic characteristics of farm workers

in the United States in 2018 from the USDA, collected from data on the American Community Survey (part of the Census project). The data shows that about 55% of farm laborers are born in countries other than the United States.

Demographic Characteristics of Farm Workers in the United States in 2018[3]
Note: Counts all private sector wage and salary workers employed in the crop, livestock, and agricultural support industries.

Item	Farm laborers, graders and sorters	Farm managers, inspectors, and supervisors	All other occupations in agriculture	Agriculture: All occupations	All U.S. private wage and salary workers
Percent female	25	13	32	26	45
Average age in years	39	43	42	40	40
Percent under age 25	22	13	15	19	18
Percent over age 44	38	46	47	41	41
Percent married	47	61	52	51	48
Race/Ethnicity/Ancestry					
Percent White, not Hispanic	32	64	59	43	60
Percent Black, not Hispanic	3	3	5	3	12
Percent other, not Hispanic	2	3	3	2	9
Percent Hispanic: Mexican origin	57	27	28	45	12
Percent Hispanic: Other	7	3	6	6	7
Percent born in U.S. (includes Puerto Rico)	45	76	75	57	80
Percent U.S. citizens	54	84	83	65	90
Education					
Percent lacking high school diploma	48	24	20	38	9
Percent with high school diploma (includes equivalency)	32	31	33	32	29
Percent with at least some college	20	45	47	30	62

3. U.S. Census Bureau. Farm labor. Economic Research Service. https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor/

Differences in demographics are also evident between crop and livestock workers (not shown in table). A larger share of laborers in crops and related support industries are female (28 percent versus 20 percent in livestock). Crop laborers are also less likely to be non-Hispanic White (25 percent versus 48 percent for livestock), and less likely to have been born in the United States (39 percent for crop workers in manual labor occupations versus 60 percent for manual livestock workers). Finally, crop laborers have lower levels of educational attainment: 52 percent lack a high school degree, compared with 37 percent in livestock.

Notably, the U.S. Department of Labor's National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS), discussed below, finds larger shares of foreign-born, Hispanic, and less educated employees among crop and support workers than does the ACS (livestock workers are not surveyed in NAWS). For example, NAWS estimates that in Fiscal Years 2015-16, just 25 percent of crop farm workers in manual labor occupations were U.S. born, compared with 39 percent in the ACS.

Since this data is gathered from a written survey related to the Census, it is important to note that there is likely some underreporting from groups that are the hardest to reach, including people of color, children under five, renters, immigrants, people with limited English proficiency, multiple-family homes, Native tribal and urban communities, disabled people, people who distrust the government, and LGBTQ+ individuals. This is discussed at length in the Representation chapter.

The survey also tells us that the average age for farmworkers is on the rise, and they are more likely to be female. Younger immigrants are less likely to go into farm work than into other professions, so the population is aging. It is hypothesized that as men move toward agricultural employment (rather than working with crops) and there is increased machine usage, women are moving into these jobs.

Immigrants, especially those who are not yet documented or who live in mixed-status families, are more likely to experience poor treatment and be less likely to complain about bad work conditions.

Field Workers

By Carla Medel, Bachelor's Degree candidate: Psychology with Spanish and HDFS minors, Oregon State University, 2021.

103 degrees Fahrenheit, picking zucchini, I turn to the sound of "water, water, we need water!" and to the woman with the purple bandana and a hurt shoulder on the ground; she had fainted of dehydration. She sits underneath a tree for 15 minutes with a bottle of water that one of our

coworkers was able to give her and before I even know it, she is back on the field picking zucchini along my side.

That afternoon as I made my way home, I could not help but to begin crying out of frustration. I was only 16 but I knew that what I had just witnessed was not correct. Feeling hopeless, the next day I no longer wanted to go back to work. What I did instead, was go grocery shopping with my mom. When we headed to produce, and I saw people grabbing zucchini, the tears came again. They did not know what those .76¢ zucchini really cost. This is my story, but this is definitely not a unique one. Immigrant farm workers in the United States are treated terribly, and with little to no protection, others are ready to take advantage.

Food Factory Workers

The recent Coronavirus pandemic has brought necessary attention to the important function of meat production and the preservation of fruits and vegetables in factories. The federal government has determined them to be essential workers. Many of these workers are immigrants and people of color.

The authors of this text plan to elaborate on this group of families in future editions of the text. For now, this podcast which highlights the experience of a mother supporting a family of five who works in the Smithfield pork plant in South Dakota illustrates the dilemmas an essential worker faces.

Procuring Food

We'll discuss getting food, and what causes some families to be hungry, or the more technical term, "food insecure." We acknowledge that food insecurity is a symptom of another **social problem**, poverty. First, let's look at some of the systems that affect food availability in the United States.

Equitable access to food is hampered by governmental systems that focus on subsidizing specific farm crops. Federal government subsidies help farmers reduce their risk due to weather, commodities brokers, economic downturns, and changes in demand. There are only five crops that receive these major government subsidies: corn, soybeans, wheat, cotton, and rice. Producers of fruit, vegetables and meat only benefit from crop insurance and disaster relief.[4] Farm subsidies have increased dramatically in the last four years, totaling $28 billion dollars for a two year period (2018-2020, not including the additional Coronavirus payments authorized in the

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4. Amadeo, K. (2020, June 29). Farm subsidies with pros, cons, and impact. The Balance. https://www.thebalance.com/farm-subsidies-4173885

spring of 2020).[5] This incentivizes the production of certain crops in the United States and provides stability for the families involved in producing those crops.

Fig. 9.2. Fresh produce is more difficult to store and less likely to be available at food banks.

It is more complicated to measure the effects of these subsidies on consumers. We know that these subsidized food crops (corn, soybeans, wheat and rice) are more easily stored and utilized in processed foods, which nutritionists advise should be eaten in the smallest amounts. Crops in their raw forms, such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, meat, and dairy products, provide more health benefits but are not subsidized consistently by the government. Here we may deduce that governmental subsidies of less healthy crops contributes to food availability and cost, affecting food purchases. Lower income families and those living in food deserts (described in the next section) are most affected.

Another challenge to food accessibility is the societal approach which focuses on governmental programs (such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program–SNAP, which will be described later) and charity, which in itself has become a business. Grocery stores and other businesses are provided with tax benefits when they overproduce food and donate it to food banks. Andy Fisher, the author of Big Hunger, describes hearing from grocery store owners who acknowledge the overproduction of sheet cakes, birthday cakes, pastries, and other baked goods. Consumers do not wish to purchase the last cake on the shelf, and so stores overproduce these items. When they are no longer considered fresh, they are donated to food banks. This is one of the reasons that about 25% of the donations that Food Banks give away consist of food that is categorized as unhealthy.[6]

Listen to Mr. Fisher describe the complexities of this cycle here.

Not only is overproduction of food supported by tax deductions, but food banks themselves have become multi-million dollar businesses (also described in the above podcast). Food banks serve a charitable purpose that meets an immediate and important need. At the same time, if the real problem–poverty–were addressed, people could have the dignity of providing and choosing the food that is best for their own family.

Poverty affects Americans of every racial-ethnic group, including those descended from European immi-

5. Charles, D. (2019, December 31). Farmers got billions from taxpayers in 2019, and hardly anyone objected. NPR. https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2019/12/31/790261705/farmers-got-billions-from-taxpayers-in-2019-and-hardly-anyone-objected

6. Hemmelgarn, M. (2013, January 3). Andy Fisher interview [Audio podcast episode]. In Food Sleuth Radio. https://exchange.prx.org/pieces/90347-food-sleuth-radio-andy-fisher-interview

grants, but continues to affect the previously mentioned groups (Native Americans, Black or African Americans, and people descended from Latinx and some Asian countries) in disproportionately larger numbers.[7] The United States is an **individualistic** country and people are sometimes blamed for being poor. This makes the problem of hunger more approachable than the problem of poverty. It is encouraging to note, however, that Americans increasingly understand that poverty stems not from personal shortcomings but from differentiation in circumstance and opportunity. Pew Center survey results released in March, 2020, note that almost ⅔ of American adults say that people who are rich have experienced more advantages than those who are poor; only ⅓ say that it is because rich people have worked harder. These viewpoints are uneven related to political affiliation and age, with Democrats and younger people more likely to hold the majority view.[8] If more people view poverty as a **social problem** than a personal problem, it is more likely to be solved with a systemic solution.

Food Deserts

Perhaps you are familiar with this term, or have lived in a food desert. If you travel by bicycle or via public transport, you may be more aware of food deserts in your community. Food deserts are geographic locations where there is not a variety of healthy food readily available (within a mile in urban environments or within 10-20 miles in a rural area). Food deserts occur nationally, with a greater concentration of food deserts in the Midwest and southern states.

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7. U.S. Census Bureau (2013, February). Poverty Rates for Selected Detailed Race & Hispanic Groups by State and Place: 2007-2011. https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2013/acs/acsbr11-17.html

8. Pew Research Center. (2020, March 2). Most Americans point to circumstances, not work ethic, to explain why people are rich or poor. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/03/02/most-americans-point-to-circumstances-not-work-ethic-as-reasons-people-are-rich-or-poor/

Fig. 9.3. Convenience Stores such as this one don't count as grocery stores because they do not sell the healthy fresh foods that nutritionists recommend.

Think about the community that you live in. Where are the grocery stores? Convenience stores don't count, because they do not typically have fresh fruits and vegetables. Are the stores even spaced out amongst the neighborhoods? Probably not, and typically the dearth of stores is in lower income neighborhoods. The same parts of Portland, Oregon that are identified as redlined neighborhoods in the Housing chapter are also food deserts. The Oregon State (OSU) Barometer wrote about food deserts in Corvallis in 2019, pointing out that the majority of grocery stores in Corvallis are clustered around 9th Street and Walnut Boulevard.[9] Two of the four stores that are more distantly spaced are among the healthiest, emphasizing organic produce and natural foods, but also the most expensive.

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9. Shelby, V. (2019, February 25). Corvallis food deserts make finding nutritious, affordable meals difficult. Daily Barometer. http://www.orangemedianetwork.com/daily_barometer/corvallis-food-deserts-make-finding-nutritious-affordable-meals-difficult/article_e28ad688-38b0-11e9-a269-8b7ab733184f.html

What if there were federal funding to support equitable distribution of grocery stores that had a full selection of healthy foods? In the same way that federal subsidies protect farmers of selected crops from economic problems, they could protect grocery businesses and create greater **equity** for many consumers.

To learn more about food deserts, or to access an interactive map that displays different ways of viewing food deserts, read [NPR's article "How to find a food desert near you"](#) and follow the link to the USDA's Food Atlas.

The Poverty Line and Food Costs

How is poverty defined? While there are multiple measures, a common and shared one is the Poverty Threshold, also known as the Poverty Line. While poverty will affect all of the families related to all of the topics in this text, we will discuss it here because it was originally tied to the cost of food, specifically an "economy food plan." In 1963, the poverty line was designated at three times the economy food plan, and it was assumed "that the housewife will be a careful shopper, a skillful cook, and a good manager who will prepare all the family's meals at home."[10]

When U.S. officials became concerned about poverty during the 1960s, they quickly realized they needed to find out how much poverty we had. To do so, a measure of official poverty, or a poverty line, was needed. A government economist, Mollie Orshanky, first calculated this line in 1963 by multiplying the cost of a very minimal diet by three, as a 1955 government study had determined that the typical American family spent one third of its income on food. Thus a family whose cash income is lower than three times the cost of a very minimal diet is considered officially poor.

This way of calculating the official poverty line has not changed since 1963, although the amount is adjusted by inflation. It is thus out of date for many reasons. For example, many expenses, such as heat and electricity, child care, transportation, and health care, now occupy a greater percentage of the typical family's budget than was true in 1963. In addition, this official measure ignores a family's non-cash income from benefits such as food stamps and tax credits. As a national measure, the poverty line also fails to take into account regional differences in the cost of living. All these problems make the official measurement of poverty highly suspect. As one poverty expert observes, "The official measure no longer corresponds to reality. It doesn't get either side of the equation right—how much the poor have or how much they need. No one really trusts the data."[11]

This is a good time to ask yourself, if you looked at food as a percentage of your budget, would it be the equivalent of 33%? That's how the poverty line is still calculated.

10. Fremstad, S. (2019, September 16). The official U.S. poverty rate is based on a hopelessly out-of-date metric. Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/09/16/official-us-poverty-rate-is-based-hopelessly-out-of-date-metric/
11. DeParle, J., Gebeloff, R., & Tavernise, S. (2011, November 4). Bleak portrait of poverty is off the mark, experts say. New York Times, p. A1.

Fig. 9.4. The measure of official poverty began in 1963 and stipulates that a family whose income is lower than three times the cost of a minimal diet is considered officially poor. This measure has not changed since 1963 even though family expenses have risen greatly in many areas.

The poverty line is adjusted annually for inflation and takes into account the number of people in a family: The larger the family size, the higher the poverty line. In 2010, the poverty line for a nonfarm family of four (two adults, two children) was $22,213. A four-person family earning even one more dollar than $22,213 in 2010 was not officially poor, even though its "extra" income hardly lifted it out of dire economic straits. Poverty experts have calculated a no-frills budget that enables a family to meet its basic needs in food, clothing, shelter, and so forth; this budget is about twice the poverty line. Families with incomes between the poverty line and twice the poverty line (or twice poverty) are barely making ends meet, but they are not considered officially poor.

When we talk here about the poverty level, then, keep in mind that we are talking only about official poverty and that there are many families and individuals living in near poverty who have trouble meeting their basic needs, especially when they face unusually high medical expenses, motor vehicle expenses, college debt, or the like. For this reason, many analysts think families need incomes twice as high as the federal poverty level just to

get by.[12] They thus use twice-poverty data (i.e., family incomes below twice the poverty line) to provide a more accurate understanding of how many Americans face serious financial difficulties, even if they are not living in official poverty.[13]

Food Security and Food Insecurity

Identified in 1995 as a measurable problem, the USDA introduced new language to describe ranges of severity of food insecurity in 2006. The methods used to assess households' food security remained unchanged. Here are the current definitions of food security and food insecurity.

Food Security

- High food security (old label=Food security): no reported indications of food-access problems or limitations.
- Marginal food security (old label=Food security): one or two reported indications—typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake.

Food Insecurity

- Low food security (old label=Food insecurity without hunger): reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake.
- Very low food security (old label=Food insecurity with hunger): Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.[14]

According to the USDA, hunger "… refer(s) to a potential consequence of food insecurity that, because of prolonged, involuntary lack of food, results in discomfort, illness, weakness, or pain that goes beyond the usual uneasy sensation." Nationally, food insecurity has been a problem as long as it has been measured and the rate has changed very little; the number of food insecure families was 12% in 1995 and was still 11.1% in 2018. Let's look more closely at Oregon, where food insecurity has been one of the toughest challenges to overcome.

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12. Wright, V. R., Chau, M., & Aratani, Y. (2011). Who are America's poor children? The official story. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.

13. Anonymous. (2016). Social problems: Continuity and change. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing. https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/social-problems-continuity-and-change

14. Economic Research Service. Department of Agriculture. (2019, September 4). Definitions of food security. Retrieved March 7, 2020, from https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security/

According to the Oregon Public Health Division, Oregon ranks 13th in the nation for food insecurity among children, and 21st for adults. While efforts have been made to combat hunger in Oregon, it is still a big problem for the state. According to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) data, more than one in seven of Oregon households were food insecure between 2014 and 2016.[15] Renters in Oregon had food insecurity rates as high as one in four between 2015-2017.[16]
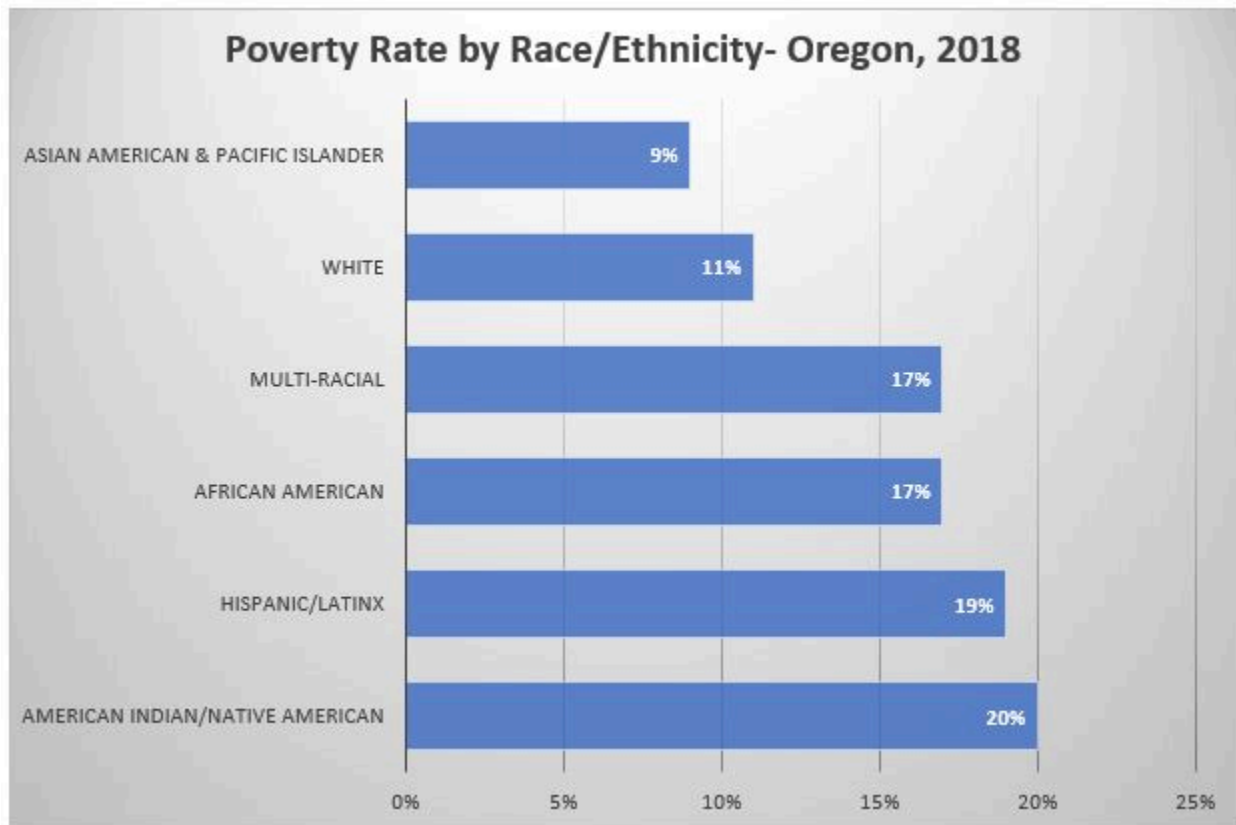
Fig. 9.5. Poverty rate by race/ethnicity, Oregon, 2018.

The Oregon Center for Public Policy says that over 527,000 people in Oregon suffer from food insecurity.

15. Bauer, J. (2018, May 17). Oregon Lags in Fighting Food Insecurity. Oregon Center for Public Policy. https://www.ocpp.org/2018/05/17/oregon-food-insecurity-lag/
16. Edwards, M. (2018, December). Widespread declines, yet persistent inequalities: Food insecurity in Oregon and the U.S. Oregon State University School of Public Policy. https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/sociology/oregonhungerreportdec2018.pdf

Figure 9.6. Share of food insecure Oregonians with too much income to qualify for SNAP assistance, 2016.

[17] To put that into perspective, the population of Portland, our largest city, is around 647,800 people. Overall, minorities and single mothers are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity; food insecurity is strongly linked to **socioeconomic status**.

While there are programs to help families who are food insecure, there are still families who are food insecure who do not qualify for any food assistance.

Food Insecurity at Linn-Benton Community College

In a recent survey conducted by the HOPE Center at Temple University, LBCC was one of 400 community colleges queried about food and **housing insecurity** over the past five years. Linn-Benton Community College students participated in 2019, the fifth year of the study. The survey was sent to 5,700 students and 558 students responded.

A surprising 48% of students reported experiencing food insecurity within the last 30 days, slightly higher than the nation-wide average of community college students.

17. Bauer, J. (2018, May 17). Oregon Lags in Fighting Food Insecurity. Oregon Center for Public Policy. https://www.ocpp.org/2018/05/17/oregon-food-insecurity-lag/

Food Security Among Survey Respondents at Linn-Benton Community College

Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey
Notes: According to the USDA, students at either low or very low food security are termed food insecure. For the full list of questions used to measure food security, see our full report available at www.hope4college.com. Cumulative percentage may not add up to 100 due to rounding error.

Fig. 9.7. 47% of student respondents at LBCC are food insecure.

66% of the students that participated in the survey reported experiencing either food insecurity, **housing insecurity**, or **houselessness** within the past year.[18]

Here is how LBCC students responded when asked whether they had experienced any of the following items in the last 30 days.

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18. Baker-Smith, C., Coca, V., Goldrick-Rab, S., Looker, Richardson, B., & Williams, T. (2020, February). Hope Center. https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2019_RealCollege_Survey_Report.pdf

Fig. 9.8. Food insecurity among survey respondents at LBCC.

Food stamps: SNAP

Many people in the United States rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to provide food for their families. SNAP is a federal program that in some states is supplemented with local funds whose goal is to supplement nutrition and the food budget of families who are moving toward self-sufficiency. According to the 2018 American Community Survey, 12.4% of people in the United States use food stamps and the majority of those families have at least one person working, with ⅓ of recipients having two family members working.[19] Oregon has one of the highest usage rates in the country at a rate of fourteen percent. Here you can see a map of SNAP usage across the country.

In 2019, President Trump proposed dramatic cuts and restrictions to the food stamp program. The rule

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19. US Census Bureau. (2020, July 21). Most families that received SNAP Benefits in 2018 had at least one person working. https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/07/most-families-that-received-snap-benefits-in-2018-had-at-least-one-person-working.html

was finalized by the administration in 2020, but a federal judge blocked its implementation in March, 2020, due to the coronavirus epidemic. Between May and July, 2020, the USDA appealed this judgement. While the SNAP program is currently unchanged, if the proposed work restrictions go into effect, it is estimated that about 700,000 people will lose benefits.[20]

Even without these changes, people on SNAP are having trouble meeting ends meet. Many people find themselves stuck in a seemingly endless cycle of poverty, despite striving for self-sufficiency. Listen here to a three minute summary of an interview with a woman in 2000 when she used food stamps and then re-interviewed in 2012.

Fraud is often mentioned as a concern when it comes to food stamps, but when recipient and vendor fraud is totaled it is estimated at less than one percent of all funds disbursed. That means that more than 99% of the funds are used correctly.[21] The USDA maintains a webpage that reports on their efforts to stop fraud and to recoup delinquent funds. These authors advocate for the focus to shift toward solving the social problems of poverty and hunger, rather than letting the small amount of fraud distract the country from these efforts.

People struggling to feed themselves and their families face other challenges as well. Accepting governmental assistance and charity is stigmatized. Some families feel too embarrassed to seek or accept needed resources. Constant stress related to food insecurity and choosing which bills to pay contributes to mental health challenges. Do you or someone you know have experience with using SNAP? Click here to read Voices From 'Hunger In Oregon' for short descriptions from Oregonians who have used this program.

What are families eating and why?

Hearing the phrase "you are what you eat" might conjure a distinct image in a person's mind. This phrase is often associated with encouraging a healthy diet to promote an individual's overall well-being. Yet, food is not only a form of sustenance, but it is also used to communicate culture as well as a way of forming social ties and communicating love.

It is important to recognize the multi-dimensional influence food has on family life, and therefore how it can impact families in various ways. In this chapter, we have focused on the ways that institutional forces and family social class shape access to food. Let's spend a little time here on other factors that affect food choices; this text will explore more aspects of food and family in the Routines, Traditions, and Culture chapter.

Early food experiences

The way our family approaches food when we are children affects us the rest of our lives. What we eat mat-

20. Vesoulis, A. (2020, May 13). The White House Pushes to Curb Food Stamps Amid Record Unemployment Retrieved August 19, 2020, from https://time.com/5836504/usda-snap-appeal-rule-change/

21. Constable, S. (2018, April 4). The facts about food stamp fraud. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/simonconstable/2018/04/04/the-facts-about-food-stamp-fraud/

ters, as do the social aspects of meals. Some families eat meals together; others eat their meals individually in front of devices. People who were not exposed to a variety of foods as children, or who were forced to swallow every last bite of overcooked vegetables, may make limited food choices as adults. Children who do not have practice socializing during meals may not develop social skills or understand dining table social norms.

Habits

It can be easy to establish a habit around things we do each day. For example, having a dessert can become a habit. Having a snack after school or a drink with dinner can develop into a habit. Healthy habits such as "an apple a day" can be developed as well and may require intention on the part of the individual.

Culture

The **culture** in which one grows up affects how one sees food in daily life and on special occasions. Food and family recipes are important ways to transmit culture across families and from generation to generation. Traditions and celebrations often include food.

Geography

Where a person lives influences food choices. For instance, people who live in Midwestern US states have less access to fresh seafood than those living along the coasts.

Advertising

The media greatly influences food choice by persuading consumers to eat certain foods. Have you ever found yourself suddenly hungry after watching an advertisement for the local pizza place? The media affects both when we eat and what we eat.

Social factors

Any school lunchroom observer can testify to the impact of peer pressure on eating habits, and this influence lasts through adulthood. People make food choices based on how they see others and want others to see them. For example, individuals who are surrounded by others who consume fast food are more likely to do the same.

Health concerns

Some people have significant food allergies, to peanuts for example, and need to avoid those foods. Others may have developed health issues which require them to follow a low salt or gluten-free diet. In addition, people who have never worried about their weight have a very different approach to eating than those who have long struggled with excess weight.

Emotions

There is a wide range in how emotional issues affect eating habits. When faced with a great deal of stress, some people tend to overeat, while others find it hard to eat at all.

Green food/Sustainability choices

Based on a growing understanding of diet as a public and personal issue, more and more people are starting to make food choices based on their environmental impact. Realizing that their food choices help shape the world, many individuals are opting for a vegetarian diet, or, if they do eat animal products, striving to find the most "cruelty-free" or sustainable options possible. Purchasing local and organic food products and items grown through sustainable means also helps shrink the size of one's dietary footprint.

Religion and Belief Systems

People design their diets for various reasons, including religious doctrines, health concerns, and ecological and animal welfare concerns. For example, Jewish people may observe kosher eating practices and Muslim people fast during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar.[22]

Knowledge

Knowledge about healthful foods and calorie amounts affect food choices. This can be gained through family, peer, or media influence. Cooking knowledge is impactful. For example, knowing how to hydrate dried beans or prepare fresh vegetables could increase consumption of healthier foods. There has been a dramatic increase in television cooking shows in the 21st century, as well as nutrition, recipe, and cooking websites, blogs, and videos. The amount of information can make it hard to choose, but there are many options to learn about nutrition and cooking.

Time

One thing that contemporary families in the United States have less now than they did fifty years ago is time. This is primarily due to the decreasing number of jobs with enough pay and benefits to support a family and the need for more adults in the house to be working. With less time, efficiencies such as fast food, processed food, and prepared food become more appealing. Having more time means that families have the flexibility to cook and prepare their own food if they choose.

Children

Several other chapters in this text (Nurturance; and Routines, Traditions, and Culture) will focus more closely on children. But they deserve a special mention when it comes to food, and especially to hunger. Children are heavily impacted by poverty and hunger in the United States. In 2017, 17.5% of all children in the United States lived in poverty; Latino and Black children were more often in poverty than were White children. This contributes to diet deficiency. A high quality diet is a major contributing factor to children's health and well-being and to their health outcomes as adults. Poor eating patterns in childhood are associated with obesity during childhood and adolescence; obese children are more likely to become obese adults. Obesity in children has been increasing dramatically since 1980 and is likely related to diet, physical activity, family environment and other factors. Obesity leads to increased risks for a wide variety of chronic diseases, including diabetes, stroke, heart disease, arthritis, and some cancers.[23]

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22. Constable, S. (2018, April 4). The facts about food stamp fraud. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/simonconstable/2018/04/04/the-facts-about-food-stamp-fraud/

23. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2019). America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2019. https://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/

Fig. 9.9 Children eating fresh fruit in a child care setting.

Hunger and a poor diet can have other effects on children. Hungry children cannot learn as efficiently as well-nourished children. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), they are more likely to develop anxiety and depression along with other health problems. Brain development, learning, and information processing can all be affected by lack of an adequate diet. Children experience stigma around being food insecure and accessing free and reduced meals, part of the federal response to poverty. For more information on this program, access the USDA website here. Children may feel isolated and ashamed about being poor or about being food insecure, although many children share this experience in the United States.[24]

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24. American Psychological Association. (n.d.). What are the psychological effects of hunger on children? Retrieved August 19, 2020, from https://www.apa.org/advocacy/socioeconomic-status/hunger.pdf

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Figure 9.6. "Share of food insecure Oregonians with too much income to qualify for SNAP assistance, 2016." Based on data from the Oregon Center for Public Policy. License: CC BY 4.0.

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Figure 9.7. "Food security among survey respondents at Linn-Benton Community College" in *#2019 RealCollege Survey: Linn-Benton Community College* by The Hope Center. Used with permission.

Figure 9.8. "Food insecurity among survey respondents at Linn-Benton Community College" in *#2019 RealCollege Survey: Linn-Benton Community College* by The Hope Center. Used with permission.

WATER

Elizabeth B. Pearce and Alexis Castaneda-Perez

Safe Water and Sanitation

For about 100 years, water in the United States has been supported by a federally funded infrastructure that ensures families safe drinking water and sanitation. Water-borne diseases, such as cholera, were virtually eliminated by the provision of this system. Although the effort to create safe water and sanitation was well funded up until the end of the 20th century, there are some geographic areas and groups that are underserved; systems were not funded **equitably** before funding dried up.

Safe water and sanitation can be defined by these three things:

- Access to safe and reliable drinking water;
- A shower, toilet, and tap in the home;
- A reliable system for treating and disposing of wastewater

Fig. 9.10. Water bottle filling stations cut down on costs related to disposable bottles.

Socioeconomic status is a barrier to safe water access. Challenges in poor communities include contaminated water supplies, housing with lead-infested water, other substandard plumbing issues, and unequal distribution of public drinking water such as water fountains in schools and other public places.

As individuals more regularly carry their water with them, access to a bottle filling station can mean the difference between a one-time purchase or the ongoing expense of hundreds of plastic water bottles. Look around your own daily environments; where can you find these stations? Could there be more bottle fillers added and more equitably distributed?

Almost one third of adults in America are inadequately hydrated. Race is the biggest predictor to lack of water access; African American and Latinx people are more likely to experience lack of adequate hydration as are lower income people.[1] This graphic from the University of North Carolina describes six access challenges.

1. Brooks, C. J., Gortmaker, S. L., Long, M. W., Cradock, A. L., & Kenney, E. L. (2017). Racial/ethnic and socioeconomic

6 Diverse Access Challenges

A family might be affected by one or more of these access challenges.

- Contaminated and At-Risk Wells
- Contaminated Water Supplies
- Customers Struggling to Pay
- Customers with Substandard Plumbing
- Lack of Basic Indoor Plumbing
- Unsanitary Onsite Wastewater Disposal

Fig. 9.11. It is eye-opening to realize the number of water access challenges families face in the United States.

There is no centralized government or research entity that collects national data about water and sanitation in the United States, which creates challenges to assessing and meeting needs. In November, 2019, the US Water Alliance and Dig Deep, two organizations dedicated to improving water access for families in the United States, released a comprehensive report analyzing all available data from local, regional and national sources. More

disparities in hydration status among us adults and the role of tap water and other beverage intake. American Journal of Public Health, 107(9), 1387–1394. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2017.303923

than two million Americans lack access to safe water. [Closing the Water Access Gap in the United States: A National Action Plan](#) has five key findings:

1. Federal data doesn't accurately measure the water access gap
2. Race is the strongest predictor of water and sanitation access
3. Poverty is a key obstacle to water access
4. Water access challenges affect entire communities
5. Progress is uneven, and some communities are backsliding.

Along with race and poverty as indicators, the report identifies residents of Puerto Rico, **houseless** people, and members of American Indian communities as having a greater likelihood of lack of access to water and sanitation.[2]

Case Study: Flint, Michigan

Let's look more closely at a community that has experienced a safe water crisis between 2014 and 2020. For some context, Flint was a booming city with an economy centered around the automotive industry through the late 20th century. In fact, this is where vehicle manufacturer General Motors was founded. Although its industrial prime is past, Flint is still home to roughly 100,000 Americans. According to the [United States census population estimates](#), 53.7% of Flint residents are African American and 40.4% of its population lives in poverty.[3] The median household income in Flint is about $24,000-$27,000 a year.

2. US Water Alliance. Dig Deep. (2019, November). Closing the water access gap in the United States. http://uswateralliance.org/sites/uswateralliance.org/files/Closing%20the%20Water%20Access%20Gap%20in%20the%20United%20States_DIGITAL.pdf
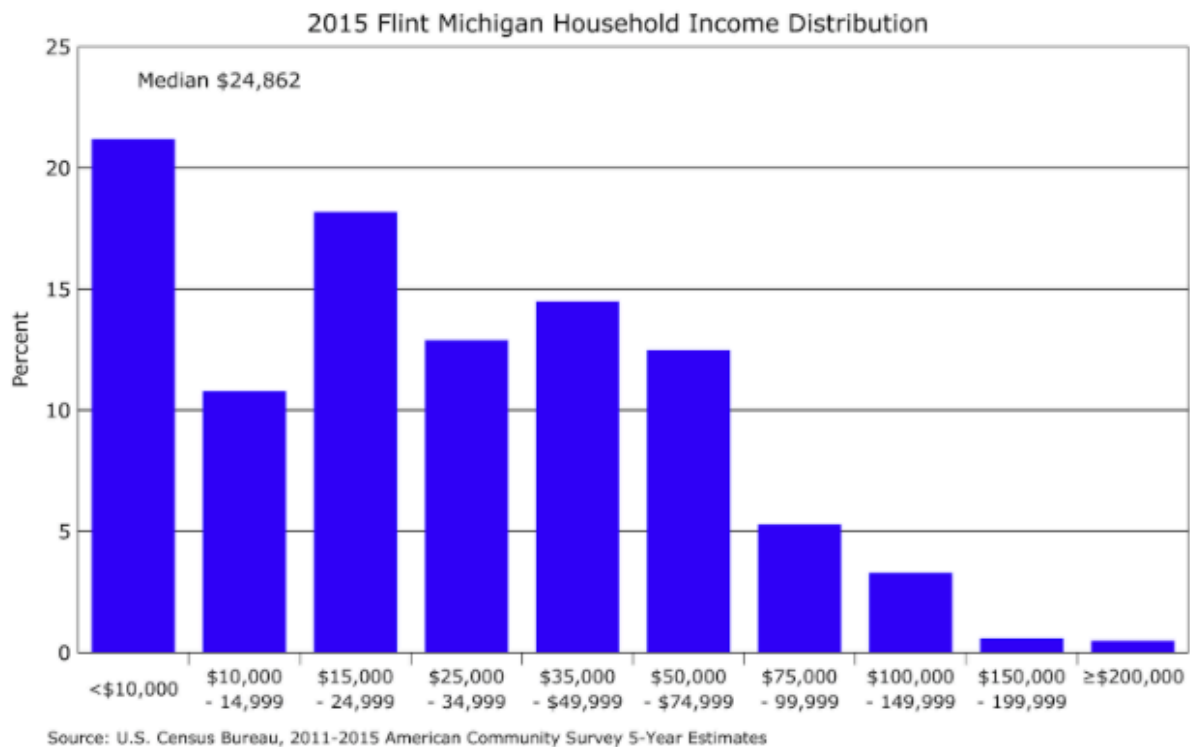3. U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). QuickFacts: Flint City, Michigan [table]. Retrieved February 17, 2020 from https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/flintcitymichigan

2015 Flint Michigan Household Income Distribution

Median $24,862

Fig. 9.12. Flint, Michigan has many families who are poor.

Saving Money

City officials in Flint decided to change its water source in 2014. The city used to get its water from the Detroit Water and Sewage Department. This water was treated and sourced from Lake Huron and the Detroit River. While this worked fine, the city was strapped for cash and in 2011, Flint had a $25,000,000 deficit.[4] The city declared a state of emergency and was looking for ways to save money. City leaders decided to source water from the Flint River as a cheap and temporary alternative while a pipeline from the Huron River was built. Unfortunately, shortcuts were taken and the water was not treated properly for human consumption, which caused spikes of lead in the water. Immediately after the water source was switched, people noticed that the tap water in Flint was different. The color ranged from yellow to brown, it smelled weird, and it tasted terrible.

Effects on Families

Dangerous amounts of lead were found in Flint's drinking water. In one home, Virginia Tech researchers

4. City of Flint. (2012, April 15). Quarterly report to the state Treasurer regarding the financial condition of the City of Flint. https://www.cityofflint.com/wp-content/uploads/Reports/Quarterly%20Report%20to%20State%20Treasurer%20April%2015,%202012.pdf

found that the lead levels in the water were between 200 parts per billion (ppb) to 13,200 ppb.[5] Lead amounts above 5,000 pbb are classified by the EPA to be hazardous waste. Children are the most susceptible to the effects of lead. It can lead to many health issues such as anemia, slowed growth, and learning problems. Lead can put pregnant women at risk for miscarriage, as well as causing organ issues in adults. High levels of lead can cause death.[6] An outbreak of Legionnaires' disease is also thought to be caused by the water crisis.[7] According to the CDC, "Legionnaires' (LEE-juh-nares) disease is a very serious type of pneumonia (lung infection) caused by bacteria called Legionella." At least twelve people have died as a result, and numerous criminal and civil lawsuits have been filed against officials. After 18 months of negotiations, a $600 million settlement to be paid by the state of Michigan was agreed to in August, 2020. More than 80% of that money would go to people who were minors and most affected by the toxins in the water. As of the publication of this text, plaintiffs still had time to decide whether or not to agree to the settlement.

To read more about how to find lead in your home environment and the effects of lead on children, [click here](#) for the CDC's infographic.

Environmental Justice

According to the [EPA,](#) "Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."[8] People of color and low income families are disproportionately being affected by the water crisis in Flint, a classic case of environmental injustice. These families can't easily move or fund a new source of water.

The EPA also emphasizes "the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards" along with its definition of environmental justice. It is clear that the people of Flint are not receiving the same degree of protection.

Watch this 3 ½ minute video to further understand the definition and history of environmental justice.

5. Mantha, A. & Roy, S. (2015, August 24). Hazardous waste-levels of lead found in a Flint household's water. http://flint-waterstudy.org/2015/08/hazardous-waste-levels-of-lead-found-in-a-flint-households-water/

6. Environmental Protection Agency. (2019, August 12). Learn about lead. https://www.epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead

7. AlHajal, K. (2016, January 13). 7 cases, 10 fatal, of Legionella bacteria found in Flint area; connection to water crisis unclear. MLive. https://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/2016/01/legionaires_disease_spike_disc.html

8. Environmental Protection Agency. (2020, February 17). Environmental justice. https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice

Institutional Forces

While on the surface it may seem like the crisis in Flint was caused by a singular error (switching the water source), the underlying responsibility is with multiple government policies that are institutionalized. These are the results of over a hundred years of policy that eventually culminated into a health crisis.

Fig. 9.13. General Motors was a highly profitable automaker in the late 20th century.

Earlier we described Flint as a city of industry, home to a rich automotive economy. The Deindustrialization (The decline of the manufacturing industry) of the United States was hard for everyone who relied on these companies to provide for their families. The decline was reinforced in the 1980s as the manufacturing industry

hit a recession. Flint's population shrunk from around 200,000 to just 100,000 residents.[9] Many people who had the means relocated to a different area in search of better opportunities. But then there are those who are more or less forced to stay, as relocating can be a risk, as well as being cost-prohibitive. As the overall population of Flint declined, the African American population percentage of Michigan has steadily increased. According to Census data, in 1960 the total percentage of African Americans in Michigan was roughly 9%. As deindustrialization occurs, and people relocate, it jumps to 14% in 2000.[10] Those who remained in Flint were White Americans and African Americans of low income. These two groups are by far the most impacted by the effects of deindustrialization, although this isn't isolated to Flint.

9. State of Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget. (2016, April). Demographic and labor market profile: City of Flint. http://milmi.org/Portals/198/publications/Flint_City_Demographic_and_Labor_Mkt_Profile.pdf

10. Metzger, K. & Booza, J. (2002, February). African Americans in the United States, Michigan and Metropolitan Detroit. Wayne State University. Center for Urban Studies. http://www.cus.wayne.edu/media/1356/aawork8.pdf

Fig. 9.14. Flint is a community filled with diverse and hard-working families.

Could this Happen in Oregon?

Fig. 9.15. When cities and counties are underfunded, they must choose between programs that serve all families such as water, parks, schools, and libraries.

The decline of deindustrialization can be felt in Oregon as well. Oregon's timber industry faced a massive decline after the 1980s recession.[11] Environmental regulations have affected job availability. We can see many parallels between this situation and other communities who have faced job and company losses. Many towns that were dependent on the income from the timber industry are now left struggling.

Douglas county recently voted to shut down their entire library system.[12] Jackson County and Josephine County have also had to shut down their libraries, although eventually they managed to bring back partial services.[13] Many timber towns depended on a federal program that gave $100,000,000 every year to Oregon counties. Since the program has been discontinued, many counties are having to make sacrifices to keep from going under.[14] Another parallel we can see between the deindustrialization of Michigan and Oregon is people leaving small towns for urban centers, with those remaining mostly being of low income.

Lawmakers in these communities face similar choices as the leaders in Flint, Michigan. When there are fewer taxpayers to fund local services and less federal funding for services that all families can use, programs such as libraries, schools, parks, and even water must be examined as places to save money.

Looking Ahead

One purpose of analyzing Flint, Michigan as a case study is to give a voice to those impacted by this and similar hardships. To see additional perspective and proposed solutions to these social problems, watch the TED Talk below. LaToya Ruby Frazier was hired to document the unfolding crisis in Flint and relates her history growing

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11. Mapes, J. (2019, January 10). Charting the decline of Oregon's timber industry. Oregon Live. https://www.oregonlive.com/mapes/2012/01/charting_the_decline_of_oregon.html

12. Friedman, G. R. (2019, January 9). Douglas County libraries to close after voters reject funding. https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2017/03/douglas_county_libraries_to_cl.html.

13. Swinder, S. (2017, April 5). When libraries close, timber counties face tough reality.https://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/2017/04/when_libraries_close_timber_co.html

14. Mapes, J. (2014, December 10). Federal payments to timber counties die in last-minute congressional maneuvering. Oregon Live. https://www.oregonlive.com/mapes/2014/12/federal_payments_to_timber_cou.html

up with environmental racism in Philadelphia to the crisis. She details the experiences of the low-income residents as well as a creative solution that helps.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families/?p=716#oembed-2

The US Water Alliance described at the start of this section has provided the most comprehensive view of water access in the United States and is dedicated to valuing and managing this resource. Via listening sessions and collaborations with businesses, governments, non-profit organizations and individuals all over the country, they have developed a platform of seven big ideas to sustain water resources:

1. Advance regional collaboration on water management
2. Accelerate agriculture-utility partnerships to improve water quality
3. Sustain adequate funding for water infrastructure
4. Blend public and private expertise and investment to address water infrastructure needs
5. Redefine affordability for the 21st century
6. Reduce lead risks, and embrace the mission of protecting public health
7. Accelerate technology adoption to build efficiency and improve water service.

Ideas and organizations such as this one provide leadership so that all families in the United States will have access to safe water and sanitation.

Fig. 9.16. Farm Water Tower

Fig. 9.17. Outdoor public water fountain

Fig. 9.18. Indoor Shower

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Figure 9.12. "<u>Distribution of household income in Flint, Michigan in 2015</u>" by <u>Delphi234</u>. <u>CC0</u>. Data from <u>US Census</u> in 2015 inflation adjusted dollars.

Figure 9.13. <u>"1968 General Motors Buick Electra Pontiac Calalina Caprice Olds 98 Fleetwood Advertisement Readers Digest November 1967"</u> by <u>SenseiAlan</u>. License: <u>CC BY 2.0.</u>

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"<u>A creative solution for the water crisis in Flint, Michigan | LaToya Ruby Frazier</u> " (c) <u>TED</u>. License: Standard Youtube license.

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