Social Problems

What makes a problem a social problem?

big social problems:
  Ask class to identify problems and discuss ways to address them
  example: racial inequality. Solution: affirmative action

small social problems:
  Ask class to identify problems and discuss ways to address them
  -most social problems are addressed at this level

What is a Social Problem:

problems that affect groups, that are created by social conditions and that can be changed by collective action

sociology of social problems = the scientific study to understand social problems and provide solutions

  personal trouble vs. social issues

  social problems are relative or contextual: “x” must be defined as a problem to be a social problem

    definition of the situation: different situations/contexts, different groups, different time

What makes a problem a social problem:

1) deviant behavior
   “x” becomes a problem when a group’s values and norms are violated

   deviance is relative: definition of the situation (ethnocentrism, subcultures)
2) **failing institutions create social problems**

   institutions = sets of norms and values

   ex. Marriage, religion, education, work, health care, economy, politics, sports, military, science, etc…

   ex’s of failing or lagging institutions: family

3) **contrasting subcultures**: different norms and values

   culture = values, norms, attitudes, beliefs, ways of living

   examples:
   crossing your heart when you pledge allegiance,
   women changing their names when they get married

   clashing subcultures:
   religious groups vs. american work ethic (“blue laws”)
   upper middle class vs. lower classes
   hip hop vs. business world

4) **power**

   influential groups are able to define what is a problem
   ex. Racism, MADD

   power =
   authority =

   more people affected, more likely to be a problem

   but small groups can attain power too: gay rights

   some small groups don’t attain power: day trading

**What are some local, national and global social problems? (List on board)**

Which ones are not social problems?