

You are walking down the street and you see a homeless person, what are your first thoughts?

You are walking down the beach and you see a person shooting Heroin, what are your first thoughts?

You see a man waiting outside the food pantry waiting to get in for free food, what are your first thoughts?

What is Sociology?



What Is a Social Problem?

- Sociology
 - The study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior
- Social Problem
 - Issue that negatively affects a person's state of being in a society



What does sociology contribute to our understanding of social problems?

- An objective and systematic approach to understanding the causes of social problems.
- relationships between individuals and society.
- role of the social structural in problems and their solutions.

The Main Focus

- Looking at the group, not the individual in order to understand the forces that operate throughout society.
 - Forces that:
 - Mold Individuals
 - Shape their behavior
 - Determine social events

WHAT DO SOCIOLOGIST STUDY

- Socialization
- Crime (and Juvenile Delinquency)
- Deviant Behavior
- Social Stratification (economic inequality)
- Race and Ethnicity
- Gender
- The Family
- Religion
- Politics, Population, Urbanization...

Why study Sociology?

- POWER TO HELP US UNDERSTAND THE INFLUENCE OF MAJOR CHANGES ON PEOPLE
- EXPLAINS SOME OF THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF THESE MAJOR CHANGES.

Fact or Fiction

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- **Fact**
- 1. It was not possible to legally gain a divorce unless you were male, very rich and very influential (the main way to get a divorce, for example, was to sponsor an Act of Parliament granting you a divorce - not a course of action open to many people...).
- 2. According to the 1851 Census, 18% of households were headed by a single parent (mainly through things like the death of a partner, separation and so forth). In the 1981 Census, 9% households were headed by a single parent... As of 2006 33% are single parent households

2. Armed Robbery is less dangerous to the victim than unarmed robbery



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- Fact
- Unarmed robber is more likely to hurt the victim.
- This is because the victim is more likely to resist during the course of the robbery - which results in the robber using greater force / violence...



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- **Fiction** **teenage pregnancies.**
- Government studies in Holland and Britain show the opposite to be true. Holland has the lowest rate of teenage pregnancies in Europe, whilst offering school children the most sex education. In Britain, the reverse is true.
- One of the reasons for this might be that in Britain there is a tendency to see children as "innocent until corrupted by adults". That is, the idea that children are blissfully ignorant of sex until adults tell them about it, thereby exiting their curiosity and encouraging them to experiment.



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- **Fiction**
- Moore and Caldwell, in a review of the relevant studies, argue that, if anything, this practice reduced the level of teenage sexual activity and significantly reduced the level of teenage pregnancy.
- They argue that where teenagers are better informed about sex they are less inclined to either indulge in sexual activity out of curiosity / ignorance or are more willing to limit their sexual behavior.



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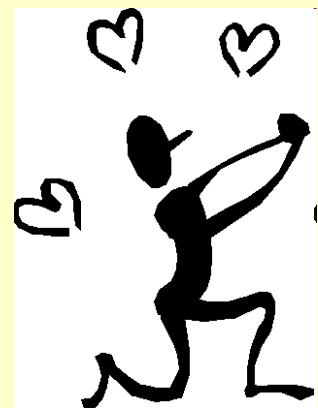
- Fiction
- When talking about male and female aggression what we are really talking about is the socially-inappropriate use of aggression, rather than aggression itself.
- While men do use violence as a means of problem-solving more readily in our society, this is a result of cultural factors and expectations. In basic terms, men have more freedom than women (their behavior is less tightly controlled) and aggressive behavior, up to a point, is more socially-acceptable or encouraged in men than women.
- The fact not all men are overly aggressive and some women are capable of extreme forms of violence demonstrates that a tendency to socially-inappropriate aggression is not something people are born with.

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- Fiction
- Although sexual attraction may be universal, this is not the same as "love". In many societies, for example, people do not marry for love. Hindu's, for example, practice a system of arranged marriages where the marriage partners may know little or nothing about each other prior to their marriage. Some religious sects (the Unification Church, for example) arrange marriages for their members simply by telling the prospective partners who they will marry.
- In addition, in our society the idea of "romantic love" is relatively recent. In the past people married for economic reasons (to protect their wealth and power or to work together on the land).



7. In countries that have a welfare system, the poor are dependent upon government handouts and lose the will or motivation to work.



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- Fiction
- Research shows poverty is something that affects people at different times in their **life-cycle**. For example, people can fall into poverty because of the death of the main breadwinner, or through the birth of children.
- As their lives change, people can move out of poverty. It is generally **untrue** the majority of the poor are poor through choice.
- Rather, the majority of the unemployed do not work because:
 - a. They are temporarily unemployed between jobs
 - b. They are unable to work through disability or age.
 - c. There are no jobs for them in the economy.

What is Empathy?

Why is it important to have in today's world?

Empathy is the experience of understanding another person's condition from their perspective. You place yourself in their shoes and feel what they are feeling. Empathy is known to increase prosocial (helping) behaviors.

While American culture might be socializing people into becoming more individualistic rather than empathic, research has uncovered the existence of "mirror neurons," which react to emotions expressed by others and then reproduce them.

**We need
empathy to:**

**Collaborate
Successfully
Solve Problems
Drive Change
Align Interests
Make Good
Decisions
Lead Effectively**



Illustration: Fernando Volken Togni © YCN

Silent Beats

Watch the 5 minute video. Then individually, please reflect on the prompt below: Share your initial perceptions of the 3 characters and your initial assumptions about their motives

African American teenager-

Chinese American man-

Senior citizen-



1. Silent Beats.mp4

- 1) Using your definition of sociology and your initial perceptions from the video written above, how can the field of Sociology help us to make sense of the *Silent Beats* video?

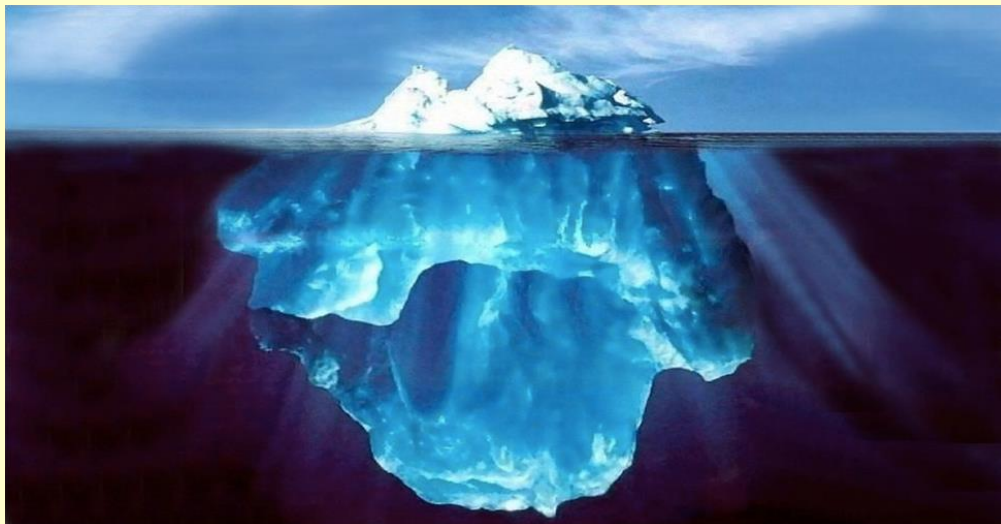
The Sociological Perspective



IT'S A GOOD THING FOR
HIM I VIEW THINGS
FROM A SOCIOLOGICAL
PERSPECTIVE!

**OBSERVATIONS ARE CERTAINLY
IMPACTED BY THE PERSONAL
PERSPECTIVES THROUGH WHICH
PEOPLE COME TO VIEW THE WORLD**

- **Manifest Functions** - consequences that are intended and recognized.
 - Education leads to learned skills and obtaining credentials.
- **Latent Functions** - consequences that are unintended and often hidden.
 - Students meet others with similar interests and make new friends/relationships



The Sociological Imagination

- Sociological Imagination
 - Ability to look beyond the individual as a cause for success and failure and see how one's society influences the outcome
 - To accomplish this we must look for the
 - **Macro (large-scale) point of view**
 - Helps to understand how history and social structure affect people
 - **Micro (small-scale) view**
 - Seeing social issues from personal viewpoints
 - Interpreting actions at face value

“Sociological Imagination”

- The ability to see the relationship between personal experiences and our social world.
- Learn to distinguish between personal troubles and public issues.



Private v. Public Issues



The New York Times
The Year of Obesity
Our perennial interest in losing weight became a national obsession in 2004

Some Unexpected

People who are overweight but not obese tend to live longer than those who are obese, according to a new study from the University of Michigan.

Category	Weight	Life Expectancy
Normal weight	150-175 lbs	78.4 years
Overweight	175-249 lbs	77.2 years
Obese	250-349 lbs	75.5 years
Very obese	350-449 lbs	73.8 years
Extremely obese	450+ lbs	72.1 years

Body Fat a Key to Reducing Risk Factors in Obese Men

Overweight or obese men need to lose their body fat, not just lose weight, to avoid having risk factors of cardiovascular disease, according to a new study in the journal *Diabetes Care*.

Dr. Mark Mattson, a nutrition researcher at the National Institute on Aging who is an expert on caloric restriction as a means of prolonging life, said it was not clear that eating fewer calories means weighing less, since some people eat very little and never get as thin. In any event, while caloric restriction may extend life, Dr. Mattson said, "there's certainly a point where you can overdo it with caloric restriction, and we

Some warn that obesity is still a major health concern.

don't know what that point is." Some statisticians and epidemiologists said that the study's methods and data were exemplary and that the authors — Dr. Wilhelmine and Katherine M. Flegal of the disease control centers, and Dr. Barry L. Graubard and Dr. Mitchell H. Gail of the cancer institute — were experienced and highly regarded scientists.

Washington Post

Americans floored to see Super Size Me. Morgan Spurlock's documentary about what happens when you eat nothing but McDonald's food for a month. New York Times

– Personal troubles

- Occur within the character of the individual and her or his immediate relationships with others.
- Can be resolved by the individual.

– Public issues

- Some value held to be precious by publics is felt to be threatened.
- Requires public debate about what values are being threatened and what the origin of the threat is.

U.S. Unemployment Rates between 2007 and 2010

Men (16 years and older)		Women (16 years and older)	
2007	2010	2007	2010
4.7%	10.5%	4.5%	8.6%

Source: Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, CPS Table 24, "Unemployed persons by marital status, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, age, and sex."

Factors that Define a Social Problem

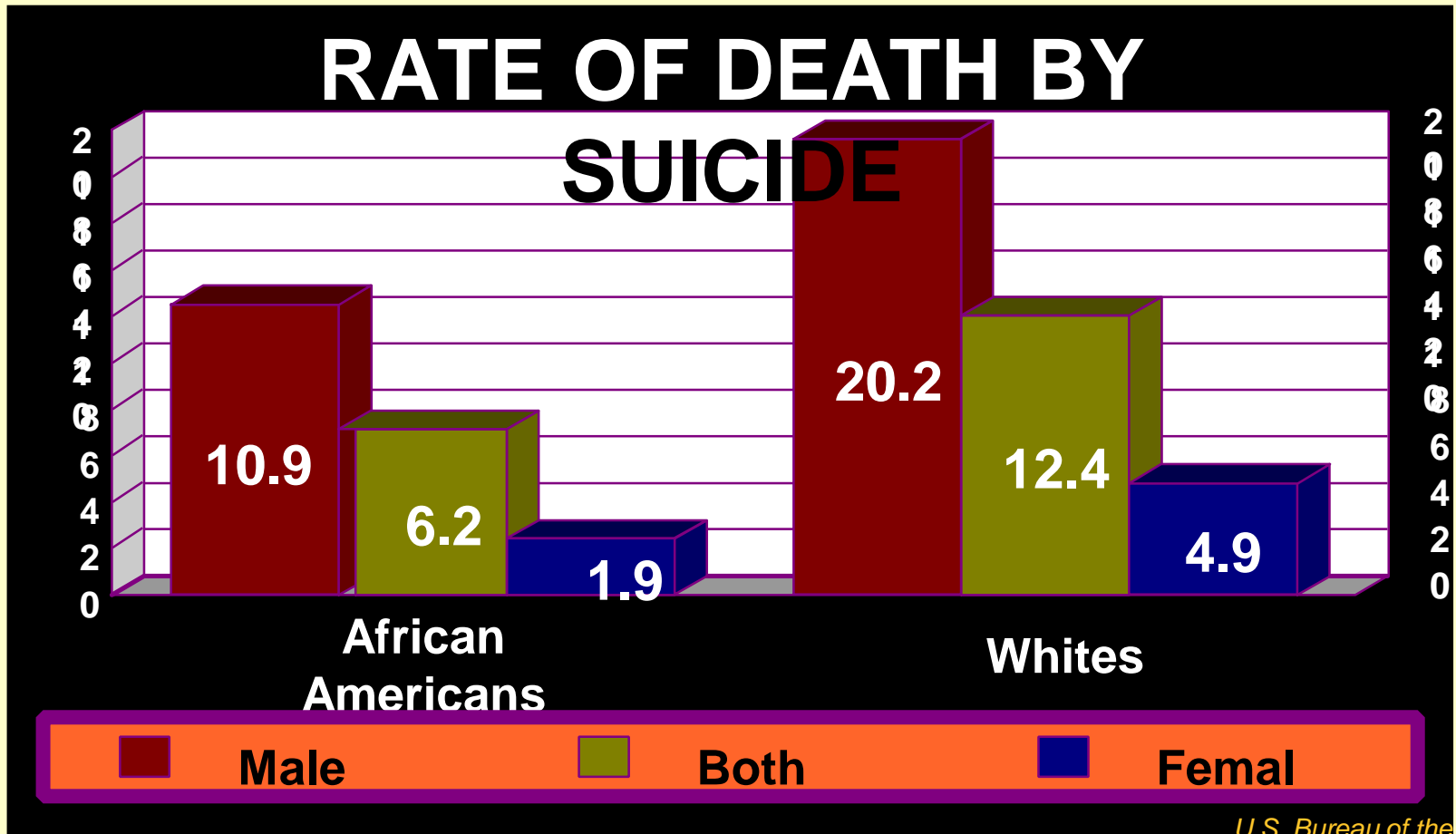
- What is and is not considered a social problem can vary over time
- Other factors influence how we define social problems
 - History
 - Changes the definition of social problems
 - Cultural Values
 - Values
 - standards by which we determine what is good, bad, right, or wrong

Examples from C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*

Consider marriage. Inside a marriage a man and a woman may experience personal troubles, but when the divorce rate during the first four years of marriage is 250 out of every 1,000 attempts, this is an indication of a structural issue having to do with the institutions of marriage and the family and other institutions that bear upon them...

Seeing the General in the Particular

WHAT SOCIAL FORCES ARE AT WORK HERE?



Examples

1. Cell Phones – What questions might sociologists ask?

**What's the Big Deal: Why is
having a sociological
imagination important?**