
Sociology, Medical Sociology, Environmental Justice

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What is sociology?

Sociology

- Discipline studying:
 - Social life
 - Social change
 - Causes and consequences of human behavior:
 - Family, mob, religion, culture, race and gender, relationship to the environment
- “Forces outside of us” (Compte 1838)



August Comte, based on
daguerreotype in 1849

Sociology as empirical science

- Empiricism = knowledge comes from sensory experience
 - Rejects intuition, religion, emotions
 - Sociology: Empirical evidence:
 - Interviews, surveys, participant observations, ethnography
 - Empirical evidence → understanding patterns of behaviors
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Patterns → predictions

- Race/ethnicity of your spouse
 - Age of marriage
 - 30 for women; 32 for men
 - Number of children
 - Income
 - Health
 - Life expectancy
 - Happiness*
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What is happiness?

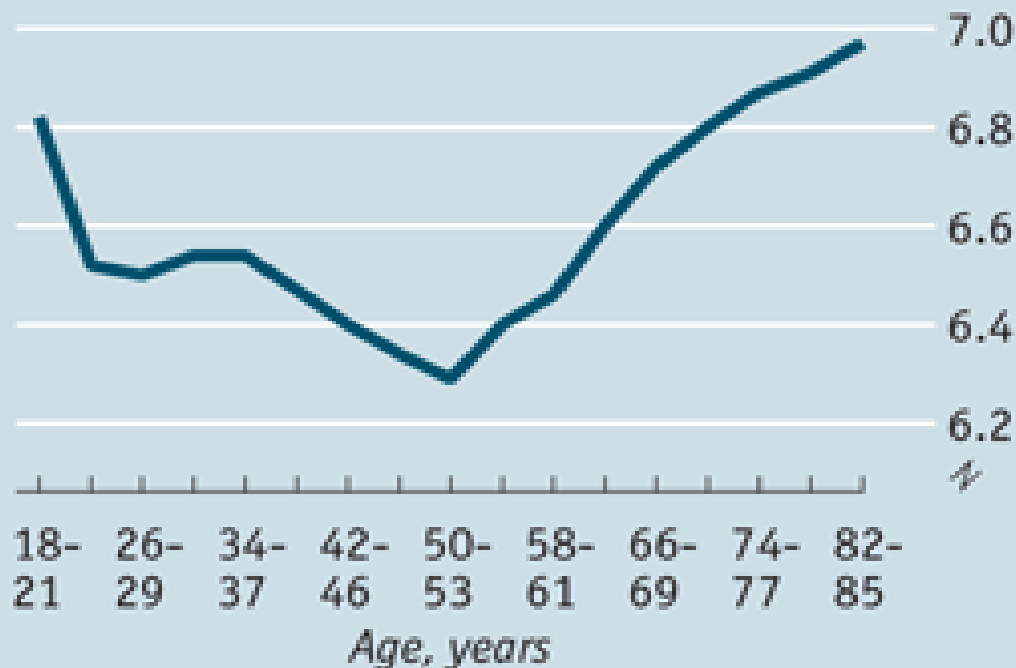
- What is the happiest period in a person's life?



Self-reported individual happiness

The U-bend

Self-reported well-being, on a scale of 1-10

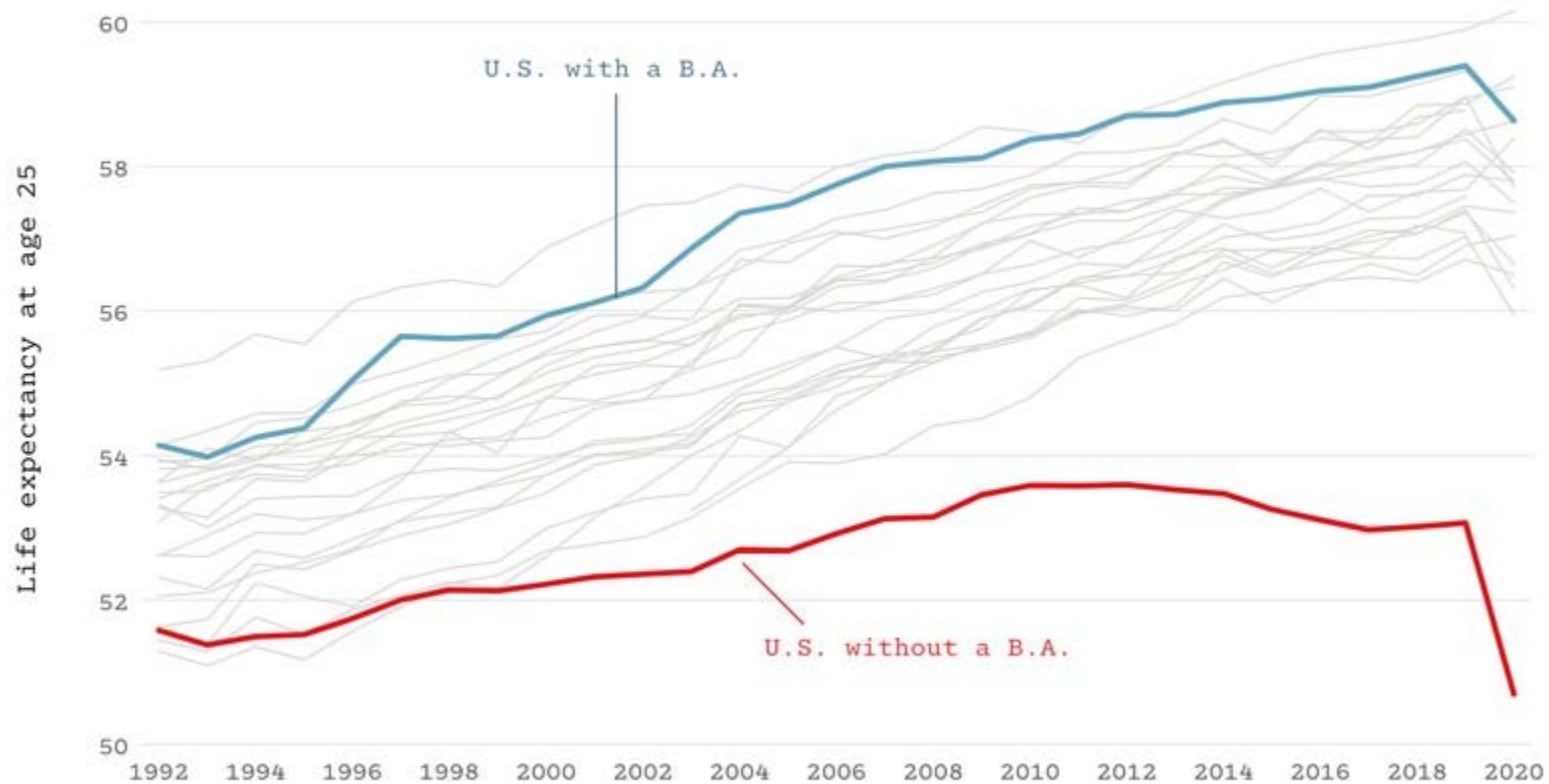


Source: PNAS paper: "A snapshot of the age distribution of psychological well-being in the United States" by Arthur Stone

Sociology of healthcare

- Organisation of healthcare services:
 - Access by race, socio-economic background, gender, etc.
 - Lay-professional interactions
 - Social capital: support networks
 - Social aspects of disease:
 - Lifestyles and risk taking (e.g., food, guns)
 - Experience of illness and disabilities
 - Sociology of the body (e.g., fertility treatments)
 - Social inequalities and health status
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Americans without a B.A. have a much lower life expectancy



Countries are: Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, U.K., Greece, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Portugal, Sweden.

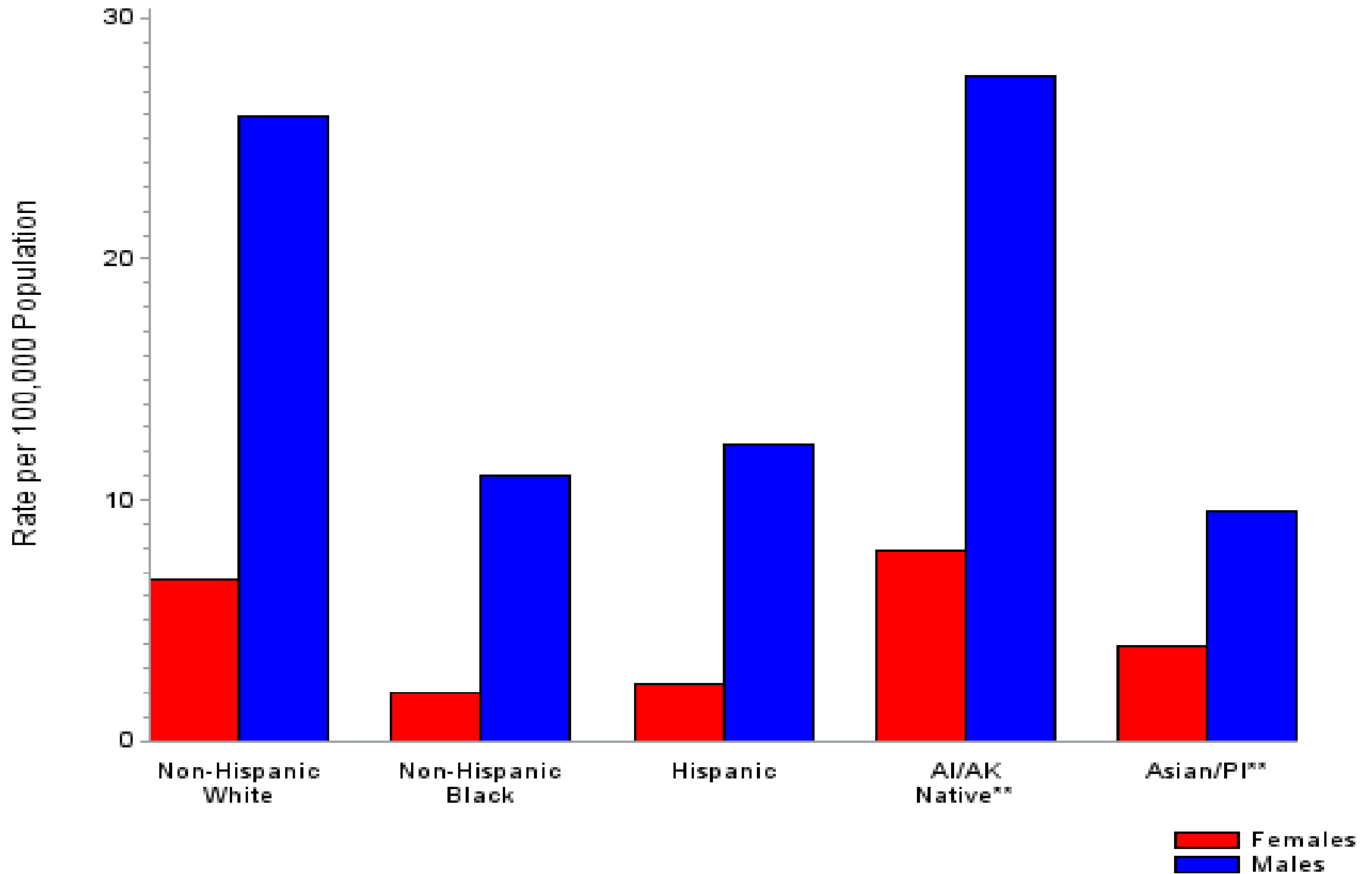
Chart: The Atlantic • Source: Anne Case and Angus Deaton / Princeton University / Brookings Papers on Economic Activity.



Why do people commit suicide?

- Psychological explanations (mental issues)
 - Sociological explanations (social structures)
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Suicide Rates by Race and Gender (CDC, 2014)



Émile Durkheim (1858-1917)

- *Suicide* (1897)
- Different suicide rates across different groups



Suicide is explained by the lack of social integration

- Social integration = social relations; connections; belonging



Chicago, July of 1995

- At least 739 deaths (heat index over 120F);
- July 15--365 deaths, average 17/day
- 170 bodies unclaimed

- The deadliest heat wave in US history:
 - More Americans die in heat waves than in all other extreme weather events combined)

Chicago police Officer Charley Henson after helping remove the body of someone who died of heat-related causes from an apartment where two people died on July 17, 1995. — *Phil Greer, Chicago Tribune, July 17, 1995*

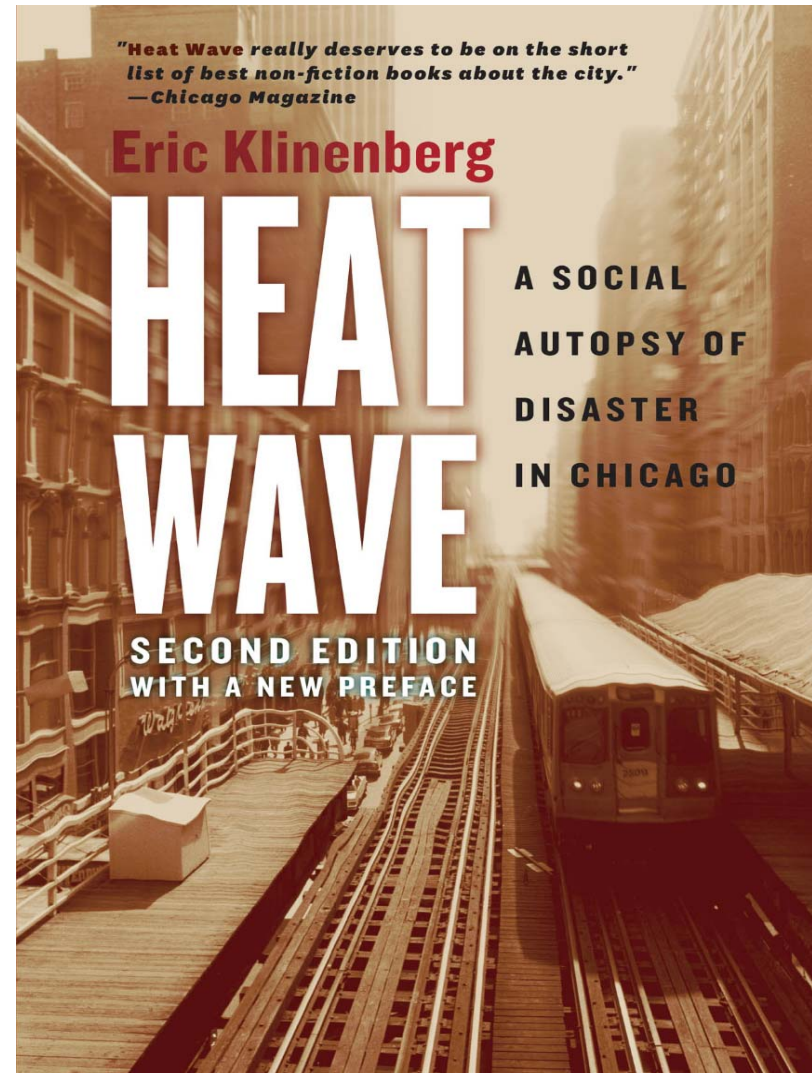


Unequal deaths

- 73% over 65 years old
 - 55% male
 - Race:
 - 49% - Black
 - 46% - White
 - 3% - Other
 - 2% - Hispanic
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Eric Klinenberg

- Cutting budget for the Department of Aging
- Transition to market model:
 - Search for assistance rather automatic enrollment
 - Cutting power and water
- Social isolation



Different effects

- Englewood vs. Auburn Gresham
 - 33 vs. 3 per 100,000 residents
 - Identical levels of income (both very poor)
 - Same racial composition, mostly Black
 - Geographical proximity: neighboring communities

 - Englewood:
 - Transitional community, loss of jobs
 - Auburn Gresham:
 - Old community (corner stores, benches)

 - Social integration is key for health outcomes (5 years more life expectancy in Auburn Gresham than in Englewood)
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Resilience/National security

- Physical infrastructures
 - Social services
 - Social infrastructures:
 - Creating spaces for socializing (urban farms, community centers, parks, benches)
 - City planning, governmental investment needed
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Environmental Justice

- An equal distribution of environmental harm and benefits



Majora Carter: Environmental justice in NYC

- Founder of Sustainable South Bronx
- MacArthur fellow
- Now consultant
- [Ted talk](#) (2:55)



Who is responsible for environmental injustice
in the South Bronx?

Environmental justice

- Hurricane Katrina: New Orleans 2005
- Costliest hurricane in the US history
- Inequality/injustice



Environmental justice

- Widespread looting
- OK to steal?



Environmental justice vs. Care perspective

- Carole Gilligan – 1982 study:
 - Gender differences in defining justice:
 - Men tend to adopt a **justice perspective**:
 - Follow laws
 - Women tend to follow a **care perspective**:
 - Address needs
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Care perspective: One health

- The goal of achieving optimal health outcomes by recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.
 - Collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach working at the local, regional, national, and global levels
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Q and A
