

# 1976-2012 YILLARINDA ‘SOCIAL PROBLEMS’ DERGİSİNDE YAYINLANAN MAKALERDE ELE ALINAN SOSYAL PROBLEMLER ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME

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## Özet

Social Problems dergisi önemli sosyal problemleri tartışmak ve bunlara ilişkin sosyal politikaların formülasyonuna katkıda bulunmak hedefi ile 1951 yılında kurulan Sosyal Problemleri Çalışma Topluluğu (The Society for the Study of Social Problems) (SSSP)’nun resmi dergisidir. Henslin ve Roesti (1976) Social Problems’de 1952-1975 yılları arasında yayımlanan tüm makalelerde, hangi sosyal problemlerin konu başlıkları olarak dahil edildiklerini, çeşitli zaman periyodlarındaki karşılaştırılmalı sıklıklarını ve yönelimlerini belirlemek için bir içerik analizi yapmışlardır. Ayrıca Henslin ve Roesti (1976) 1952-1975 yıllarında dergide yayımlanan makaleleri, makalede önerilen politikaları, önerilen politikanın yöneltildiği kitleyi ve politika önerilerindeki yönelimleri açısından da incelemişlerdir. Bu çalışmada, Henslin ve Roesti (1976)’nin çalışmasından esinlenerek, dünyanın hangi ülkesinden olursa olsun özellikle sosyal problemler sosyolojisi ile ilgilenen araştırmacılar için önemli bir başvuru kaynağı olan ve ayrıca sosyal problemlere ilişkin akademik tartışmaları (konuları, yönelimleri, politikaları, ilgili kitleleri) takip etme olanağı veren Social Problems dergisinde 1976-2012 yıllarında yayımlanan makaleler incelenmek istenmiştir. Böylece Social Problems’deki makalelerin 1952-1975 yılları arasındaki içerik analizine ilave olarak, daha farklı bir bağlamda dergide 1976-2012 yılları arasında yayımlanan makalelerin içerik analizi gerçekleştirilmek istenmiştir. Ancak bizim çalışmamızda bu içerik analizi özellikle dergideki sosyoloji çalışmaları için yapılmıştır. İçerik analizinde MAXQDA software programı yardımıyla, belirtilen yıllar içinde sosyoloji ve sosyoloji ile birlikte diğer alanlarda yazılmış makaleler üzerinde durulmuştur. Bu içerik analizinin en önemli amacı dergideki yayınlanan yazılar hakkında genel bir bilgi vererek Social Problems dergisinin 1976-2012 yıllarındaki genel profilini vermektir. Çalışmada sosyoloji alanında yayımlanmış çalışmaların hangi sosyal problemler üzerinde odaklandığının zaman içindeki karşılaştırmalı dağılımları ile ana konulara ilişkin eğilimleri, bu makalelerde hangi metod ve tekniklerin sıklıkla kullanıldığı ve yine bu makalelerde kullanılan kuramsal açıklamanın hangilerinde yoğunlaştığı belirtilmiştir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** *Sosyal problemler; ‘Sosyal Problemler’ Dergisi, MAXQDA*

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## **AN ANALYSIS OF 'SOCIAL PROBLEM TOPICS' PERTAINING TO THE ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN SOCIAL PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE YEARS 1976-2012**

### **Abstract**

Social Problems, the flagship journal of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) established in 1951, continues to make invaluable contributions to current sociology. A prominent reference source for researchers from all around the world, this journal enables scholars to follow the academic discussions, topics, trends, and policies in the field. The main objective of SSSP's journal is to provide an open space for discussion of social problems as well as to contribute to the formulation of social policies regarding these issues. Henslin and Roesti (1976) conducted a content analysis covering all the articles published in Social Problems between the years 1952 and 1975 with the aim of designating what social problem topics were included, their comparative frequency in various time periods, and their related trends. In this study, Henslin and Roesti (1976) also presented an analysis of the articles in terms and trends of the policy suggestions as well as the target audience to whom the policies were directed. Deriving inspiration from Henslin and Roesti's study, and as a follow-up, this current research analyzes the articles published between the years 1976 and 2012 in Social Problems, acknowledging the journal's worldwide appeal for researchers particularly involved in the sociology of social problems. In other words, to complement the analysis of published articles between 1952 and 1975, the authors aimed at making a content analysis in a new context, now dealing with the articles published during 1976 and 2012. However, the content analysis in this current study was particularly conducted on the sociological studies published in the journal. The researchers utilized MAXQDA software to analyze the content of articles published in sociology, and in other related disciplines in conjunction with sociology. The main purpose of this content analysis was to create an outline of the articles published in the journal, constructing a general profile of Social Problems between 1976 and 2012. It was this study's objective to determine, in this time period, which social problem topics were included in these articles, the trends of the topics, distribution by country regarding research on social problem topics, the methods and techniques used in the studies, and the theoretical explanations utilized in the studies, as well as the interpretation of the study's findings.

**Key Words:** *Social problems, 'Journal of Social Problems', MAXQDA*

## **Introduction**

The French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution were two important events that led to rapid social change. The transformative impact of these two revolutions on societies resulted in the emergence of certain problems. Following the Industrial Revolution's new technologies and innovations, the social structure changed, bringing about greater social mobility and urban population growth which created various problems in industrialized cities such as hunger, homelessness, criminal gangs, and theft. Within this atmosphere, sociology emerged as a scientific discipline to study, explain, and solve the social problems related to the political, economic, and social changes engendered by the Industrial Revolution. Social problems still constitute a significant field of research within sociology.

The analysis of social problems is of great magnitude. Kendall (2004:7) stated that studying social problems enables us to understand the social forces that shape our lives. Furthermore, analyzing social problems in a given society contributes to the formation of policies that will presumably help solve the said problem(s) within that society. As Parillo (2005:2) argued, apart from the necessity of obtaining concrete data on the frequency of social problems at hand, there is also the need for extensive scientific studies; these studies need to tackle the causes of the emergence of social problems, results of the social problems, and what may happen if social problems are not corrected.

Being inseparable parts of social life, social problems are processes which include traumatic, threatening, and generally undesirable social attitudes and behaviours. Within this context, definitions of a social problem provided by Poplin, Jamrozik and Nocella, and Henslin have been found noteworthy. Poplin (1978:4) defined 'social problem' as a condition that constitutes a threat towards the society and its social institutions. According to Jamrozik and Nocella,

The term 'social problem' applies to social conditions, processes, societal arrangements or attitudes that are commonly perceived to be undesirable, negative, and threatening certain values or interests such as social cohesion, maintenance of law and order, moral standards, stability of social institutions, economic prosperity or individual freedoms. A social problem may also be experienced as a feeling of collective guilt created through an

awareness of collective neglect to remove or alleviate certain undesirable social conditions that negatively affect some sections of society. (1998:1)

As for Henslin (2003:25), the definition of social problem combines both objective and subjective definitions, and 'social problem' in essence refers to a condition that causes concern for the society and hence needs to be changed. Social problems can be measured objectively and a significant number of people may develop a subjective concern for said problem.

There is need for more research in the identification and solution of social problems within a society. Established in 1951 for this very task, SSSP is an inter-disciplinary community that studies significant social problems from a critical, scientific, and humanistic perspective; SSSP supports research that offers significant suggestions for solving the problems of social life. In this regard, SSSP tries to solve these problems by developing social policies. SSSP, which has brought into attention a significant number of social problems since its foundation through its inter-disciplinary studies, organizes annual meetings and issues news bulletins, journals and pamphlets.<sup>1</sup>

An outstanding publication of SSSP is the journal *Social Problems (SP)*.<sup>2</sup> Through this publication, SSSP brings together the research in the field, and establishes dialogue among the researchers. *Social Problems* is a journal that contributes to the pursuit, verification, and improvement of scientific knowledge; it is an important platform of academic dialogue, especially for sociologists and other scholars from social sciences who work in the field of sociology of social problems. The journal has a respected international reputation among sociologists, and hence Turkish libraries have been subscribed to the journal since 1960. The journal therefore has significant contribution to the academic knowledge of Turkish scholars.

This study derives its inspiration from the article "Trends and Topics in 'Social Problems' 1953-1975: A Content Analysis and a Critique," by Henslin and Roesti, published in 1976 in *Social Problems*. The aforementioned

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.sssp1.org](http://www.sssp1.org)

<sup>2</sup> Published quarterly, the journal has been in print since 1953 and presents a multitude of interdisciplinary studies submitted by researchers who are experts in their respective fields. The journal can be accessed via libraries in various countries including Turkey and on the internet.

article was an analysis of the social problem topics of the articles published in *Social Problems* between 1953 and 1975, and it demonstrated the importance of social context while dealing with social problems. The article presented a comparison of the articles published in the said time interval according to their frequency and trends, taking into consideration the social conjuncture; Henslin and Roesti recommended that an inventory of the social problems analyses should be carried on. This current study is a response to their recommendation and aims to carry out a similar analysis of the articles published in *Social Problems* between 1976 and 2012.

It has been the objective of this study to describe the profile of the articles published between 1976 and 2012. As a first step, an overall picture of the journal publications was reached by evaluating all the publications in *Social Problems* in the given time frame. Next, by identifying the research articles' related disciplines, those articles dealing with social problems from a sociological perspective (i.e., articles investigating social problems through sociological explanations) were revealed. In this context, the topics defined as social problems in the articles published in *Social Problems*, as well as their distribution by years, were brought to light. Additionally, the theories used by various researchers to explicate the social problems, their methods and techniques used in the research of social problems, were documented; the study also revealed the countries on which the research articles focused on. Finally, the social problem topics were evaluated in connection with overall results obtained.

It is the intention of this article to pave the way for new research in the field of social problems and to contribute to the literature of sociology of social problems. Additionally, it is hoped that the results of this study on the topics, theories, countries, methods and techniques will contribute to the development of new strategies and policies related to the study of social problems.

The difficulties of analyzing the wide scope of the data obtained during the process constitutes one of the limitations of this study. Another limitation of the study is that since the study particularly concerns itself with the analysis of the article topics published between 1976 and 2012, it does not delve into the analysis of the solutions suggested in the aforementioned articles. One other limitation of this study is its emphasis on only the content of articles

published in sociology, and in other related disciplines in conjunction with sociology, but excluding all other disciplines.

## **Research Methods**

The study covers a total of 1169 articles published in *Social Problems* between 1976 and 2012. As Henslin and Roesti (1976:55) stated 37 years ago, there is not a universal agreement on a standardized list of the social problems among researchers of social problems; in this case, as well, this current study is not based on any standard list of topics. The sociological literature in the field of social problems already provides preliminary information for this study on what might constitute social problems and how to construct a list of them (Fuller and Myers 1941, Horton and Leslie 1955, Horton 1975, Manis 1976, Specture and Kitsuse 1977, Poplin 1978, Coleman 1998, Loseke 1999, Jamrozik and Nocella 1998, Henslin 2003, Kelleher 2004, Kendall 2004, Parillo 2005); Henslin and Roesti's 1976 list and its outcomes were observed carefully, as well. However, it must be pointed out that the list of the topics through which the social problems are defined was reached through an analysis of every single article published in the journal on sociology and other disciplines in conjunction with sociology. As sociology is a very comprehensive field of study, various problems were encountered during the categorization process. Despite the fact that the articles analyzed gave reference to more than one social problem at a time, attention was paid to the predominant social problem topic in each article; to determine this, each article was examined with regard to its abstract, topic, objective, theoretical framework adopted, outcomes and the citations made.

At the first stage of the analysis, all the articles published in the journal were analyzed using MAXQDA software and a total of 1306 entries, including editorial introductions, presidential addresses, comments, responses, replies, letters, errata, special sections, reviews, notes, critiques, and articles was obtained. At this point, the ethnomethodological problem of 'what exactly constitutes an article,' as encountered by Henslin and Roesti (1976:55) in their study was also a matter of concern for the researchers of this study. Following discussions, the research team decided that 1169 peer-reviewed published articles would be analyzed among the 1306 entries. As stated earlier, this study included only those articles that were categorized under the title of sociology and other related disciplines in conjunction with so-

ciology. Within this context, 1005 of a total of 1169 articles were found to be categorized under sociology and other related disciplines in conjunction with sociology.

The first strategy adopted in the selection of the articles was whether there was any direct reference to the related discipline in the article or not. If no direct reference was made in the article to its related field of study, the researchers consulted online search engines to obtain information concerning the area of expertise of the author(s) of the respective articles to determine to which discipline(s) the related articles belonged. In addition, the title, abstract, and the content of the article were taken into consideration in determining its related field of study.

The 1169 articles published in *Social Problems* between 1976 and 2012 were divided into three categories according to their disciplines: 'articles on sociology,' 'articles on disciplines in conjunction with sociology,' and 'articles on non-sociological studies.' The category 'articles on sociology' included 908 articles, the category 'articles on disciplines in conjunction with sociology' included 97 articles, while 'articles on non-sociological studies' contained 164 articles. For the category 'articles on disciplines in conjunction with sociology,' researchers identified articles from the fields of criminology, psychology, social psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, law, economy, political science, social work, education, health, medicine, history, anthropology, demography, geography, science and technology, sexology, statistics behavioral science, management and philosophy. The 164 articles in the category 'articles on non-sociological studies' belonged to one of the above mentioned disciplines. The following table illustrates the distribution of the three categories of articles in the 70's, 80's, 90's and 2000's.

**Table 1.** The three categories in *Social Problems* articles

	YEARS				TOTAL
	1976-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2012	
Articles on sociology	129	261	221	297	908
Articles on disciplines in conjunction with sociology	17	20	29	31	97
Articles on non-sociological studies	35	61	40	28	164
<b>TOTAL</b>	181	342	290	356	<b>1169</b>

The first question pursued in this study was which social problem topics were discussed in the articles published between 1976 and 2012 in *Social Problems*. To answer this question, a total of 1005 articles, as stated above, were obtained and they were individually examined using MAXQDA. Multiple readings were carried out for each article, paying close attention to its title, abstract, and full content. The social problem topics studied in these articles were evaluated according to the decade in which they were published. Following this question, a qualitative content analysis was performed to determine the type of methods and techniques employed as well as the theories adopted in the explanation of social problems in the articles.

The qualitative content analysis of the 1005 articles was carried out between March 2011 and January 2013. To start with, using MAXQDA, open codes were created for the topics for each single article and then the connections created by these open codes resulted in axial codes that were in turn followed by the creation of selective codes. The selective codes reached are the main topics of this study. Various problems were encountered during this stage in which the codes were categorized. The first among these was the fact that certain articles dealt with more than one social problem topic, making it difficult for the researchers to determine the predominant topic among the others, in the process of reaching selective codes. For example, should the position of women in the labor market be included in the category of 'women' or in the category of 'work.' In such cases, it was necessary to make a secondary closer inspection where the researchers examined the content (i.e., the conceptual and theoretical framework) and the 'references' section



of the article. When an agreement among the researchers--regarding which topic was predominant among other topics--was reached, selective codes were created. To ensure reliability on the selective codes, each article was read, one by one, and examined by each member of the team of researchers. Among the selective codes used during the qualitative content analysis was a code titled 'other.' This code designated a category that included the articles that could be categorized under any other selective code. For the current study, 51 categories (main topics) were formed. Each of these categories was created under each decade on the basis of each selective code and its sub-categories. Henslin and Roesti's study (1976) had obtained 28 categories. On the other hand, the researchers of this current study obtained certain categories that were not obtained in Henslin and Roesti's study. This shows that as time passes new social problems emerge in societies.

A social problem, by its nature, can only be explained in relation to the society and the specific time frame in which it emerges (Jamrozik and Nocella 1998). For this reason, social problem topics may vary from country to country. In this study, for the 1005 articles published in *Social Problems* between 1976 and 2012, there was a concern for which countries a respective social problem research was conducted. Accordingly, a total of six country categories were created. These categories were: 'no country specified,' which included articles that did not focus on a specific country; 'USA,' which included articles that focused solely on the United States; 'comparative with the USA,' which included articles that compared one country with the United States; 'cross-national studies,' which included articles on comparative studies including more than one country; 'multiple European countries,' which included articles focusing on Europe in general or more than one European country; and finally 'single countries,' which included articles that focused on countries other than the United States.

In this research, apart from the categorization of social problem topics, the methods and techniques used in the articles were also categorized as 'quantitative research methods,' 'qualitative research methods,' 'mixed-method research,' and 'theoretical studies.' Finally, the theories used in the articles to explain social problems were placed under 65 separate categories.

## Results

### Social Problem Topics in *Social Problems* Articles

In the content analysis of the articles' social problem topics published in *Social Problems* between 1976 and 2012, the following main topics and sub-topics were identified (Table 2 and Table 3).

**Table 2.** Distribution of social problem main topics by decades

MAIN TOPICS	YEARS				TOTAL %	
	1976-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2012		
ADOLESCENCE&YOUTH	10	7	4	16	37	3.68
CAPITALISM&SOCIALISM	3	6	1	2	12	1.19
CHILDREN	2	3	6	6	17	1.68
CRIME	20	33	25	33	111	11.04
CULTURE	1	2		5	8	0.79
DEATH		1			1	0.09
DEVIANCE	10	28	10	9	57	5.67
DISABILITY & HANDICAPPED PEOPLE		2	1	3	6	0.59
DISASTER	1		3	1	5	0.49
ECONOMY	1	10	5	1	17	1.79
EDUCATION	11	5	5	15	36	3.58
ELDERLY	1			1	2	0.19
ENVIRONMENT		1	8	7	16	1.59
ETHNICITY	4	2	3	4	13	1.29
FAMILY	9	5	6	9	29	2.88
GENDER&SEX ROLES	3	5	17	12	37	3.68
GLOBALIZATION				10	10	0.99
HEALTH	2	24	8	14	48	4.77
HUMAN RIGHTS				5	5	0.49
INTERNET				2	2	0.19
LANGUAGE	1	9			10	0.99
LAW	4	4	1	2	11	1.09
LEISURE		2			2	0.19
MEDIA	2	1	3	8	14	1.39
METHODOLOGY	3	3	1	2	9	0.89

MIGRATION	2	4	4	11	<b>21</b>	<b>2.08</b>
MILITARY				3	<b>3</b>	<b>0.29</b>
MINORITY	1	2	3	2	<b>8</b>	<b>0.79</b>
NEIGHBORHOOD	1	1	2	12	<b>16</b>	<b>1.59</b>
NUTRITION		2			<b>2</b>	<b>0.19</b>
POLICY	2	7	3	6	<b>18</b>	<b>1.79</b>
POSTMODERNITY			2		<b>2</b>	<b>0.19</b>
POVERTY		4		2	<b>6</b>	<b>0.59</b>
PSYCHIATRIC SOCIOLOGY	3		5	1	<b>9</b>	<b>0.89</b>
PUBLIC			1	3	<b>4</b>	<b>0.39</b>
RACE	4	9	19	20	<b>52</b>	<b>5.07</b>
RELIGION				13	<b>13</b>	<b>1.29</b>
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGIES	1	6	1	1	<b>9</b>	<b>0.89</b>
SOCIAL CHANGE		1	2	1	<b>4</b>	<b>0.39</b>
SOCIAL CONTROL	1	3	4	1	<b>9</b>	<b>0.89</b>
SOCIAL MOVEMENT	5	18	45	44	<b>112</b>	<b>11.14</b>
SOCIAL PROBLEMS	3	6	1	3	<b>13</b>	<b>1.29</b>
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	1	1	1		<b>3</b>	<b>0.29</b>
SSSP – SP	5			8	<b>13</b>	<b>1.29</b>
STATE&GOVERNMENT		8	8	1	<b>17</b>	<b>1.69</b>
STIGMA	2	4			<b>6</b>	<b>0.59</b>
SUICIDE	1				<b>1</b>	<b>0.09</b>
URBAN	1	2	4		<b>7</b>	<b>0.69</b>
VIOLENCE	2	1			<b>3</b>	<b>0.29</b>
WOMEN	16	32	16	13	<b>77</b>	<b>7.66</b>
WORK&OCCUPATION	7	16	21	16	<b>60</b>	<b>5.97</b>
OTHER		1	1		<b>2</b>	<b>0.19</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>1005</b>	

As Table 2 demonstrates, there has been a great variety of social problem topics (51 main topics) in the articles published in *Social Problems*.

Among the 51 main topics studied in this work, a majority of the 28 topics analyzed in Henslin and Roesti's article reoccur. On the other hand, to the 22 common topics that take place in both Henslin and Roesti's earlier research

and this current research, 29 new topics were added.<sup>3</sup> In the current research, six of the topics from the earlier study were not identified as main topics: 'alienation,' 'demography,' 'professions,' 'theoretical overviews,' 'juvenile delinquency,' and 'international tensions.' And yet, these six topics that were included in Henslin and Roesti's study were treated in the current research as axial codes and placed under related selective codes with which they have a contextual relationship. The analysis resulted in these topics being re-categorized under new main topics in the current study. For instance, 'demography' as an axial code is placed under 'migration' selective code. On the other hand, 'juvenile delinquency' as an axial code is placed under 'adolescence&youth' selective code.

As Table 2 illustrates, there were 112 articles within the 'social movement' main topic, containing the largest proportion of articles (11.14 percent). The next largest proportion of articles (11.04 percent) were grouped within 'crime' (111 articles). The third most frequently studied main topic was 'women' with 77 articles, a proportion of 7.66 percent. The main topic of 'work&occupation' followed 'women' with 60 articles (5.97 percent).

Research on the main topic of 'social movement' was particularly on the rise since the early 1990's, as the current study revealed. The studies that had 'crime' as its main topic were more uniformly distributed throughout the 1970's, 1980's, 1990's, and 2000's. Compared to the 1970's, there was a twofold increase in the number of the studies with 'women' as the main topic in the 1980's. Despite the topic 'women' being a subject of study in all the decades examined, the concentration of the women's studies in the 80's is noteworthy; these were the years when feminist theories came to the forefront in women's studies. On the other hand, the main topic 'work&occupation' was found to be more frequently studied in the 1990's.

When each decade was analyzed individually, the articles published in time frames 1976-1979 and 1980-1989 were found to be focusing on the main topic 'crime' mostly, while those in 1990-1999 and 2000-2012 mainly concentrated on the main topic 'social movement.' As is clear, crime studies, that were prominent until early 1990's, gradually left its place to social movement studies in the later decades.

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<sup>3</sup> The 29 new main topics are indicated by italics in Table. 2

The main topics ‘death,’ ‘disability&handicapped people,’ ‘environment,’ ‘globalization,’ ‘human rights,’ ‘internet,’ ‘leisure,’ ‘military,’ ‘nutrition,’ ‘postmodernity,’ ‘poverty,’ ‘public,’ ‘religion,’ ‘social change,’ ‘state&government’ (15 topics) were never studied in the 1976-1979 time frame; yet, among these ‘death,’ ‘disability&handicapped people,’ ‘environment,’ ‘leisure,’ ‘nutrition,’ ‘poverty,’ ‘social change,’ ‘state&government’ (8 topics) were first seen to be studied in the 80’s. Similarly, the main topics ‘postmodernity’ and ‘public’ (2 topics), never studied during the 1976-1989 time frame, were first studied in the 90’s; and ‘globalization,’ ‘human rights,’ ‘internet,’ ‘military,’ ‘religion’ main topics were first studied in the 2000’s.

On the other hand, there are also certain main topics that were studied as social problem main topics in the 1976-1979 time frame, while not appearing among the list of main topics studied in the following decades. Accordingly, although studied in the 1976-1979 time frame, the main topics which were not studied in the 1980’s were ‘disaster,’ ‘elderly,’ ‘psychiatric sociology,’ ‘SSSP-SP,’ ‘suicide’; the main topics which were not studied in the 90’s were ‘culture,’ ‘elderly,’ ‘language,’ ‘SSSP-SP,’ ‘stigma,’ ‘suicide,’ ‘violence’; and the main topics which were not studied in the 2000’s were ‘language,’ ‘social responsibility,’ ‘stigma,’ ‘suicide,’ ‘urban,’ and ‘violence.’

Table 2, above, demonstrates which of the social problem main topics were considered as having greater importance. However, Table 3, below, presents in greater detail the main topics for social problem and their sub-topics studied in the 1976-2012 time period. Thus, this table presents a more detailed formulation of the topics and their distribution along the range of sub-topics, thereby revealing the relative academic attention they drew.

**Table 3.** Distribution of social problem main topics and sub-topics by decades

MAIN TOPICS and SUB-TOPICS	YEARS				TOTAL
	1976-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2012	
<b>ADOLESCENCE&amp;YOUTH</b>	10	7	4	16	<b>37</b>
Culture and Identity	1			1	<b>2</b>
Delinquency	1	3	1	1	<b>6</b>
Deviance	4	4	1	1	<b>10</b>
Education				4	<b>4</b>

Family	1		1	3	5
Neighborhood				2	2
Race	2		1	3	6
Social Network				1	1
Unemployment	1				1
<b>CAPITALISM&amp;SOCIALISM</b>	3	6	1	2	12
Capitalist Development	1				1
Class	2	4	1		7
Liberalism				2	2
Socialist Government/State		2			2
<b>CHILDREN</b>	2	3	6	6	17
Abuse	1		2	1	4
Child Care				2	2
Childhood		1	1		2
Family			1	1	2
Gender/Sexuality	1	1		1	3
Law/Rights/Punishment		1	2		3
Race				1	1
<b>CRIME</b>	20	33	25	33	111
Crime and Immigration				1	1
Crime and Neighborhood/Ecological Crime Studies				3	3
Crime and Women/Gender/Sex	1	2	3	2	8
Crime Control/State Penal Systems		1	1		2
Crime Rates/Incidence of Crime	2	3	1	1	7
Criminal Behavior/Delinquent Behavior		1	1		2
Criminal Justice System and Policies	4	3	2	6	15
Criminal Punishment	1	1	4	2	8
Fear of Crime		2	2		4
Homicide	1		2	4	7
Offenders/Defendants		2	3	1	6
Police	1	3		2	6
Prison	1	1	1	1	4
Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives in Crime	4	2		2	8
Trials/Courts/Jury	1	2		1	4
Types of Crime	3	10	5	6	24

Victimization/Victims	1			1	2
<b>CULTURE</b>	1	2	0	5	8
Acultural Dimension/Chronic Pain/Pain in Culture		1			1
Cultural Democracy	1				1
Cultural Pluralism				4	4
Material Culture		1		1	2
<b>DEATH</b>		1			1
<b>DEVIANCE</b>	10	28	10	9	57
Deviants/Deviant Careers		4			4
Gambling		1			1
Homelessness		5	3	2	10
Mental/Psychological Deviance	1	2	1		4
Occupational/Professional Deviance	1	2			3
Pornography		1			1
Prostitutes	1		1		2
Sadism/Sadomasochism/Social Features of Sadomasochism		2			2
Substance Abuse/Alcoholism/Smoking/Drinking	7	4	5	6	22
Theories of Deviance		7		1	8
<b>DISABILITY&amp;HANDICAPPED PEOPLE</b>		2	1	3	6
<b>DISASTER</b>	1		3	1	5
<b>ECONOMY</b>	1	11	5	1	18
Corporate Power/Corporate Relationship/Corporate Control	1	6	2	1	10
Economic Change		4	3		7
<b>EDUCATION</b>	11	5	5	15	36
Academics/Professionalization	2	1		1	4
Inequality	3	1	1	6	11
Policy	1			1	2
School	5	3	4	7	19
<b>ELDERLY</b>	1	0	0	1	2
Social Spending/Helping	1			1	2
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	0	1	8	7	16
Air Pollution				1	1
Environment and Health				2	2
Environment and Modernization			1	1	2

Environmental Degradation/Environmental Change			2	2	4
Environmental Justice			3		3
Environmental Policy		1	1		2
Global Warming			1	1	2
<b>ETHNICITY</b>	4	2	3	4	13
Discrimination	1	1			2
Ethnic Economy			2		2
Ethnic Identity/Culture			1		1
Ethnic Mobilization		1			1
Ethnicity and Conflict	1				1
Inequality	1			1	2
Neighborhood/Residential Segregation				3	3
Stigma	1				1
<b>FAMILY</b>	9	5	6	9	29
Family Life and Work	2	2		5	9
Family Structure	6	2	5	2	15
Fertility	1				1
Marriage		1	1	2	4
<b>GENDER&amp;SEX ROLES</b>	3	5	17	12	37
Accomplishment of Gender/Cosmetics Operation			1		1
Education			1		1
Work/Employment/Jobs/Occupation	2	1	7	4	14
Child /Infant/Baby Care			1		1
Household Labor		1	1		2
Race/Ethnicity			2	1	3
Sport			1	1	2
Gender Relations		2			2
Masculinity/Hegemonic Masculinity/Male Inexpressiveness	1			2	3
Social Construction of Gender				1	1
Transsexualism/Lesbians/Bisexualism/Gay		1	3	3	7
<b>GLOBALIZATION</b>	0	0	0	10	10
Economic Development/Industry				6	6
National Identity				1	1
Peace				1	1



State/State Power				1	1
Global World Polity/Regionalization				1	1
<b>HEALTH</b>	2	24	8	14	48
Abortion		1		1	2
Cancer Research		1	1		2
Eating/Disorders/Obesity/Overweight/ Anorexia				2	2
Health Legislation/Occupational Health Policy		1	1		2
Health Policy/Health Care System/Health Services		4	2	4	10
Maternal Deaths/Infant Mortality				2	2
Medical Staff/Profession/Doctor-Patient Relationships		5		1	6
Medicalization/Medicine		2	1	1	4
Mental Health/Mental Health Services/Mental Health Policy	2	5		2	9
Midwives/Midwife Management		3			3
Safe Sex Information/AIDS-HIV Prevention Strategies		2	3	1	6
<b>HUMAN RIGHTS</b>				5	5
<b>INTERNET</b>				2	2
<b>LANGUAGE</b>	1	9	0	0	10
Bilingualism		1			1
Conversation/Conversational Practices/ Idiomatic Expressions		5			5
Interaction/Language Practices		3			3
Sociolinguistics	1				1
<b>LAW</b>	4	4	1	2	11
Advocacy sector				1	1
Social Conflict/Conflict Management	1				1
Law Enforcement and Antitrust Act/Enforcement/Antitrust Law	1	2			3
Lawsuits/Trials/Judges		1	1		2
Lawyer/Legal Culture/Legal Consciousness		1		1	2
State Drug Laws	2				2
<b>LEISURE</b>		2			2
<b>MEDIA</b>	2	1	3	8	14
Claims Making/Legitimacy			1		1

Drug Problems			1		1
Embedding Program				1	1
Homelessness				1	1
News			1	1	2
Obesity				1	1
Political Power		1			1
Race/Ethnicity				2	2
Sex Scandals				1	1
Television Entertainment	1				1
Violence	1				1
Welfare				1	1
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	3	3	1	2	9
<b>MIGRATION</b>	2	4	4	11	21
Immigrant Entrepreneurship/Industrial Relations		1			1
Immigrant Labor-Employment/ Migrant-Immigrant Workers		2	2	8	12
Immigrants Kinship Network			1		1
Legal and Illegal Immigration	1	1			2
Government/State/Politics of Immigration			1	1	2
Sexual Behavior				1	1
Migratory Subgroup				1	1
Professional Emigration	1				1
<b>MILITARY</b>	0	0	0	3	3
Militarism/Public Opinion/Military Personal				2	2
Military Industry/Private Military Corporations				1	1
<b>MINORITY</b>	1	2	3	2	8
Ethnic Minority and Fertility			1		1
Minority Communities	1				1
Minority Labor/Job		1		1	2
Minority Poverty			2		2
Minority Self-Governance and Social Capital				1	1
Minority Status and Self-Esteem		1			1
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD</b>	1	1	2	12	16
Home Ownership and Inequality		1		1	2
Institutional Homes/Housing Legislation				1	1
Neighborhood Organization/Politics			1	1	2

Neighborhood Poverty/Poor Neighborhoods				4	4
Neighborhood Viability/Working Class	1				1
Residential Segregation and Inequality			1	5	6
<b>NUTRITION</b>		2			2
<b>POLICY</b>	2	7	3	6	18
Community Politics	1				1
Legitimacy Crisis		2			2
Local Politics/National Policy/National Integration Policy	1			1	2
Political Accounts			1		1
Political Challenges		1		1	2
Political Conflict/Political Violence		1	1		2
Political Consumerism/Political Participation and Boycott		1		1	2
Political Control and Use of Role		1			1
Political Events/Political Scandales		1			1
Political Life/Political Resistance/Collective Memory				2	2
Political Riots			1		1
Public Policy/Public Policy Changes				1	1
<b>POSTMODERNITY</b>			2		2
<b>POVERTY</b>	0	4	0	2	6
Causes of Poverty/Socio-Economic Factors/Income		2			2
Measurement of Poverty		1		1	2
Poverty and Problem of Hunger		1			1
Poverty and Work/Working Poor				1	1
<b>PSYCHIATRIC SOCIOLOGY</b>	3		5	1	9
<b>PUBLIC</b>	0	0	1	3	4
Public Attention			1	1	2
Public Sociology/Public Sociological Discourse				2	2
<b>RACE</b>	4	9	18	20	51
Black Representations/Popular Culture		1			1
Blackness/Whiteness Studies/Identity				4	4
Blacks in the Army/Black Soldiers	1				1
Neighborhood/Housing/Racial Residential Segregation	2	1	2	7	12

Occupational Differences/Job Opportunities/Employment Barriers	1	4	6	6	17
Racial Harassment			1		1
Racial Inequality/Differences/Discrimination/Barriers		2	6	1	9
Racial Stratification/Racial Hierarchy				2	2
Racism/Problem of Race/Racial Prejudice/Racial Subjugation		1	4		5
<b>RELIGION</b>	0	0	0	13	13
Anti-Semitism				1	1
Church and Social Services				1	1
Congregation/Civic Engagement/Volunteering				3	3
Conservative Christianity				1	1
Islamic Fundamentalism				1	1
Science				1	1
Sexuality				2	2
Spirituality				1	1
Religious Beliefs-Norms and HIV/AIDS				1	1
Religiosity and Substance Use				1	1
<b>SCIENCE&amp;TECHNOLOGIES</b>	1	6	1	1	9
Science and Technology Studies		5	1	1	7
Scientists and Technologists	1				1
Technological Risks		1			1
<b>SOCIAL CHANGE</b>		1	2	1	4
<b>SOCIAL CONTROL</b>	1	3	4	1	9
Decision-Making Process		1	3		4
Government Control Agencies		1		1	2
Informal Social Control/Surveillance Systems		1	1		2
Social Control and Social Protest	1				1
<b>SOCIAL MOVEMENT</b>	5	18	45	44	112
Activists/Activist Identity/Activism/Activist Stigma			4	7	11
Claims-Making Activity			3		3
Crime/Punishment			2	1	3
Environment	1	3	3	2	9
Health				1	1
Industry/technology movement/antibiotic movement			1	1	2

Labor Movement/Employer Mobilization			1	3	4
Movements and AIDS		2			2
Policy			4	2	6
Poverty/Poor People's Movement	1				1
Protest Movements	1	2	9	6	18
Race			1	2	3
Reactive Social Movement				1	1
Rights		3	5	6	14
Countermovement		1		1	2
Organizations/Tactics/Ideology		3	4	7	14
Student Movement/Youth Activists		1	2	1	4
Women	2	3	6	3	14
<b>SOCIAL PROBLEMS</b>	3	6	1	3	13
Causes/Creation of Social Problems/ Construction of Social Problem	1	3		2	6
Defining/Theory/Methodology/Research	2	3	1	1	7
<b>SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</b>	1	1	1		3
<b>SSSP-SP<sup>4</sup></b>	5			8	13
<b>STATE&amp;GOVERNMENT</b>	0	8	8	1	17
Bureaucracy		1	1		2
Business and State		1			1
Citizen Participation		1			1
Development and State/Welfare State		2	7	1	10
Government/State and Nuclear Power/Policy		2			2
State Policy/Administrative Action of State		1			1
<b>STIGMA</b>	2	4	0	0	6
Divorce/Stigmatizing Divorce		1			1
Involuntary Childlessness		1			1
Social Rejections	1				1
Social Relationships		1			1
Obesity	1				1
Illness/Epilepsy		1			1
<b>SUICIDE</b>	1				1
<b>URBAN</b>	1	2	4	0	7
Urban Housing/Rental Housing		1	2		3
Urban Poverty/Poor/ Urban Employment/Unemployment			2		2

Urban Situation/Uneven Development and Industry	1				1
Urbanism/Characteristics of Urban Living		1			1
<b>VIOLENCE</b>	2	1			3
<b>WOMEN</b>	16	32	15	13	77
Older Women	1		1		2
Abortion		1	1		2
Body/Sexuality		1		1	2
Childbirth/Child Care		2	1		3
Culture		1	2		3
Feminism/Feminist Research	2	1	3		6
Health		2		1	3
Marriage	2	1	1	2	6
Media	1				1
Politics				1	1
Race		2		1	3
Religion			1		1
Violence		10	1	3	14
Work	9	10	5	4	28
Women Drinker/Women's Problem Drinking		1			1
Women's Liberation	1				1
<b>WORK&amp;OCCUPATION</b>	7	16	21	16	60
Dirty Work	2				2
Discrimination/Inequality		1	3	5	9
Employment		1	3		4
Labor/Labor Market/Labor Force	1	1	2		4
Management and Authority of Work		3		1	4
Occupation/Job	1	1		2	4
Unemployment/Underemployment		2			2
Wage/Income/Earnings	1	1	2	2	6
Work/Workplace	1	5	4	3	13
Workers	1	1	7	3	12
<b>OTHER</b>		1	1		2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>1005</b>

As can be seen in the analysis presented above (Table 3), the frequency of

<sup>4</sup>This category, includes the articles directly related to The Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) and Social Problems (SP)

the main topic, 'social movement,' was high in almost every single decade. When the trends of sub-topics that received attention under the main topic of 'social movement' were investigated, 'protest movement,' 'rights,' 'women,' 'social movement organization,' 'ideologies and tactics,' and 'activism' emerged as the most frequently studied topics respectively. Once the 'protest movement' sub-topic was analyzed in detail, it was found that the authors' attentions were more commonly concentrated on the topics 'gay/lesbian protest movement,' 'war protest movement,' 'peace movement,' 'unemployment protest movement,' 'protest movement against nuclear power,' 'homeless protest movement,' and 'protest movement organization and identity.' It is possible to observe that the research trends of authors related to the 'social movement' main topic became more diversified in the course of time. In the 1970's, the interest in topics such as 'environment,' 'poverty,' 'protest' and 'women' was low, while by the 2000's a greater variety in the number of topics can be observed.

The sub-topics under the main topic 'crime' reveal that the researchers were more inclined to study 'type of crime' and 'criminal justice system and policies.' The 'type of crime' studies were more likely to be related to 'violent crime,' 'white-collar crime,' 'thrifts crime,' 'rape,' 'political crime,' 'organized crime,' 'corporate crime,' 'hate crime,' and 'drug related crime.'

'Women' ranks among the most studied main topics, and 'work' sub-topic was the most popular. Research trends on women and work were concentrated on issues of 'unemployed women,' 'low income women,' 'women's status/position/career in occupation,' 'women workers,' 'sex differences/inequality in workplace,' 'sex-based occupational segregation,' and 'domestic workers.' In addition to these, studies on women and violence were a recurrent issue. In this regard, the writers displayed a trend towards issues such as 'domestic violence,' 'wife abuse,' 'battered women,' and 'sexual violence.'

Following these main topics, comes 'work&occupation,' a main topic which was studied in almost every decade, with sub-topics as 'work&workplace,' 'workers,' and 'discrimination&inequality.' While the articles that studied 'work&workplace' mostly focused on 'work/workplace conditions' ('occupational safety,' 'unhealthy workplace,' 'work time,' 'effective work'), 'workplace organization,' 'mistake at work' and 'ideology at work/workplace,' the articles on 'workers' examined 'type of workers' ('domestic workers,'

'temporary workers,' 'foreign workers,' 'clerical workers,' 'service workers') and 'organizational behavior,' 'solidarity,' 'resistance' and 'participation' of workers. 'Discrimination and inequality' was another research trend under the main topic of 'work&occupation.' In relation to 'discrimination and inequality,' 'labor market discrimination,' and 'occupational inequality/discrimination/segregation' were studied more extensively.

### **The Countries Studied in *Social Problems* Articles**

A number of articles published in *Social Problems* analyzed social problems representing certain countries. Within this context, the following table (Table 4) reveals the countries and years in which social problem research was conducted.

**Table 4.** Countries and years in which social problem research was conducted

<b>COUNTRIES</b>	<b>1976-1979</b>	<b>1980-1989</b>	<b>1990-1999</b>	<b>2000-2012</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>No country specified</b>	50	59	31	56	<b>196</b>
<b>USA</b>	83	196	193	213	<b>685</b>
<b>Comparative with the USA</b>	2	3	5	4	<b>14</b>
USA-Iran	0	0	1	0	1
USA-France	0	0	0	1	1
USA-India	0	0	0	1	1
USA-Egypt	0	0	0	1	1
USA-Sweden	0	0	2	0	2
USA-Soviet Rep.	0	1	1	0	2
USA-Italy	0	1	0	0	1
USA-England	0	1	1	1	3
USA-Canada	1	0	0	0	1
USA-China	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Cross-National Studies</b>	1	7	5	20	<b>33</b>
<b>Multiple European Countries</b>	0	0	1	3	<b>4</b>
<b>Single Country</b>	10	16	15	32	<b>73</b>
Peru	0	0	0	1	1
Soviet Rep.	0	0	0	1	1
Pakistan	0	0	0	1	1
Netherlands	0	0	0	1	1



Czech Rep.	0	0	0	1	1
Taiwan	0	0	0	1	1
Iceland	0	0	0	1	1
Hungary	0	0	0	1	1
Germany	0	0	1	1	2
Mexico	0	0	1	3	4
Northern Ireland	0	0	1	4	5
Kenya	0	0	1	0	1
Thailand	0	0	1	0	1
Nicaragua	0	0	1	0	1
South Korea	0	0	2	0	2
Sweden	0	0	2	1	3
Vietnam	0	1	0	0	1
Russia	0	1	0	0	1
Israel	1	1	0	5	7
India	0	1	2	0	3
Cuba	0	1	0	0	1
Britain	0	4	0	0	4
Poland	0	1	0	1	2
Canada	1	2	2	3	8
Japan	1	1	0	2	4
China	3	0	1	4	8
France	1	1	0	0	2
Australia	1	1	0	0	2
Egypt	1	0	0	0	1
Haiti	1	0	0	0	1
Iran	0	1	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	146	281	250	328	1005

As can be seen in Table 4, the articles studying social problem issues in relation to the 'USA' are dominant within every time frame examined. The 'cross-national studies' display an increase over the years.

An examination of the countries and the social problem topics<sup>5</sup> displays

<sup>5</sup> As the table on the related analysis is too long to include into this article, only the more significant results are documented here.

that, in the articles belonging to the 'USA' category (articles discussing the social problems in the United States) as the focus of the study (a total of 685 articles), the most frequently examined topics were 'social movement' (83), 'crime' (82), 'women' (51), 'race' (49), and 'work&occupation' (45) respectively. In the category 'no country specified' which includes studies not focusing on a specific country (a total of 196 articles), the most frequently studied social problem topics were, respectively, 'crime' (20), 'deviance' (15), 'social movement' (14), 'SSSP-SP' (13), and 'gender' (10). In 'comparative with the USA' category (a total of 14 articles) which includes comparative studies of USA and other countries, the most frequently studied social problem topics were 'policy' (3) and 'women' (2). In 'single country' category which includes studies on countries other than the USA (a total of 78 articles), the most frequently studied topic was 'social movement' (11). This topic is followed by 'women' (7), 'crime' (6), 'state&government' (4), and 'health' (4).

In the 'cross-national' category which covers comparative studies among countries other than the USA (a total of 28 articles), 'globalization' (6), 'environment' (4), and 'economy' (3) social problem topics were the most frequently studied topics. In 'multiple European countries' category which includes more than one European country (a total of 4 articles), social problem topics were 'social movement' (2), 'ethnicity' (1), and 'policy' (1).

As can be understood from Table 4, this study reiterates one conclusion Henslin and Roesti's study remarked: The main social problem topics, or "vital social problems" as Henslin and Roesti emphasized (1976:56), studied in the articles published in *Social Problems* were mostly associated with the American society. Accordingly, the main social problem topics that are identified in this study could be defined as vital social problems for the American society. Furthermore, the study reveals that among the articles examined, it was mostly those on the American society ('USA' category) that carried out social problem analyses at the micro level, while analyses on the macro level were mostly carried out in the articles that belonged to the category 'no country specified.' This category (no country specified) included the macro level studies that do not discuss any issue specific to one country and instead approach social problems from a global perspective. As Kendall stated (2004:8), social problems can be studied on two levels. For instance, a study on unemployment and how it affects a person's fam-

ily and his close environment is a micro level study, while an analysis of unemployment through social processes, institutions, wide-scale organizations, politics and economy is a macro level study. In their study, Henslin and Roesti (1976) pointed out that the number of macro level studies was less than that of the micro level studies in the 1953-1976 time frame. As can be seen in this current study, the number of micro level studies was higher, as well, than that of macro level studies, in the articles published in the 1976-2012 time frame. For instance, 'capitalist development,' 'class,' 'liberalism,' and 'socialist government/state' under the main topic of 'capitalism,' pointing at macro level studies, were less frequently studied compared to 'marriage,' 'violence,' and 'women's work life' under the main topic of 'women,' pointing at micro level studies.

### Methods and Techniques Used in *Social Problems* Articles

The analysis of a social problem necessitates the application of various theoretical approaches and a variety of research methods and techniques. The tables below (Table 5 and Table 6) demonstrate the distribution of research methods and techniques and main social problem topics in the articles published in *Social Problems* in the 1976-2012 time frame.

**Table 5.** Distribution of main social problem topics and research methods used in the articles

MAIN TOPICS	Quantitative Methods and Research	Qualitative Methods and Research	Mixed Method Research	Theoretical Study	TOTAL
ADOLESCENCE&YOUTH	24	9	1	3	37
CAPITALISM&SOCIALISM	3	1		8	12
CHILDREN	2	11	1	3	17
CRIME	53	30		28	111
CULTURE	3	5			8
DEATH		1			1
DEVIANCE	14	22	3	18	57
DISABILITY & HANDICAPPED PEOPLE		4		2	6
DISASTER	2	1		2	5
ECONOMY	5	2	1	9	17

EDUCATION	23	8		5	36
ELDERLY	1	1			2
ENVIRONMENT	5	3		8	16
ETHNICITY	6	1		6	13
FAMILY	7	8	2	12	29
GENDER&SEX ROLES	9	22	1	5	37
GLOBALIZATION	4	2		4	10
HEALTH	12	19	1	16	48
HUMAN RIGHTS		2		3	5
INTERNET	1			1	2
LANGUAGE	1	6		3	10
LAW	3	5		3	11
LEISURE			1	1	2
MEDIA	5	8		1	14
METHODOLOGY	1	2		6	9
MIGRATION	7	8	2	4	21
MILITARY	1	2			3
MINORITY	5	1		2	8
NEIGHBORHOOD	13	2		1	16
NUTRITION		1		1	2
OTHER		2		1	3
POLICY	2	7		9	18
POSTMODERNITY				2	2
POVERTY	2			4	6
PSYCHIATRIC SOCIOLOGY	3	4		2	9
PUBLIC		1		3	4
RACE	30	10	1	11	52
RELIGION	9	4			13
SCIENCE&TECHNOLOGIES	1	1		7	9
SOCIAL CHANGE	1	2		1	4
SOCIAL CONTROL		4	1	4	9
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS	21	39	2	50	112
SOCIAL PROBLEMS	2	4		7	13
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY		1		2	3
SSSP-SP	1	7		5	13
STATE&GOVERNMENT		7	1	9	17

STIGMA	1	3	1	1	6
SUICIDE	1				1
URBAN	4			3	7
VIOLENCE	2			1	3
WOMEN	25	25	8	18	76
WORK&OCCUPATION	24	20	1	15	60
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>1005</b>

As can be understood from Table 5, a higher number of researchers preferred to use quantitative methods and research (339) than qualitative methods and research (328) in the analysis of social problems. The number of theoretical studies was 310. Mixed method research, a relatively new and recently adopted mode of research, was used in 28 articles.

In the articles covered, the main social problem topics analyzed through the extensive use of quantitative methods and research were, respectively, 'crime' (53), 'race' (30), 'women' (25), 'work&occupation' (24), 'education' (23), 'adolescence&youth' (24), and 'social movement' (21). The main social problem topics analyzed through the extensive use of qualitative methods and research were, respectively, 'social movement' (39), 'crime' (30), 'women' (25), 'deviance' (22), 'gender&sex roles' (22), 'work&occupation' (20), and 'health' (19). On the other hand, the main social problem topics analyzed through the extensive use of mixed method research were, respectively, 'women' (8) and 'deviance' (3). The most frequently studied main social problem topics within theoretical studies were 'social movement' (50), 'crime' (28), 'women' (18), 'deviance' (18), 'health' (16), and 'work&occupation' (15). When examined individually, it was observed that, in the analysis of 'economy,' 'environment,' 'human rights,' and 'policy' main social problem topics, the studies were mostly theoretical ones.

The following table (Table 6) demonstrates in greater detail the research methods and techniques used in the analysis of the social problems in the articles, by decades.

**Table 6.** Distribution of research methods and techniques used in articles by years

Research Methods and Techniques	YEARS				TOTAL
	1976-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2012	
Quantitative Methods and Research	46	59	79	155	<b>339</b>
Documentary Analyze	2	3	7	27	39
Secondary Analysis	19	27	40	94	180
Survey-Questionnaire-Interview	25	29	32	34	120
Qualitative Methods and Research	36	92	93	107	<b>328</b>
Single Qualitative Technique	25	57	67	84	<b>233</b>
Case study	2	7	7	5	21
Content Analysis	3	4	8	7	22
Conversation Analysis	1	6	2	6	15
Discourse Analysis	1	2	1	2	6
Documentary Analysis	5	6	8	10	29
Ethnographic Fieldwork	2	1	3	6	12
Interview & In-depth Interview& Semi-structured Interview	10	31	35	41	117
Narratives Analysis				1	1
Observation	1		1	2	4
Participant Observation			2	4	6
Multiple Qualitative Techniques	11	35	26	23	<b>95</b>
Interview & Content Analysis	1	2	2		5
Interview & Documentary Analysis		6	6	7	19
Interview & Observation & Content Analysis		1			1
Interview & Observation	4	16	8	6	34
Participant Observation & Case Study		1			1
Participant Observation & Interview	4	6	9	7	26
Participant Observation & Interview & Content Analysis	1				1
Participant Observation& Interview & Documentary Analysis	1	3	1	3	8
Mixed Method Research	2	11	9	6	<b>28</b>

Questionnaire & Ethnography & Documentary Analysis		1			1
Questionnaire & Interview		7	7	2	16
Questionnaire & Interview & Documentary Analysis		2	1		3
Questionnaire & Interview & Observation	1		1	1	3
Questionnaire & Observation	1			1	2
Secondary Analysis & Interview		1		2	3
Theoretical Study	62	119	69	60	<b>310</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>1005</b>

As Table 6 demonstrates, almost all research methods and techniques used in the articles displayed an increase in number and diversification through the years. Arguing that there is an evolutionary transformation from the quantitative approach towards the qualitative approach in the course of history, Creswell (2009:4) remarked that the quantitative approach became the dominant mode of research in social sciences between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and that in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the qualitative researches began to increase in number, accompanied by the acceptance and wide use of the mixed method research mode. In line with Creswell, the results of this study, as presented above, demonstrate that the researchers studying social problems made heavy use of the quantitative, qualitative, and increasingly mixed method researches.

### **Theories Used in *Social Problems* Articles**

Theory, in a general sense, is a series of logical, abstract and accepted assumptions directed at explaining relationships among phenomena. Theories introduce explanations about phenomena related to varying social facts and about society. (Timasheff 1967, Kinloch 1977, Turk 1988, Wallace and Wolf 1991, Ritzer 1996, Elliott 1999). Theories differ among themselves in terms of the methods, assumptions, hypotheses, as well as the concepts used, and the ways in which they explain social life. In this respect, theoretical explanations about social problems vary in regards to defining, comprehending, explaining, and resolving a given social problem. This diversity is an innate quality of social sciences. A general outlook on social problems literature (Kitsuse and Spectre 1973, Best 1989, Jamrozik and Nocella 1998, Leon-

Guerrero 2005, Parillo 2005) reveals that to explain social problems, classical theories (functionalist theory, conflict theory, structuralist theory, symbolic interactionist theory) are used alongside modern theories (feminist theory, social constructivist theory, postmodern theory). This study demonstrated that a diverse number of theories were used in the articles published in *Social Problems* in the 1976-2012 time frame. Table 7 does not differentiate between classical and modern theories but shows the theories used in the articles, as well as their distribution across the decades.

**Table 7.** Distribution of theories used in the articles by decades

Theories	1976-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2012	Total
Adolescence and Youth Theories	2	0	0	0	2
Border Theory	0	0	0	1	1
Class Theories	2	9	4	2	17
Collective Efficacy Theory	0	0	0	1	1
Conflict Theory	5	16	6	3	30
Constructionist Theory	3	6	7	2	18
Contact Theory	0	0	0	1	1
Criminology and Deviance Theories	20	39	20	21	100
Critical Theory	0	2	0	0	2
Cultural Pluralism/Multiculturalism/ Subculture Theories	2	0	0	4	6
Economic Theories	1	7	6	5	19
Education Theories	11	3	1	9	24
Elite Theory	0	1	0	0	1
Environment Theories	0	0	5	0	5
Exchange Theory	0	0	0	1	1
Family Theories	8	5	5	11	29
Feminist Theory	5	5	14	6	30
Framing Theory	0	0	0	1	1
Functionalist/Neo-Functionalist Theory	3	1	1	0	5
Gender/Women Theories	12	21	20	15	68
Globalization Theories	0	0	1	8	9
Health Theories	2	17	7	5	31
Human Rights	0	0	0	1	1



Identity Theories	0	2	5	7	<b>14</b>
Single Theorists	21	35	17	22	<b>95</b>
Knowledge Theories	1	1	0	0	<b>2</b>
Labeling Theory	2	1	4	1	<b>8</b>
Law Theories	1	2	1	0	<b>4</b>
Leisure Theories	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
Media Theories	2	0	3	6	<b>11</b>
Methodology	1	3	0	8	<b>12</b>
Migration Theories	1	5	2	4	<b>12</b>
Minority Theories	1	0	0	1	<b>2</b>
Modernism/postmodernism	2	7	4	1	<b>14</b>
Multiple Theories/Theorists	5	14	8	19	<b>46</b>
Negotiation Theories	1	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Panic Theory	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
Psychiatric/Mental Disorder Theories	0	0	3	0	<b>3</b>
Poverty Theories	0	2	0	2	<b>4</b>
Rational Choice Theory	0	0	1	1	<b>2</b>
Race and Ethnicity Theories	9	9	17	37	<b>72</b>
Religion Theories	0	0	0	5	<b>5</b>
Social Action Theory	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
Social Change Theory	0	3	1	0	<b>4</b>
Social Control Theory	1	7	3	1	<b>12</b>
Socialization Theories	1	1	1	3	<b>6</b>
Sociolinguistic Theories	1	4	0	0	<b>5</b>
Social Inequality and Discrimination Theories	0	0	1	2	<b>3</b>
Social Gerontological Theory	1	0	0	1	<b>2</b>
Social Organization Theory	1	2	0	0	<b>3</b>
Social Policy Theories	1	4	1	3	<b>9</b>
Societal Reaction Theory	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
Social Resource Theory/Incentive Theory	0	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
Social Movement Theories	3	14	34	45	<b>96</b>
SSSP-SP	5	0	0	8	<b>13</b>
Structural Theory	2	1	1	0	<b>4</b>
Symbolic Interactionist Theories	0	0	2	2	<b>4</b>

Theory of Public Sociology	0	0	0	3	<b>3</b>
Theory of Risk Communication	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
Theories of Social Capital	0	1	1	8	<b>10</b>
Theories of Social Problems	3	4	1	9	<b>17</b>
Theory of State	0	5	7	2	<b>14</b>
Urban/Neighborhood and Ecology Theories	2	2	9	10	<b>23</b>
War Theories	0	0	0	3	<b>3</b>
Work Theories	2	16	24	16	<b>58</b>
Others	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>1005</b>

Table 7 illustrates the fact that a great variety of theories were utilized in the articles to explain social problems. It was observed that among a multitude of theories, ‘criminology and deviance theories’ (100), ‘social movement theories’ (96), ‘individual theories’ (95) [such as, theories by Adler, Becker, Bourdieu, Blumer, Camus, Cohen, Coleman, Collins, Durkheim, Etzioni, Foucault, Friedman, Freud, Garfinkel, Gestalt, Goffman, Gramsci, Metron, Mills, Oarsons, Smelser, Veblen, Wallerstein], ‘race and ethnicity theories’ (72), ‘gender and women theories’ (68), and ‘work theories’ (58) were used more often in the given time frame. The category ‘multiple theories/theorists’ (46) in the table refers to the articles which made use of an array of theories or theorists. For instance, Durkheim’s and Sutherland’s theories were used separately in the same article as theoretical explications.

### **In Lieu of a Conclusion**

It can be argued that, with new global trends, social conditions have been in a state of rapid change both in the American society and the rest of the world. The dynamics of globalization coupled with developments in information and communication technologies, process of transition into an economics of information, acts of global terrorism, policies of discrimination, global economic crisis, and increasing environmental pollution are all in close relation with various social problems. The aforementioned changes made it necessary that a re-analysis and re-evaluation of the questions posed by Henslin and Roesti’s article needed to be carried out for the 1976-2012 time period.

As many sociologists remarked, the definition of what actually constitutes a social problem can differ in accordance with the changes in a given society. In line with this fact, the analysis on the articles published in *Social Problems* between 1976-2012 showed that the social problem topics studied in the articles display a significant variety. As Henslin and Roesti (1976) stated, this condition is an acknowledgement of the fact that *Social Problems* presents a broad range of evidence, interpretation, and solutions concerning social problems.

The social problem topics determined in this study verified the existence of various social problems in both the American society and the rest of the world. In addition to this verification, this analysis also demonstrated which social problems are given importance by social scientists, i.e., the trends in studying social problems. This relative significance attached to the social problem shows, on the one hand, that social problems can be defined in terms of various social issues that belong to a particular society, that is, social problems are society-specific; on the other hand, it reveals that there is a trend towards a recognition of the global social problems. In other words, there is a recognition that some social problems are problems on a global scale.

Problems that globalization gives rise to, such as deterioration of welfare state, the diminishing life standards for the middle class, changes in social movements, fascism, racism, environmental pollution and depletion of resources, are also matters of interest as study topics for many social scientists (Jamrozik and Nocella 1998, Deacon 2000, Rutra 2008). These vital social problems that come to the forefront with the process of globalization are discussed from the stand point of inequalities, discrimination, and polarizations by social scientists (Castells 1999:7-8). Some results supported by the above mentioned explanations have been reached in this study. In this study, many social problem topics have been identified related to various societies. 'Inequality' and 'discrimination' were found to be the two most frequently studied social problem sub-topics between the years 1976 and 2012 in almost all societies. To give another example, 'racial inequality,' 'income/wage/earn inequality,' 'gender inequality,' 'rights,' 'workplace discrimination/inequality,' and 'sexual inequality' were among common social problems studied by authors. As Jamrozik and Nocella stated, this condition is an indicator of the fact that, to study social problems even on

the national level, researchers now have to take into consideration global factors and determine the causal links between the internal and external activities and the effects of these links (Jamrozik and Nocella 1998: 80).

The analysis further reveals that certain social problems are global problems that are still being discussed, and have continued to exist since 1976 to the present. In this regard, the studies focusing on 'social movement,' 'crime,' 'women,' and 'work&occupation' have continued. The prominent trends in recent years in the field of 'social movement' topic were 'women's movements,' 'gay-lesbian protest movements,' and 'activism.' As for the social problem 'crime,' the major trends were 'criminal justice system,' 'type of crime,' and 'homicide'; and for the social problem 'women,' the prominent trends were 'women and work life' and 'violence' studies. It must be emphasized that, a noticeable observation for the social problem 'women' was the declining trend in the study of certain issues, and more interestingly, a number of issues were not studied, at all, in the recent years. For example, research on women's issues such as 'abortion,' 'childbirth/child care,' and 'women and religion' was not undertaken in the 2000's. On the other hand, the recent years have witnessed the emergence of various new social problem topics such as 'globalization,' 'postmodernity,' and 'internet.'

It was also observed that certain topics which were not dealt with between 1976-1979 (such as 'death,' 'disability,' 'environment,' and 'religion') began to be studied in the following years. For example, the topic 'environment' may deserve special mention as it began to be studied as a social problem topic after the 1990's. What's more, Henslin and Roesti (1976:65) stated that between 1953 and 1975, no records were made of a study on the environment. In fact, the environment emerged as topic of interest due to the rising concerns over the risks posed by the developing technologies especially in the last 30 years. In this topic, the primary study trends were 'air pollution,' 'global warming,' 'environmental degradation,' 'environmental change,' 'modernization,' 'health,' 'environmental justice,' and 'policy.'

The limited number of studies on the 'environment,' 'women,' and 'protest movements,' related to the social problem of 'social movement' between the years 1976-1979, displayed a rapid increase after the 80's. Especially in these years, the incidence of the studies on 'women' and 'environment' showed an upward trend. All these results demonstrate that there has been a

growing academic interest towards social movements since the 80's. According to della Porta and Diani (2006:6-7), studies on social movements have been on the rise since the 60's. They emphasize that, analyzing the changes in society on the basis of identity and rights rather than class struggle, these social movements have been defined as "the new social movements." Marx and Wood (1975), Morris and Herring (1987), and Rucht (1991) remarked that, in the mid 1970's, the studies on collective action were considered to be one of the most vigorous areas of sociology and that, particularly at the end of 80's, there was an explosion of interest in the theoretical and empirical studies on social movements and collective action (della Porta and Diani 2006:1). On the other hand, as the current study shows, it could be maintained that starting from the 90's onwards, there was an increasing trend in the topic of 'rights' related to the social problem of social movements. Similarly, Parillo (2005) stated that the achievements of the gay movement can be considered as an appropriate example of the changes observed in the relations between the social problem and the socio-historical process. According to him, while homosexuality was once defined as a form of immorality, in time a transformation took place, which led to the emergence of social conditions in which gay rights were protected by law.

As stated earlier, studies dealing with the topic of crime were found to be popular in all time periods in this research. Since 1976 to the present, the existing trends in 'women/gender/sex,' 'incidence of crime,' 'criminal justice system and policies,' 'type of crime,' and 'criminal punishment' related to the social problem of crime have been maintained. On the other hand, other topics related to the social problem of crime, such as 'immigration,' and 'neighborhood/ecological crime studies' were not studied for many years, only to be dealt with again in the 2000's. While the sub-topics under crime changed from society to society depending on the social structure, crime has remained a popular area of study both for the social scientists from the USA, and other countries. As Parillo (2005) remarked, social problems cannot be considered in isolation from the historical conditions of a given society. Using data obtained from the *New York Times*, Kendall (2004:6) similarly pointed out that it is likely for social problems to go through changes in the course of history. Underlining the fact that the designation of what exactly constitutes a social problem can display significant changes through the years, Kendall (2004) analyzed social problems from 1950's onwards, basing his research on data. He established that it is not surprising for a society in

the 1950's, which just came out of World War II, to regard war as a grave social problem, that civil rights gained prominence in the 1970's with the influence of alternative political movements, and that in more recent years crime and terror are considered to be more critical problems due to the effects of globalization.

This study exposes that, as in the case of crime, the social problem studies focused on 'women' remained predominantly high in this time frame. Almost all the time periods studied include articles from the United States and other countries, referring to the topics of 'women' and 'work.' Study of women's issues from a feminist perspective continued in a steady manner from 1976 to 1999. In addition, studies on violence against women were more commonly carried out in the 1980's, while remaining a popular subject in our time. It is noteworthy that regardless of their sub-topics, the social problem articles focusing on women were highest in number in the 1980's. While discussing the changes taking place in the definition of social problems in time, Parillo (2005:2) points out the changes observed in the rules of social interaction between men and women in American society from the past to the future; he remarks that in recent years, violence against women, and more specifically sexual violence against women, began to be defined as a social problem.

Finally, it could be argued that, the articles published in *Social Problems*, as was the case in the past, continues to offer a platform for social problems of different sorts to be studied from a broad perspective. While the authors of the articles published between 1976 and 2012 mainly used quantitative research methods in analyzing social problems, qualitative research methods were being used increasingly to understand and interpret the world of social problems, thereby providing significant contributions to the research field of social problems. Furthermore, a great variety of theoretical perspectives were implemented in the articles, by the authors, to comprehend and to provide explanations for the social problems. These theoretical explanations also went through changes during the time period studied. Starting from mainly the 1980's onwards, it is notable that feminist studies used gender in socio-cultural contexts more extensively, and that postmodern theories began to be used in the interpretation of social problems. Besides, it is noteworthy that postmodernity itself was considered a social problem issue, as well, starting from this time period. While the articles published in *Social Problems*

mainly displayed a local definition of a social problem--they mostly took American society as their subject of analysis--, it can be argued that these studies may also raise the awareness of social scientists for the existence of certain global problems. Besides, it can be stated that there are various impending social problems that demand solution in many societies around the world. There is always the need for more research and analyses carried out using the lens of social sciences, in the definition, in the explanation, and in the formation of strategies of solutions for social problems. As *Social Problems* supports a more global approach to its analysis of societal issues, the journal's role in meeting this need cannot be disregarded. The researchers believe that this role of the journal will give inspiration to novel ideas for the development of sound strategies and policies in confronting social problems, across the world, and for new studies to be carried out in the field of social problems.

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