

## CHAPTER 3

### HEALTH BEHAVIOR

#### Learning Questions

1. What is meant by health behavior?
2. How do medical sociologists generally explain health behavior?
3. According to the health belief model, what conditions promote positive health behavior?
4. How do social class, race and ethnicity, and gender shape health behavior?
5. Why are social relationships important for health behavior?
6. Why do religiosity, neighborhood conditions, and sexual orientation and gender identity all affect health behavior?

#### Chapter Outline

- I. Learning Questions
- II. What is Health Behavior?
- III. Understanding Health Behavior
  - A. Macro Factors
  - B. Race and Ethnicity
- IV. The Social Context of Health Behavior: Social Class, Race and Ethnicity, and Gender
  - A. Social Class
  - B. Race and Ethnicity
  - C. Gender
  - D. Illustrating the Effects of Social Class, Race and Ethnicity, and Gender
- V. The Social Context of Health and Behavior: Other Factors
  - A. Social Relationships
  - B. Neighborhood Living Conditions
  - C. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
  - D. Religious Involvement
  - E. Corporate Practices
  - F. Public Policy
- VI. Conclusion
- VII. Summary
- VIII. Giving it Some Thought

#### Key Terms

**Binge drinking:** having five or more drinks on the same occasion on at least 1 day in the past 30 days

**Health behavior:** the activities people do that either maintain or improve their health or potentially harm their health

**Health belief model:** the assumption that promotive health behavior is more likely among individuals who perceive that they are susceptible to incurring a health problem, who perceive the health problem could be serious, who perceive that a potential health behavior will prove beneficial, who have a high level of self-efficacy, and who lack barriers to undertaking a health behavior

**Health lifestyle:** a general pattern of high or low involvement in promotive health behaviors

**Heavy drinking:** having five or more drinks on the same occasion on each of five or more days in the past 30 days

**Heterosexual privilege:** the everyday advantages straight people enjoy because of their sexual orientation

**Homophily:** the tendency of people to have relationships with other people with similar backgrounds, beliefs, interests, and other traits

**Life chances:** people's ability to live a happy, fulfilling life and to improve their station in life

**Lifestyles:** how people live their lives, including the choices they make about what products to purchase and about which activities to pursue

**Locus of control:** the extent to which individuals feel they have control over their own lives

**Social control:** the regulation of behavior by the various components of society

**Social integration:** strong, extensive social bonds and the shared norms and values stemming from the social bonds

**Social relationships:** our social ties to other individuals such as spouses, romantic partners, family, and friends

**Socialization:** the learning of a norms, values, and attitudes

### **“Giving It Some Thought”**

You are a social worker who specializes in children's welfare. One of the new families in your caseload consists of two parents and two children, aged 3 and 5. When you first visit this family, you notice both parents smoking throughout your visit. Although you didn't ask them to stop, you recognize that their smoke could be very harmful to their children both in the short run and in the long run. What, if anything, do you do?

## Online Resources

1. The Alcoholism Guide  
<http://www.the-alcoholism-guide.org/binge-drinking-facts.html>  
Learn more about binge drinking. How do you stop binge drinking?
2. Common Dreams  
<http://www.commondreams.org/views/2009/11/29/social-status-has-measurable-effect-health>  
What type of impact does social status have on health? Is the impact valid?
3. The National Bureau of Economic Research  
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w19225>  
How does religion affect risky health behaviors among U.S. adolescents and adults?
4. Center for American Progress  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/healthcare/news/2010/12/16/8762/fact-sheet-health-disparities-by-race-and-ethnicity/>  
What type of health disparities are there when you look at race and ethnicity? Why are their health differences based on race and ethnicity?