

## **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?