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Bridging the Gap
Examining Polarity in America

Nancy L. Herron
Diane Zabel
Editors

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This book is dedicated to all groups of Americans adversely affected by the polarity issues it defines.

Contents

Contributing Authors	xiii
Acknowledgments	xiii
Introduction	xv
1	1
Polarity	
Roots of Polarity	2
Changing Demographics	3
Population Diversity	4
Immigration Trends	6
The Age Gap	9
Concentration of Wealth	10
Role Changes Within the Family	10
Technonationalism	11
Knowledge Needs	12
Multiculturalism Movement	14
Environments at Risk	14
Gender Issues	15
Gay and Lesbian Issues	18
The Arbiters of Polarity	19
References	21
Sources of Additional Information	26
Indexes/Databases	26
Useful Library of Congress Subject Headings	27

2	29
The Government's Role in "Bridging the Gap"	
What Is Public or Social Policy?	30
History of Government Social Policy	30
Recurring Themes in Federal Social Policy	37
References	40
Sources of Additional Information	46
Selected Federal Legislation and Court Cases Relevant to Social Policy	46
Government Publications and Legal Resources	50
Indexes	51
Useful Library of Congress Subject Headings	51

3	53
Law and Criminal Justice	
Criminal Law and the Poor	55
Administrative Justice	58
Wealth Discrimination Versus Racial Discrimination	59
Programs for Legal Services	60
Legal Reform	65
The Supreme Court	66
Summary of Trends and Issues	69
References	69
Sources of Additional Information	73
Bibliographies and Guides	73
Dictionaries and Encyclopedias	73
Periodicals	74
Indexes/Databases	74
Useful Library of Congress Subject Headings	75
4	77
Poverty, Welfare, and Unemployment	
Poverty	77
Welfare	82
Unemployment	89
References	92
Sources of Additional Information	98
Indexes/Databases	98
Useful Library of Congress Subject Headings	98

5	99
Caregiving and Caregivers	
Child Care	100
Major Child Care Issues	101
Society's Response to Child Care Needs	108
Summary of Trends and Issues	111
Elder Care	112
Family Caregivers	114
Society's Response to Elder Care Needs	116
Summary of Trends and Issues	117
References	118
Sources of Additional Information	125
Juvenile Literature	125
Nonprint Materials	125
Resources for Working Parents and Family Caregivers	126
Indexes/Databases	126
Periodicals	128
Organizations	130
Useful Library of Congress Subject Headings	132

6	133
Hunger and Malnutrition in America	
Definitions	134
The Problem: Assessing Hunger	135
The Costs of Hunger and Malnutrition	138
Historical Perspective	139
The Reagan-Bush Years	143
The Clinton Administration	144
The Politics of Hunger	145
Populations at Risk	146
Food Assistance Programs	149
Why Have Government Programs Failed?	152
Private Sector Initiatives	153
Conclusion	154
References	154
Sources of Additional Information	163
Bibliographies	163
Nonprint Materials	163
Selected Food Assistance Legislation	163
Indexes/Databases	165
Periodicals	165
Antihunger Advocacy Groups	166
Electronic Bulletin Board Services	166
Useful Library of Congress Subject Headings	166
7	167

The Homeless	
Research on Homelessness	167
History of Homelessness	169
Definition of Homelessness	169
Counting the Homeless	170
Who Are Today's Homeless?	172
Causes of Homelessness	177
Public Opinion	181
Responses and Solutions	182
The Future	184
References	185
Sources of Additional Information	192
Bibliographies	192
Overview Sources	192
Annual Reports	192
Children's Literature	193
Homeless in Art	193
Indexes/Databases	193
U.S. Statistical Sources	193
State and Local Sources	194

7	194
The Homelesscontinued	
Sources of Additional Informationcontinued	194
Congressional Sources	194
U.S. Government Sources	194
Health and Medical Issues	194
Education Issues	194
Political and Economic Issues	194
Periodicals	195
Organizations	195
Useful Library of Congress Subject Headings	195
8	197
Children and Learning	
Childhood	200
Learning via Development	203
The School	211
Developing Issues for the 1990s and Beyond	217
References	221
Sources of Additional Information	231
Juvenile Literature	231
Indexes/Databases	231
Periodicals	232
Organizations	234
Nonprofit Organizations	235
Government Agencies	235

Electronic Conferences (Interest Groups)	235
Useful Library of Congress Subject Headings	236
9	237
Adult Literacy	
Definitions and Measures of Literacy	238
Teaching Adults	241
Delivery	241
Demographics of Illiteracy	243
Responding to the Need	244
Two Arenas for Success	246
Future Prospects	252
References	253
Sources of Additional Information	263
Nonprint Materials	263
ERIC Descriptors	264
Indexes/Databases	264
Organizations	265
Useful Library of Congress Subject Headings	267

10	269
Substance Abuse	
How Bad Is It?	269
When Does Use Become Abuse?	270
Historical Perspective	271
Abuse in the 1990s	273
Substance Abuse Is Bad Business	274
Victims of Abuse	276
Prevention Efforts	281
Treatment Options	285
Legalization Issue	287
An Encouraging Trend	288
References	289
Sources of Additional Information	293
Indexes/Databases	293
Periodicals	294
Organizations	297
Private Organizations and Groups	297
Government Organizations	298
Treatment/Self-Help Groups	299
Electronic Conferences (Interest Groups)	299
Useful Library of Congress Subject Headings	300
11	303
The Health Care System	
Major Problems	304

The Current U.S. Health Care System	306
History	307
Major Components of the Current U.S. System	310
Institutions and Organizational Structures	313
Financing Mechanisms	314
Reform Proposals	315
What the Future May Bring	319
References	321
Sources of Additional Information	325
Books	325
Bibliographies	326
Indexes/Databases	326
Statistical Sources	328
Demographics	328
Delivery and Financing	328
Health Professions	329
Vital and Health	329
Economics and Financing	329
Legal and Regulatory	329
Directories	330
Health Facilities	330
Organizations, Associations, and Agencies	330

11	330
The Health Care Systemcontinued	
Sources of Additional Informationcontinued	330
Education and Training	330
Health Care Companies	330
Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) and Preferred Provider Organizations (PPOs)	330
Periodicals	331
Organizations	333
Nongovernmental Organizations	333
Government Organizations and Agencies	335
Useful Library of Congress Subject Headings	336
12	337
Changing Family Structures	
Major Trends and Social Forces Impacting Family Life	339
American Families in the 1990s	342
The Future of the American Family	343
Contemporary Family Patterns	345
Issues for Families in the 1990s and Beyond	351
Summary of Issues and Trends	353
References	354
Sources of Additional Information	362
Bibliographies	362
Juvenile Literature	362
Nonprint Materials	363
Resources for Families	363

Indexes/Databases	364
Periodicals	365
Organizations	366
Useful Library of Congress Subject Headings	366
Index	367

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Introduction

This book is about social issues in American society. It is best described by defining what it is not: It is not a treatise on change, it is not a book of solutions or recommendations, it is not a telescope to the future. In a word, it is descriptive rather than prescriptive, a work whose sole purpose is to focus on social issues through creative works produced by thoughtful Americans in an attempt to clarify and magnify for closer scrutiny the ever-widening gulfs that divide and separate a diverse people.

It is a book that strives to define several of the most pressing issues in twelve bibliographic essays that look to the realities of tough social problems facing American culture, issues that are increasingly vigorous in driving a wedge between generations, sexes, races, and ethnic groups. Each of the chapters can be used independently. Although each chapter is unique, all synthesize the literature on a critical social issue. These include popular culture; public policy and government; law and the administration of justice; poverty, welfare, and unemployment; child care and elder care; hunger and nutrition; homelessness; children and learning; adults and literacy; substance abuse; the health care system; and the changing American family. Chapters begin with a bibliographic essay summarizing diverse opinions on the topic. Also included are strategies for locating additional information, such as useful Library of Congress Subject Headings; listings of indexes and databases; and in some cases, specific periodicals, monographs, and nonprint materials. Listings of selected federal legislation and court cases are included when relevant.

Because this book was prepared before the 1994 elections, it does not reflect the uncertainty over the status of health care reform or the future of assistance programs such as WIC, AFDC, and food stamps. Regardless of any changes that may occur, the issues discussed here have been part of American society for decades and will remain crucial issues for the foreseeable future.

This book is about contrasts, comparisons, divisions, and expectations. It is about hope for the future grounded in the free flow of ideas and the information they provide. To that free flow of information, the life blood of a prosperous society, we dedicate this book.



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