Introduction to Sociology - 2nd Canadian Edition

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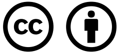

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Changes to this book, as a whole, were made to achieve the following goals.

1. Replace U.S.-centric content with Canadian content. This included examples, case studies, significant figures, perspectives and, more pragmatically, spelling, idioms, measurements and grammatical structure and style.
2. Add feminist theory and feminist perspectives throughout the text.
3. Add Canadian aboriginal perspectives and content.
4. Added chapter on Religion

Key Terms, Section Summary, Quiz, Further Research, and References in each chapter have been updated to reflect new chapter content.

For a detailed list of the changes and additions made to this book, see "2nd Canadian Edition Changes".

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Chapter 1. An Introduction to Sociology

Figure 1.1. Sociologists study how society affects people and how people affect society. How does being in a crowd affect people's behaviour? (Photo courtesy of PDerek Hatfield/Wikimedia Commons)

Learning Objectives

1.1. What Is Sociology?

- Explain the concepts central to sociology.
- Describe the different levels of analysis in sociology: micro-level sociology, macro-level sociology, and global-level sociology.
- Define the sociological imagination.

1.2. The History of Sociology

- Explain why sociology emerged when it did.
- Describe the central ideas of the founders of sociology.

1.3. Theoretical Perspectives

- Explain what sociological theories and paradigms are and how they are used.
- Describe sociology as a multi-perspectival social science divided into positivist, interpretive and critical paradigms.
- Define the similarities and differences between quantitative sociology, structural functionalism, historical materialism, feminism, and symbolic interactionism.

1.4. Why Study Sociology?

- Explain why it is worthwhile to study sociology.
- Identify ways sociology is applied in the real world.

Introduction to Sociology

Concerts, sporting matches and games, and political rallies can have very large crowds. When you attend one of these events you may know only the people you came with, yet you may experience a feeling of connection to the group. You are one of the crowd. You cheer and applaud when everyone else does. You boo and yell alongside them. You move out of the way when someone needs to get by, and

you say “excuse me” when you need to leave. You know how to behave in this kind of crowd.

It can be a very different experience if you are travelling in a foreign country and you find yourself in a crowd moving down the street. You may have trouble figuring out what is happening. Is the crowd just the usual morning rush, or is it a political protest of some kind? Perhaps there was some sort of accident or disaster. Is it safe in this crowd, or should you try to extract yourself? How can you find out what is going on? Although you are *in* it, you may not feel like you are *part* of this crowd. You may not know what to do or how to behave.

Even within one type of crowd, different groups exist and different behaviours are on display. At a rock concert, for example, some may enjoy singing along, others may prefer to sit and observe, while still others may join in a mosh pit or try crowd-surfing. On February 28, 2010, Sydney Crosby scored the winning goal against the United States team in the gold medal hockey game at the Vancouver Winter Olympics. Two hundred thousand jubilant people filled the streets of downtown Vancouver to celebrate and cap off two weeks of uncharacteristically vibrant, joyful street life in Vancouver. Just over a year later, on June 15, 2011, the Vancouver Canucks lost the seventh hockey game of the Stanley Cup finals against the Boston Bruins. One hundred thousand people had been watching the game on outdoor screens. Eventually 155,000 people filled the downtown streets. Rioting and looting led to hundreds of injuries, burnt cars, trashed storefronts and property damage totaling an estimated $4.2 million. Why was the crowd response to the two events so different?

Figure 1.2. People's experiences of the post-Stanley Cup riot in Vancouver were very different. (Photo courtesy of Pasquale Borriello/Flickr)

A key insight of sociology is that the simple fact of being in a group changes your behaviour. The group is a phenomenon that is more than the sum of its parts. Why do we feel and act differently in different types of social situations? Why might people of a single group exhibit different behaviours in the same situation? Why might people acting similarly not feel connected to others exhibiting the same behaviour? These are some of the many questions sociologists ask as they study people and societies.

1.1. What Is Sociology?

Figure 1.3. Sociologists learn about society as a whole while studying one-to-one and group interactions. (Photo courtesy of Robert S. Donovan/Flickr)

A rather standard definition of sociology might note that sociology is the systematic study of society and social interaction. But what does this really tell us? It seems the object of study is something called "society and social interaction" and that sociologists study this in a "systematic", or as we will later argue, a 'scientific' way.

While a useful start, we will soon see that understanding what sociology is and what sociologists do is rather complex. While most of us have an understanding of the world rooted in our individual life history and the views of those we are closest to, taking a sociological perspective often reveals a very different, broader and more complex idea of social life and our place in it. Sociological investigation reveals how as members of a society we both shape and are shaped by the social world we inhabit. A

sociological perspective, by examining the way society is organised, allows us to make connections between the everyday life of individuals and structure of opportunities and problems in society. Moreover, by focusing on historical trends and developments and by comparing societies across the globe, sociology demonstrates that there is nothing inevitable about the present ways of doing things – that social change is possible.

Are you still a bit confused? Don't worry, the goal of an introductory course in sociology is to thoroughly explain what sociology is and why it is important. In the following pages you will encounter many well-known sociologists and their findings about how the social world operates and the theories and concepts sociologists use. Sociology however, is not just for sociologists. Taking a sociological perspective can help each and every one of us in our jobs, as members of families and neighbours navigate a complex world.

What are Society and Culture? Micro, Macro and Global Perspectives

Sociologists study all aspects and levels of society. A **society** is a group of people whose members interact, reside in a definable area, and share a culture. A **culture** includes the group's shared practices, values, beliefs, norms, and artifacts. One sociologist might analyze people as they carry on everyday conversations to study how the rules of polite conversation differ by social class or cultural group. Another sociologist might study how a shift to working from home changes the way organizations are run. Yet another sociologist might study how access to daycare affects the national poverty rate. A fourth sociologist might study how the increasing economic importance of China,

India and Brazil has altered the politics and economics of African nations.

These examples illustrate the ways in which society and culture can be studied at different *levels of analysis*, from the detailed study of face-to-face interactions to the examination of large-scale historical processes affecting entire civilizations. As discussed in later chapters, sociologists break the study of society down into four separate levels of analysis: micro, meso, macro, and global. The basic distinctions, however, are between **micro-level sociology**, **macro-level sociology** and **global-level sociology**.

The study of cultural rules of politeness in conversation is an example of micro-level sociology. At the *micro*-level of analysis, the focus is on the social dynamics of intimate, face-to-face interactions. Research is conducted with a specific set of individuals such as conversational partners, family members, work associates, or friendship groups. Other examples of micro-level research include the study of how informal mentorship helps or hinders advancement of women in high tech startups, or how loyalty to criminal gangs is established.

Macro-level sociology focuses on the properties of large-scale, society-wide phenomenon that extend beyond individual interaction. The example above of the influence of child care policies on poverty rates is a macro-level phenomenon. A sociologist might study how access to public childcare has a different effect on families depending on their income, their place of residence (rural or urban), their family type (single or two-parent), or their ethnic and racial background. Other examples of macro-level research include examining which racial and ethnic groups are under-represented in positions of power in society, or why fundamentalist Christian religious

movements play a more prominent role in American politics than they do in Canadian politics. In each case, the site of the analysis shifts away from the nuances and detail of micro-level interpersonal life to the broader, macro-level systematic patterns in society.

In *global*-level sociology, the focus is on structures and processes that extend beyond the boundaries of states or specific societies. As Ulrich Beck (2000) has pointed out, in many respects we no longer "live and act in the self-enclosed spaces of national states and their respective national societies." Issues of climate change, pandemics, the introduction of new technologies and popular culture increasingly by-pass traditional borders. With the boom and bust of petroleum or other export commodity economies, it is clear to someone living in Fort McMurray, Alberta, that their daily life is affected by global markets that determine the price of oil, the global flows of capital investment and increasingly the global response to a building climate emergency.

The relationship between the micro, macro, and global remains one of the key conceptual problems confronting sociology. What is the relationship between an individual's life and social life at the national and global level? On the one hand, macro-level phenomena like class structures, racial inequality, health care systems, and gender roles and urbanization clearly affect our everyday lives. When our health care system cannot provide necessary services we may die prematurely, gender stereotypes make it difficult for us to enter certain types of work, and transportation systems in cities might make our commutes long and unhealthy (stuck in a car in traffic) or short and active (a brisk walk to school). On the other hand, these macro-level phenomenon do not explain the specific nuances of everyday interaction very well.

They do not explain how strangers interact on the bus, how we navigate cliques in school, or how everyday racism is expressed and affects us in the streets. Macro-level structures constrain the daily interactions of the intimate circles in which we move, but they are also filtered through localized perceptions and "lived" in a myriad of inventive and unpredictable ways.

The Sociological Imagination

While we will learn that there are many different 'kinds' of sociology and many different methods that sociologists use, sociologists all have something in common. Each of them looks at society using what C. Wright Mills (1916-1962) called the **sociological imagination**, sometimes also referred to as the "sociological lens" or "sociological perspective." Mills defined a sociological imagination as the capacity to see an individual's private troubles in the context of the broader social processes that structure them. This enables the sociologist to examine what Mills called "personal troubles of milieu" as "public issues of social structure," and vice versa.

Mills reasoned that private troubles like being overweight, being unemployed, having marital difficulties, or feeling purposeless or depressed appear to most people as purely personal in nature. When faced with such troubles we tend to focus on how they are unique to our personal selves, our psychological circumstance, or our moral character: "I have an addictive personality;" "I didn't get the right education," "My husband is unsupportive," etc. ***However, if private troubles are widely shared with others, they indicate that there is a common social problem that has its source in the way social life***

is structured. At this level, the issues are not adequately understood as simply private troubles. They are best addressed as public issues that require a collective response to resolve.

Obesity, for example, has been increasingly recognized as a growing problem for both children and adults in North America. Michael Pollan cites statistics that three out of five Americans are overweight and one out of five is obese (2006). In Canada in 2012, just under one in five adults (18.4%) were obese, up from 16% of men and 14.5% of women in 2003 (Statistics Canada, 2013). Because the *rate* of obesity has changed over time we know it is is not simply a private concern related to individual genetics, medical issues, dietary practices, or exercise habits. This change in the incidence of obesity can only be accounted for by changing social conditions that that puts people at risk for chronic diseases like hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease and creates significant costs for the medical system. Rather than simply a personal trouble, obesity is also a social issue.

What are the social changes that can account for changing obesity rates? Polan is particularly interested in the role of the industrialization of the food chain, which since the 1970s has produced increasingly cheap and abundant food with significantly more calories due to processing. Cheap ingredients from industrial farms like corn syrup and mass produced potatoes and beef, led to the trend of super-sized fast foods and soft drinks in the 1980s. As Pollan argues, trying to find a processed food in the supermarket without a cheap, calorie-rich, corn-based sugar additive is a challenge. Pollan also agrees with health researchers and urban planners such as the University of British Columbia's, Lawrence Frank that obesity rates are, in part, a product of the

increasingly sedentary and stressful lifestyles of modern, capitalist society. These academics argue that obesity, like many of the pressing health issues, is influenced by the type and amount of work we do,and the way our cities and neighbourhoods are organized. Others would note that gender stereotypes and racial and economic inequalities place some people more at risk than others.

The sociological imagination in this example is the capacity to see the connection between the private trouble of being overweight and the social issues of the industrialization of the food chain, the profit motive of fast food restaurants, social norms about the types of food we eat, the transportation we use and to the way that some social groups have better access to healthy food and exercise.

A sociological imagination allows us to see the social arrangements and contexts that influence behaviour, attitudes, and culture. By applying systematic and scientific methods to this process, they try to do so without letting their own biases and preconceived ideas influence their conclusions.

Studying Patterns: How Sociologists View Society

To a sociologist, the personal decisions an individual makes do not exist in a vacuum. Cultural patterns and social forces put pressure on people to select one choice over another. Sociologists try to identify these general patterns by examining the behaviour of large groups of people living in the same society and experiencing the same societal pressures. When general patterns persist through time and become routine forms of micro-level

(interpersonal) interaction, or institutionalized at macro or global levels of interaction (i.e. into class structures, legal systems, or economic activities), they are referred to as ***social structures*.**

A key basis of the sociological perspective is the concept that the individual and society are inseparable. It is impossible to study one without the other. German sociologist Norbert Elias (1887-1990) called the process of simultaneously analyzing the behaviour of individuals and the society that shapes that behaviour **figuration**. He described it through a metaphor of dancing. There can be no dance without the dancers, but there can be no dancers without the dance. Without the dancers, a dance is just an idea about motions in a choreographer's head. Without a dance, there is just a group of people moving around a floor. Similarly, ***there is no society without the individuals that make it up, and there are also no individuals who are not affected by the society in which they live*** (Elias, 1978).

One problem for sociologists is that such a perspective is often discouraged by the *moral* framework of the contemporary capitalist societies we live in. Such societies emphasize the importance of individual responsibility and individual choice. This moral framework insists that the individual is responsible for their behaviours and decisions and suggests that explanations of behaviour that address social context are "letting the individual off the hook" for their actions. Talking about the social roots of individual problems is seen to be morally soft or lenient.

Sociology, as a social science, remains neutral on these types of moral questions. For sociologists, the individual

and society relationship is complex and needs to be examined through evidence-based, rather than morality-based, research. Sociology encourages us to acknowledge that our behaviours and decisions are shaped by the society and social groups we belong to while also acknowledging that within these contexts we do make individual decisions and endure the consequences of these decisions. Our lives are profoundly shaped by our social context and through living our lives we come to influence, change or reinforce these social arrangements. In the end, a society is nothing *but* the ongoing social relationships and activities of specific individuals, but we are never entirely free of our social ties.

Making Connections: Sociology in the Real World

The Individual in Society: Choices of Aboriginal Gang Members

Figure 1.4. "Native Pride" (photo courtesy of Rap Dictionary at http://62.193.220.29/Native_syndicate)

In 2010 the CBC program *The Current* aired a report about several young Aboriginal men who were serving time in prison in Saskatchewan for gang-related activities (CBC, 2010). They all expressed desires to be able to deal with their drug addiction issues, return to their families, and assume their responsibilities when their sentences were complete. They wanted to have their own places with nice things in them. However, according to the CBC report, 80% of the prison population in the Saskatchewan Correctional Centre were Aboriginal and 20% of those were gang members. This is consistent with national statistics on Aboriginal

incarceration which showed that in 2010–2011, the Aboriginal incarceration rate was 10 times higher than for the non-Aboriginal population. While Aboriginal people account for about 4% of the Canadian population, in 2013 they made up 23.2% of the federal penitentiary population. In 2001 they made up only 17% of the penitentiary population. Aboriginal overrepresentation in prisons has continued to grow substantially (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2013). The outcomes of Aboriginal incarceration are also bleak. The federal Office of the Correctional Investigator summarized the situation as follows. Aboriginal inmates are:

- Routinely classified as higher risk and higher need in categories such as employment, community reintegration, and family supports.
- Released later in their sentence (lower parole grant rates); most leave prison at Statutory Release or Warrant Expiry dates.
- Overrepresented in segregation and maximum security populations.
- Disproportionately involved in use-of-force interventions and incidents of prison self-injury.
- More likely to return to prison on revocation of parole, often for administrative reasons, not criminal violations (2013).

The federal report notes that “the high rate of incarceration for Aboriginal peoples has been linked to systemic discrimination and attitudes based on racial or cultural prejudice, as well as economic and social disadvantage, substance abuse, and intergenerational loss, violence and trauma” (2013).

This is clearly a case in which the situation of the incarcerated inmates interviewed on the CBC program has been structured by historical social patterns and power relationships that confront Aboriginal people in Canada generally. How do we understand it at the individual level, however — at the level of personal decision making and individual responsibilities? One young inmate described how, at the age of 13, he began to hang around with his cousins who were part of a gang. He had not grown up with “the best life”; he had family members suffering from addiction issues and traumas. The appeal of what appeared as a fast and exciting lifestyle — the sense of freedom and of being able to make one’s own life, instead of enduring poverty — was compelling. He began to earn money by “running dope” but also began to develop addictions. He was expelled from school for recruiting gang members. The only job he ever had was selling drugs. The circumstances in which he and the other inmates had entered the gang life, and the difficulties getting out of it they knew awaited them when they left prison, reflect a set of decision-making parameters fundamentally different than those facing most non-Aboriginal people in Canada.

1.2. The History of Sociology

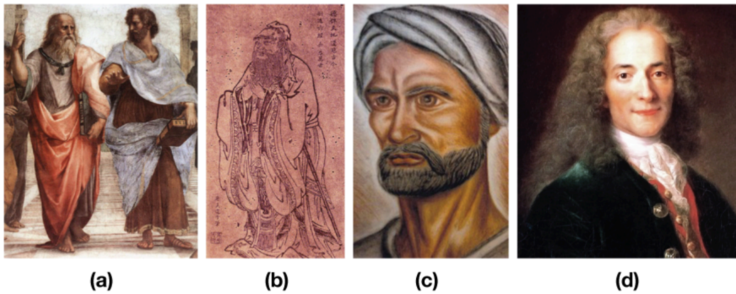

Figure 1.5. People have been thinking like sociologists long before sociology became a separate academic discipline: (a) Plato and Aristotle, (b) Confucius, (c) Khaldun, and (d) Voltaire all set the stage for modern sociology. (Photos (a),(b),(c),(d) courtesy of Wikimedia Commons).

Since ancient times, people have been fascinated by the relationship between individuals and the societies to which they belong. The ancient Greeks might be said to have provided the foundations of sociology through the distinction they drew between *physis* (nature) and *nomos* (law or custom). The modern sociological term *"norm"* (i.e., a social rule that regulates human behaviour) comes from the Greek term *nomos*. *Histories* by Herodotus (484–425 BCE) was a proto-anthropological work that described the great variations in the *nomos* of different ancient societies around the Mediterranean, indicating that human social life was not a product of nature but a product of human creation. In the 13th century, Ma Tuan-Lin, a Chinese historian, first recognized social dynamics as an underlying component of historical development in his seminal encyclopedia, *General Study of Literary Remains*. The study charted the historical development of Chinese

state administration from antiquity in a manner very similar to contemporary institutional analyses.

However, it was not until the 19th century that the basis of the modern discipline of sociology can be said to have been truly established. The ideas that culminated in sociology can be found in the three major transformations that came to define modern society: the development of science from the 16th century onward, the emergence of democratic forms of government with the American and French Revolutions (1775–1783 and 1789–1799 respectively), and the Industrial Revolution beginning in the 18th century. This was a time of great hope in a scientific understanding of world through systematic observation, of popular uprisings that upended forms of governance based on claims of divine inheritance, and of unprecedented social problems, from the breakdown of local communities to the hyper-exploitation of industrial labourers.

Early sociologists like Comte and Marx sought to formulate a rational, evidence-based, scientific explanation of this tumultuous time. While Comte hoped to restore order and Marx sought to provide the basis for a revolutionary transformation, each argued that sociology, by providing a rational and scientifically comprehensive knowledge of society and its processes, could help build a better world. This is why to the day sociology can be understood as a fundamentally hopeful endeavour.

Figure 1.6. Newton, William Blake, (1795). (Photo courtesy of William Blake/Wikimedia Commons)

August Comte: The Father of Sociology

Figure 1.7. Auguste Comte is considered by many to be the father of sociology. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

The term sociology was first coined in 1780 by the French essayist Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès (1748–1836) and in 1838, the term was reinvented by Auguste Comte (1798–1857). The contradictions of Comte's life and the times he lived through can be in large part read into the concerns that led to his development of sociology. He was born in 1798, year 6 of the new French Republic, to staunch monarchist and Catholic parents. They lived comfortably off his father's earnings as a minor bureaucrat

in the tax office. Comte originally studied to be an engineer, but after rejecting his parents' conservative, monarchist views, he declared himself a republican and free spirit at the age of 13 and was eventually kicked out of school at 18 for leading a school riot. This ended his chances of getting a formal education and a position as an academic or government official.

He became a secretary to the utopian socialist philosopher Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825) until they had a falling out in 1824 (after St. Simon reputedly purloined some of Comte's essays and signed his own name to them). Comte believed that societies and human behaviour were best understood using the same scientific methods used to study the natural world. He also believed in the potential of social scientists to work toward the betterment of society and coined the slogan "order and progress" to argue that the opposing progressive and conservative factions that marked post-revolutionary French society could be united. Comte proposed that science would be the means to create a rational social order where each social group could find their place in a hierarchical social order. It is a testament to his influence in the 19th century that the phrase "order and progress" adorns the Brazilian coat of arms (Collins and Makowsky, 1989).

Comte named the scientific study of social patterns **positivism**. He believed that using scientific methods to reveal the laws by which societies and individuals interact would usher in a new "positivist" age of history. In principle, positivism, or what Comte called "social physics," proposed that the study of society could be conducted in the same way that the natural sciences approach the natural world.

Karl Marx: The Ruthless Critique of Everything Existing

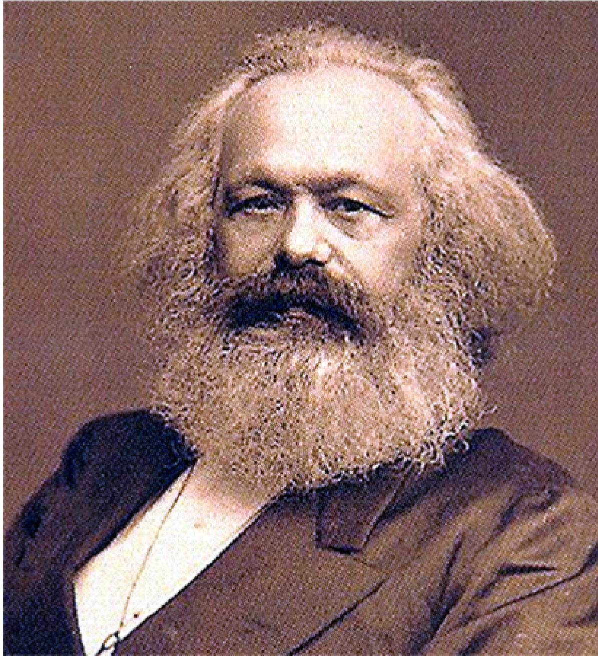

Figure 1.8. Karl Marx was one of the founders of sociology. His ideas about social conflict are still relevant today. (Photo courtesy of John Mayall/ Wikimedia Commons)

Karl Marx (1818–1883) was a German philosopher and economist but not in the way that most of the time or today would conceive of this. After a crackdown on a group of intellectuals known as the "Young Hegelians" of which he was a part, Marx found himself shunned from the academy. His voluminous work, much published late in his life or afterwards was written independently, and he made a very modest living as a journalist. Today, however, Marx is best known for his critical analysis of capitalist economies and as a revolutionary who, along with his lifelong

collaborator, Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) co-authored the Communist Manifesto — one of the most influential political manuscripts in history.

Although Marx never called his analysis "sociology", much of Marx's work contained the hallmarks of a sociological imagination. Marx was driven to connect the 'private troubles' he and Engels saw around him with the 'social issues' of the capitalist economic system that had come to prominence in Europe. His goal was a scientific analysis of society rooted in objective data and understanding and support of struggles for social justice. This work is foundational for contemporary critical sociology that seeks to use a rigorous scientific analysis of society as a basis to change it.

Marx developed a sophisticated political economy that revealed the social relationships, and inequalities, built into capitalist economies. Capitalism, Marx argued, is a class system where the ownership of the "means of production", the factories, raw materials and tools used in production, gave the 'bourgeoisie' not only economic but political and cultural power. Marx described capitalism as inherently dynamic, and driven to technological change and globalization upending all other forms of production and continually reinventing itself and the products it creates.

The conditions of work under capitalism was a driving concern for Marx. He coined the term 'alienation' to describe how it was owners that got to decide what, when and how to produce and that at the end of the day the products of workers labour were sold for a profit that owners got to keep. Increasingly work was highly specialized and workers became lowly-paid, appendages to the machines they kept. It is important to remember that Capitalists didn't lower wages or degrade workers because

they were mean or cruel, they were simply following their interests in creating profit.

Finally, Marx sought to understand the potential and source of social change to a form of production and society that might better meet the needs and better develop the potential of all. Marx saw the tensions of capitalism where a small minority grew wealthy at the expense of the masses as ripe for revolutionary change and that movements of alienated workers were likely to be the drivers of this change. This is the least developed aspect of Marx's writings and he said little about real word "communism" or "socialism" that political movements established in his name afterwards. From the Manifesto and other writings, we can say that Marx envisioned a society where the tremendous technological abilities developed under Capitalism could be redirected from the production of commodities for profit to the well-being of all.

Harriet Martineau: The First Woman Sociologist?

Figure 1.9. Harriet Martineau. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) was one of the first women sociologists in the 19th century. There are a number of other women who might compete with her for the title of the *first* woman sociologist, such as Catherine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft, Flora Tristan, and Beatrice Webb, but Martineau's specifically sociological credentials are strong. She was for a long time known principally for her English translation of Comte's *Course in Positive Philosophy.* Through this popular translation she introduced the concept of sociology as a methodologically rigorous discipline to an English-speaking audience. But

she also created a body of her own work in the tradition of the great **social reform** movements of the 19th century, and introduced a sorely missing woman's perspective into the discourse on society.

It was a testament to her abilities that after she became impoverished at the age of 24 with the death of her father, brother, and fiancé, she was able to earn her own income as the first woman journalist in Britain to write under her own name. From the age of 12, she suffered from severe hearing loss and was obliged to use a large ear trumpet to converse. She impressed a wide audience with a series of articles on political economy in 1832. In 1834 she left England to engage in two years of study of the new republic of the United States and its emerging institutions: prisons, insane asylums, factories, farms, Southern plantations, universities, hospitals, and churches. On the basis of extensive research, interviews, and observations, she published *Society in America* and worked with abolitionists on the social reform of slavery (Zeitlin, 1997). She also worked for social reform in the situation of women: the right to vote, have an education, pursue an occupation, and enjoy the same legal rights as men. Together with Florence Nightingale, she worked on the development of public health care, which led to early formulations of the welfare system in Britain (McDonald, 1998).

Émile Durkheim: The Pathologies of the Social Order

Figure 1.10. Émile Durkheim. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) helped establish sociology as a formal academic discipline by establishing the first European department of sociology at the University of Bordeaux in 1895, and by publishing his *Rules of the Sociological Method* in 1895. He was born to a Jewish family in the Lorraine province of France (one of the two provinces, along with Alsace, that were lost to the Germans in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871). With the German occupation of Lorraine, the Jewish community suddenly became subject to sporadic anti-Semitic violence, with the Jews often being blamed for the French defeat and the economic/political instability that followed. Durkheim

attributed this strange experience of anti-Semitism and scapegoating to the lack of moral purpose in modern society.

As in Comte’s time, France in the late 19th century was the site of major upheavals and sharp political divisions: the loss of the Franco-Prussian War, the Paris Commune (1871) in which 20,000 workers died, the fall and capture of Emperor Napoleon III (Napoleon I’s nephew), the creation of the Third Republic, and the Dreyfus Affair. This undoubtedly led to the focus in Durkheim’s sociology on themes of moral anarchy, decadence, disunity, and disorganization. For Durkheim, sociology was a scientific but also a “moral calling” and one of the central tasks of the sociologist was to determine “the causes of the general temporary maladjustment being undergone by European societies and remedies which may relieve it” (1897/1951). In this respect, Durkheim represented the sociologist as a kind of medical doctor, studying *social* pathologies and proposing social remedies and cures. He saw healthy societies as stable, while pathological societies experienced a breakdown in social norms between individuals and society. He described this breakdown as a state of normlessness or **anomie —** a lack of norms that give clear direction and purpose to individual actions. As he put it, anomie was the result of “society’s insufficient presence in individuals” (1897/1951).

Key to Durkheim’s approach was the analysis of **social facts** and social **functions.** Social facts are societal phenomenon like law, custom, morality, religious rites, language, money, business practices, etc.. Each identifiable social fact could be analyzed with regard to its specific function in a society. Like a body in which each organ (heart, liver, brain, etc.) serves a particular function in maintaining the body’s life processes, a healthy society

depends on particular functions or needs being met by particular social facts.

Durkheim's insights into society often revealed that social practices, like the worshiping of totem animals in his study of Australian Aboriginal religions, had social functions quite at variance with what practitioners consciously believed they were doing. The honouring of totemic animals through religious rites and practices helped create social solidarity and cohesion for tribes whose lives were otherwise dispersed through the activities of hunting and gathering in a sparse environment.

Making Connections: Sociology in the Real World

Durkheim and the Sociological Study of Suicide

Figure 1.11. The chalice is at the center of Catholic religious ritual and practice. In what way is it an example of a social fact? How does it function to bind the community of the faithful? (Photo courtesy of Mary Harrsch/Flickr)

Durkheim was very influential in defining the subject matter of the new discipline of sociology. For Durkheim, sociology was not about just any

phenomena, it was not about the biological or psychological dynamics of human life, but about the external *social facts* through which the lives of individuals were constrained. Such a sociology explained how phenomenon that may seem deeply personal are influenced by the societal structures and cultural constraints of individual lives.

This is the framework of Durkheim's famous study, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (1897/1997). Using statistics compiled by police and other state agencies across Europe, Durkheim observed that while there was no correlation between rates of suicide and rates of psychopathology, suicide rates did vary by social context. For example, suicide rates varied according to the religious affiliation of suicides. Protestants had higher rates of suicide than Catholics, even though both religions equally condemn suicide. In some jurisdictions Protestants killed themselves 300% more often than Catholics. Jews meanwhile were even less likely than Catholics to commit suicide.

Durkheim argued that the key factor that explained the difference in suicide *rates* were the different degrees of *social integration* of the different religious communities, measured by the degree of authority religious beliefs hold over individuals, and the amount of collective ritual observance and mutual involvement individuals engage in in religious practice. In short, the more a religion created shared experiences and beliefs that bound people together, the less likely members of that religion were to commit suicide.

Durkheim noted that Catholicism included shared, public ritual practice of the sacraments, such as confession and taking communion and fostered a strong adherence to religious authority. Protestants meanwhile were taught to take a critical attitude to religious authority and formal doctrine and shared ritual was reduced to a minimum. They were less integrated into their communities and more thrown back on their own resources. Protestants were more prone to what Durkheim termed **egoistic suicide**: suicide which results from individuals having to depend on themselves in the absence of strong social bonds tying them to a community. Suicide, Durkeim wrote, "varies inversely with the degree of integration of the social groups of which the individual forms a part" (Durkheim, 1897/1997).

Here the situation of Jews is instructive. It seems paradoxical that a group, which faced the significant discrimination and hardship of antisemitism would also have low suicide rates. Durkheim's explanation was that, such threat, encourages unity and the creation strong intra-community ties, ties that protect individuals from violence, provide economic and cultural opportunity and coincidentally provide the social integration that reduces the risk of egoistic suicide. Durkheim's study was sociological because he did not try to explain suicide rates in terms of individual psychopathology. Instead, he argued that "Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of the social groups of which the individual forms a part" (Durkheim, 1897/1997).

Durkheim looked at several other variables such as sex, nationality and marital status and while the passage of time, and the quality of the data available in his day, mean that we cannot simply rely on his findings directly, contemporary research into suicide in Canada shows that suicide rates continue to vary considerably by age, gender and marital status. Males are considerably more likely to commit suicide across all age groups. It is elderly men, however, that have the highest rate of suicide and this is followed by those in middle age. Those under 14 years of age and even those 15 to 19 years of age have lower rates of suicide than all other age groups. On the other hand, married people are the least likely group to commit suicide. Single, never-married people are 3.3 times more likely to commit suicide than married people, followed by widowed and divorced individuals respectively.

How do sociologists explain this? It is clear that early adulthood is a period in which social ties to family and society are strained. It is often a period in which young adults break away from their childhood roles in the family group and establish their independence by going off to college or university. Youth unemployment meanwhile is higher than for other age groups and, since the 1960s. These factors tend to decrease the quantity and the intensity of ties to society. Married people on the other hand have both strong affective affinities with their marriage partners and strong social expectations placed on them, especially if they have families: their roles are clear and the norms which guide them are well-defined.

According to Durkheim’s proposition, suicide rates vary inversely with the degree of integration of social groups. Young adults are less integrated into society, which puts them at a higher risk for suicide than married people who are more integrated. It is interesting that the highest rates of suicide in Canada are for adults in midlife, aged 40-59. Midlife is also a time noted for crises of identity, but perhaps more significantly, as Navaneelan (2012) argues, suicide in this age group results from marital breakdown. This is also a time when children are leaving the household an act that leaves both child and parent with lessened social ties and commitments.

Max Weber: Verstehende Soziologie

Figure 1.12. Max Weber. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Prominent sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920)

established a sociology department in Germany at the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich in 1919. Weber wrote on many topics related to sociology including political change in Russia, the condition of German farm workers, and the history of world religions. He was also a prominent public figure, playing an important role in the German peace delegation in Versailles and in drafting the ill-fated German (Weimar) constitution following the defeat of Germany in World War I.

Weber also made a major contribution to the methodology of sociological research. Weber believed that it was difficult if not impossible to apply natural science methods to accurately predict the behaviour of groups as positivist sociology hoped to do. What was distinct about human behaviour was that it could not be understood independently of the meanings that individuals attributed to it. A Martian's analysis of the activities in a skateboard park would be hopelessly confused unless it *understood* that the skateboarders were motivated by the excitement of taking risks and the pleasure in developing skills. This insight into the meaningful nature of human behaviour even applied to the sociologists themselves, who, they believed, should be aware of how their own cultural biases could influence their research. To deal with this problem, Weber introduced the concept of ***Verstehen***, a German word that means to understand from a subject's point of view. In seeking *Verstehen*, outside observers of a social world — an entire culture or a small setting — attempt to understand it empathetically from an insider's point of view. The actions of the young skateboarders can be explained because they hold the experienced boarders in esteem and attempt to emulate their skills, even if it means scraping their bodies on hard concrete from time to time.

Weber and other like-minded sociologists founded

interpretive sociology whereby social researchers strive to find systematic means to interpret and describe the subjective meanings behind social processes, cultural norms, and societal values. This approach led to research methods like ethnography, participant observation, and phenomenological analysis. Their aim was not to generalize or predict (as in positivistic social science), but to systematically gain an in-depth understanding of social worlds. The natural sciences may be precise, but from the interpretive sociology point of view their methods confine them to study only the external characteristics of things.

1.3. Theoretical Perspectives

Figure 1.14. People holding posters and waving flags at a protest rally. (Photo courtesy of Steve Herman/Wikimedia Commons)

Sociologists study social events, interactions, and patterns of behaviour. They then develop theories to explain why

these occur and what can result from them. In sociology, a **theory** is a way to explain patterns of social interaction and create testable propositions about society (Allan, 2006). For example, Durkheim's proposition, that differences in suicide rate can be explained by differences in the degree of social integration in different communities, is a theory.

As this brief survey of the history of sociology suggests, there is considerable diversity in the theoretical approaches sociology takes to studying society. The variety of theories and methodologies makes for a rich and useful dialogue among sociologists. It is also sometimes confusing for students who expect that sociology will have a unitary scientific approach like that of the natural sciences. However, the key point is that the subject matter of sociology is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences. The "contents" of a society are never simply a set of objective qualities like the chemical composition of gases or the forces operating on celestial spheres, they are imbued with social meanings, historical contexts, political struggles, and human agency. Having multiple approaches to understanding society and social relationships makes sense given the subject matter of sociology.

Figure 1.15. The South Asian fable of the blind men and the elephant from the poem by John Godfrey Saxe. The inquisitive blind men want to know what an elephant is. The first one feels the elephant's flank and says, "the elephant is very like a wall!" The second one feels the elephant's tusk and says, "an elephant is very like a spear!" The third one feels the elephant's trunk and says, "the elephant is very like a snake!" (Illustrations courtesy of Mlke Kline/Flickr)

Despite the differences that divide sociology into multiple perspectives and methodologies, its unifying aspect is the systematic and rigorous nature of its social inquiry. Sociology is based on the scientific research tradition which emphasizes two key components: empirical observation and the logical construction of theories and propositions. **Science** is understood here in the broad sense to mean the use of reasoned argument, the ability to see general patterns in particular incidences, and the reliance on evidence from systematic observation of social reality. However, as noted above, the outcome of sociological research will differ depending on the initial assumptions or perspective of the researcher. Each of the blind men studying the elephant in the illustration above are capable of producing an empirically true and logically consistent account of the elephant, albeit limited, which will differ from the accounts produced by the others. While the analogy that society is like an elephant is tenuous at best, it does exemplify the way that different

schools of sociology can explain the same factual reality in different ways

Sociology can be divided into three broad paradigms of sociological thinking: **structural functionalism**, **critical sociology** (which encompasses Marxist, feminist, intersectional sociology as well as queer theory and much environmental sociology) and **symbolic interactionism**. Each of these perspectives of paradigms comes with its own strengths, limitations, and practical purposes: **funtionalism** focuses on generating types of knowledge useful for controlling or administering social life. **interpretive sociology** on types of knowledge useful for promoting greater mutual understanding and consensus among members of society, and **critical sociology** on types of knowledge useful for changing and improving the world, for emancipating people from conditions of servitude. Within these three types of sociological knowledge, we will discuss four paradigms of sociological thinking: **structural functionalism**, **historical materialism**, **feminism**, and **symbolic interactionism**.

Structural Functionalism

Structural Functionalism falls within the **positivist tradition** in sociology due to Durkheim's early efforts to describe the subject matter of sociology in terms of objective **social facts** and his emphasis on empirical observation and measurement the search for law-like statements about the social world. According to structural functionalism, society is composed of different social **structures** that perform specific **functions** to maintain the operation of society as a whole. *Structures* are simply regular, observable patterns of behaviour or organized social arrangements that persist through time. Legal

systems, family forms, economic institutions, forms of governance and gender roles are all structures. *Functions* are the purposes or roles that structures play to meet the various needs of a society (i.e., for socializing children, for the distribution of food and resources, or for a unified belief system, etc.). Different societies have the same basic functional requirements, but they meet them using different configurations of social structure (i.e., different types of kinship system, economy, or religious practice). Thus, society is seen as a *system* not unlike the human body or an automobile engine.

In fact the English philosopher and biologist Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) likened society to a human body. Each structure of the system performs a specific function to maintain the orderly operation of the whole (Spencer, 1898). When they do not perform their functions properly, the system as a whole is threatened. The heart pumps the blood, the vascular system transports the blood, the metabolic system transforms the blood into proteins needed for cellular processes, etc. When the arteries in the heart get blocked, they no longer perform their function. The heart fails, and the system as a whole collapses. In the same way, the family structure functions to socialize new members of society (i.e., children), the economic structure functions to adapt to the environment and distribute resources, the religious structure functions to provide common beliefs to unify society, etc. Each structure of society provides a specific and necessary function to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the whole. However, if the family fails to effectively socialize children, or the economic system fails to distribute resources equitably, or religion fails to provide a credible belief system, repercussions are felt throughout the system. The other structures have to adapt, causing further repercussions.

With respect to a system, when one structure changes, the others change as well. Spencer continued the analogy to the body by pointing out that societies evolve just as the bodies of humans and other animals do (Maryanski and Turner, 1992).

According to American sociologist Talcott Parsons (1881–1955), in a healthy society, all of these parts work together to produce a stable state called **dynamic equilibrium** (Parsons, 1961). Parsons was a key figure in systematizing Durkheim's views in the 1940s and 1950s. He argued that a sociological approach must emphasize the systematic nature of society — how definable "structures" serve particular "functions" necessary for the needs or "maintenance" of the system.

Another noted structural functionalist, Robert Merton (1910–2003), pointed out that social processes can have more than one function. **Manifest functions** are the intended or anticipated functions of a structure, while **latent functions** are the unintended or unanticipated consequences A manifest function of post-secondary institution like this college would be the transferring of knowledge and skills to students, the preparation of students for a career, and finding a good job, or the production of knowledge through research. All of these are useful for the ongoing success of our society. But is that all colleges do? College is also a place where students meet new people, it is place where students participate in extracurricular activities, and it is a place where some meet romantic or sexual partners. While colleges are not explicitly built or funded to do such things these are latent functions that contribute the working of society. Latent functions can be beneficial, neutral, or harmful. Social processes that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society are called

dysfunctions. Colleges for example often charge significant tuition fees that might exclude lower-income people from attending and in so doing society loses out on their potential talents and these individuals may never get the chance for the type of work they are most suited for. Colleges have also encouraged environments such as pub nights and fraternities that have been linked to higher rates of sexual assault. These, while part of the ongoing operation of society are nonetheless clearly dysfunctional.

While sociologists in many different traditions can use *quantitative data,* the Structural *Functionalist* tradition tends to present this data as objective facts and their findings as a value-neutral scientific understanding of society.

Criticisms of Structural Functionalism

The main criticisms of positivist sociology and structural functionalism have to do with whether (1) social phenomena can, or should, be studied objectively like the natural phenomena of the physical sciences and (2) whether the 'macro' level study of social systems can capture the richness of social life. On one hand, interpretive sociologists suggest that by focusing on the macro workings of society and by emphasizing quantitative data, these approaches reduce the rich complexity and ambiguity of social life to an abstract set of numbers and statistical relationships. Measuring someone's depth of religious belief or "religiosity" by the number of times they attend church in a week. Moreover, explaining religious structures for their role in social cohesion explains very little about the religious experience itself. Interpretive sociologists argue that the social world must be understood at the level of interpersonal

communication and the meaning people attach to their experiences.

Meanwhile, critical sociologists challenge the conservative tendencies of quantitative sociology and structural functionalism. Both types of positivist analysis represent themselves as being objective, or value-neutral, whereas critical sociology notes that as societies are defined by relationships of power, inequality and struggles for social justice, sociology cannot be neutral or purely objective. The focus in *quantitative sociology* on observable facts and law-like statements presents an ahistorical and deterministic picture of the world. These approaches simply describe how the world 'is' but they offer little explanation of 'why' social arrangements are as they are and how such systems might benefit certain groups at the expense of others.

Similarly, the focus on the needs and the smooth functioning of social systems in *structural functionalism* supports a conservative viewpoint because it suggests a static model of society. The functions of each structure are understood in terms of the needs of the social system as it exists at a particular moment in time. Each individual has to fit the function or role designated for them. Change is not only dysfunctional or pathological, because it throws the whole system into disarray, it also is very difficult to understand why change occurs at all if society is functioning as a system. This conservative tendency is illustrated by some of its more controversial arguments. For example, Davis and Moore (1944) argued that inequality in society is good (or necessary) because it functions as an incentive for people to work harder. Talcott Parsons (1954) argued that the gender division of labour in the nuclear family between the husband/breadwinner and wife/housekeeper is good (or necessary)

because the family will function coherently only if each role is clearly demarcated. In both cases, the order of the system is not questioned, and the historical sources of inequality are not analysed. Inequality in fact performs a useful function. Critical sociologists ask a very important question "who is society functional for?" When observing a society at "equilibrium" these sociologists argue we must look closely to see whose interests are served and who is harmed.

2. Interpretive Sociology

The focus in interpretative sociology is on understanding or interpreting human activity in terms of the meanings that humans attribute to it. It is sometimes referred to as *social constructivism* to capture the way that individuals *construct* a world of meaning by interacting with others in particular social circumstances. Max Weber's Verstehende (understanding) sociology is often cited as the origin of this perspective. Weber believed that we cannot understand human behaviour if we don't 'get inside the head' of people and understand how they see the world around them.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is one of the main schools of interpretive sociology and as such the focus is on understanding or interpreting human activity in terms of the meanings that humans attribute to it. It is sometimes referred to as *social constructivism* to capture the way that individuals *construct* a world of meaning by interacting with others in particular social circumstances.

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level

perspective is centred on interpersonal communication where individuals reach common *definitions of the situation* (shared understandings). The student sitting in a lecture has a quizzical look on their face which the instructor interprets as meaning that they have not stated their point clearly. The instructor stops and uses a story to illustrate the point and the student responds with a more knowing look. This illustrates that a lecture is actually a dialogue even when only one person is speaking as subtle social cues pass between instructor and student. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes that groups of individuals have the freedom and agency to define their situations in potentially numerous ways.

Have you noticed for instance how in one class students might be quiet and only listen to the instructor while another might be marked by many questions and discussions. While instructors often take the credit (and the blame) for such differences, symbolic interactionists would point to how the actions of both students and instructors come to help shape the environment. An instructor might, through body language, choice of words or explicit instruction might encourage (or discourage) students to speak up. A small number of assertive students might encourage others to ask questions. Even the way that desks are arranged might shape the tenor of the class.

Symbolic-interactionists emphasize that all situations are subject to interpretation. For example, Howard Becker (1953) argued in his classic study of marijuana users that the effects of marijuana have less to do with its physiological qualities in the body than how users in communication (symbolic interaction) with other users interpret the effects. New marijuana users learn from experienced smokers how to identify the effects, how to

enjoy them, and how to attach meaning to them (i.e., that the experience is funny, strange or euphoric, etc.). Becker emphasizes, therefore, that marijuana smoking is a thoroughly social process and that the experience of "being high" is as much a product of mutual interactions as it is a purely bio-chemical process. This is not to deny that cannabis does not have a psychoactive effect but rather that what matters is how, through interacting with others, we come to understand and give meaning to this effect. In one social circumstance the disorienting effects might be be understood as stress relieving and a momentary escape from everyday pressures, in another situation this may be interpreted as frightening and immoral and in another context it might be seen as way to connect to a spiritual being or higher power.

Symbolic interactionism has also been important in bringing to light the experiences and worlds of individuals who are typically excluded from official accounts of the social order. Howard Becker's *Outsiders* (1963) for example described the process of **labelling** in which individuals come to be characterized or labelled as deviants by authorities. The sequence of events in which a young person, for example, is picked up by police for an offense, defined by police and other authorities as a "young offender," processed by the criminal justice system, and then introduced to criminal subcultures through contact with experienced offenders is understood from the subjective point of view of the young person. The significance of labelling theory is to show that individuals are not born deviant or criminal, but become criminal through an institutionalized symbolic interaction with authorities. As Becker says, deviance is not simply a social fact, as Durkheim might argue, but the product of a

process of definition by moral entrepreneurs, authorities, and other privileged members of society:

> …*social groups create deviance by making rules whose infraction creates deviance*, and by applying those roles to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is *not* a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by other of rules and sanctions to an "offender." The deviant is one to whom that label has been successfully applied; deviant behavior is behaviour that people so label (1963).

Studies that use the symbolic interactionist perspective are more likely to use qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews or participant observation, rather than quantitative methods because they seek to understand the symbolic worlds in which research subjects live.

Criticisms of Interpretive Sociology

From the point of view of positivism, one of the problems of interpretive paradigms that focus on micro-level interactions is that it is difficult to generalize from very specific situations, involving very few individuals, to make social scientific claims about the nature of society as a whole. The danger is that, while the rich texture of face-to-face social life can be examined in detail, the results will remain purely descriptive without any explanatory or analytical strength. In discussing the rich detail of the rituals and dynamics of authority in a street gang, can a sociologist make conclusions about the phenomenon of street gangs in general, or determine the social factors that lead individuals to join street gangs? Can one go from a particular observation to a general claim about society?

In a similar fashion, critical sociologists argue that in

focusing on micro-level interaction and the ability of individuals to interpret these interactions, this approach misses the very real ways power and inequality shape interactions and interpretations. Feminist sociologists for instance have found that men are more likely to interrupt women in conversation a phenomenon referenced in recent popular culture discussion of 'mansplaining' where men assume they know more than a woman and thus feel the need to take on the role of 'teacher' in everyday conversation. Similarly, it is impossible fully understand the interaction of individuals and police without understanding larger patterns of racial inequality including systemic racism within police forces.

In the case of marijuana users, for example, it is difficult to go from Becker's analysis of symbolic interaction between individuals to a strong explanation for the reasons why marijuana was made illegal in the first place, how this produced an underground trade, how drug laws were unequally enforced, who the winners and losers were, and how the groups formed to fight for drug policy reform.

3. Critical Sociology

The critical perspective in sociology has its origins in social activism, social justice movements, revolutionary struggles, and radical critique. This perspective focuses on identifying social inequalities and the historical processes that allowed for their development. Rather than objectivity and value neutrality, the tradition of critical sociology promotes practices of liberation and social change in order to achieve universal social justice. As Marx stated, "the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it" (1845). Marxist, feminist,

and anti-racist sociology along with queer studies and much environmental sociology are all examples of the critical perspective in sociology.

The critical tradition in sociology is not about complaining or being “negative.” Nor is it about adopting a moral position from which to judge people or society. It is not about being “subjective” or “biased” as opposed to “objective.” Being critical in the context of sociology is about using objective, empirical knowledge to expose inequalities and to assess the possibilities and barriers to improving or “ameliorating” human life.

Historical Materialism aka Marxist Sociology

The tradition of **historical materialism** that developed from Karl Marx’s work is one of the central frameworks of critical sociology. Marxist sociology concentrates on the study of how our everyday lives are structured by relations of power embedded in economic processes. The elements that make up a culture, our ideas, traditions and beliefs, are all shaped by the type of economy that our society rests upon.

Figure 1.16. The Last of the Clan painted by Thomas Faed, (1865). [Long Description] (Photo courtesy of Thomas Faed/ Wikimedia Commons)

In the dramas of our everyday lives (that interpretive sociologists are so good at describing) it is often hard to see the connection to large scale economic structures. For example, it was not evident to the Scots who were expelled during the Highland clearances of the 18th and 19th centuries that their fate was tied to the transformation from feudalism to capitalism. The rise of this new economic system freed owners of land from historical responsibilities and they forced tenants off the land they had worked for generations to make way sheep production in a new form of capitalist agriculture. Yet understanding this shift is critical to understanding the not only the lives of these men

and women but also the future of the Indigenous peoples of what is now known as Canada. Landless and fleeing poverty, these Scots were recruited to emigrate to the Red River settlements in Rupert's Land (now Manitoba). To these marginalized folk it might not have been clear that they were playing an important part in a colonial process that would soon displace the Cree and Anishinabe who were gradually drawn out of their own Indigenous modes of production (hunting and gathering economies) and into the developing global capitalist economy as fur trappers and provisioners for early European settlements. It was a process that eventually led to the loss of control over their lands, the destruction of their way of life, the devastating spread of European diseases, the imposition of the Indian Act, the establishment of the residential school system, institutional and everyday racism, and an enduring legacy of intractable social problems.

In a similar way, historical materialism helps us understand how our own lives and especially the problems we face are influenced by the type of economy central to our society. From the types of career to pursue to the number of children to have, the decisions and practices of everyday life are shaped by a new form of capitalism where factory work has shifted to other parts of the world, jobs are short lived and economic inequality has grown. In this environment, a Marxist sociologist might argue, we are encouraged to not put roots down, to think firstly of ourselves, to value individuality over collective well-being.

The historical materialist approach employs a form of dialectical thinking. **Dialectics** in sociology proposes that social contradiction, opposition, and struggle in society drive processes of social change and transformation.

Marx's study of capitalism makes clear that owners (capitalist class or bourgeoisie) and workers (proletariat) are not simply social groups that are part of a whole but rather they have opposing interests. While owners seek to increase profits by keeping wages low and hiring as few workers as possible, workers have an interest in higher wages and better working conditions. The conflict between owners and workers, each following their interests, is what drives social change. Globalization is driven by owners seeking pools of cheap labour and workers band together to create unions and political parties to push for better working conditions, to protect their jobs and fight for a bigger share of the profits that their work creates.

Historical materialists, however, do not claim there is any inevitable direction to history, only that the internal contradictions and tensions of economic and political systems must be understood if we are to understand why and how change can happen. For example, the self-immolation of the street vender Mohamed Bouazizi in 2010 lead to the Tunisian revolution of 2011 because it "crystallized" the multitude of everyday problems endured by others in this society — unemployment, government corruption, poor living conditions, and a lack of rights and freedoms. This 'spark' awoke people to the shared source of what often seemed to be 'personal troubles' — the way that society was organized benefited a minority of those holding economic and political power handsomely, while masses suffered. While not always successful, critical sociology focuses attention on the way

that people, even those with few other resources, can act together to bring about social change.

Making Connections: Sociology in the Real World

"Wanna go for a coffee?"

Figure 1.17. According to a 2010 study, 65% of Canadians drink coffee daily. The average coffee drinker drinks 2.8 cups of coffee per day. Source: Coffee Association of Canada, 2010. (Photo courtesy of Duncan C/Flickr)

A good example of the dialectical approach to everyday social life would be to think about all the social relationships that are involved in meeting a friend for a cup of coffee. This is a common everyday event that usually passes without a great deal of sociological reflection. On the one hand, it might offer the sociologist numerous opportunities to study the social aspects of this event in isolation or at a micro-level: conversation analysis, the dynamics of friend relationships, addiction issues with caffeine, consumer preferences for different beverages, beliefs about caffeine and mental alertness, etc. In this regard, a symbolic interactionist might ask: Why is drinking coffee at the center of this specific interaction? What does coffee *mean* for you and your friend who meet to drink it?

On the other hand, if we were to take a more systematic and critical sociological view of the activity of coffee drinking, we would note how the practice also embeds us in a series of relationships to others and the environment that are not immediately apparent if the activity is viewed in isolation (Swift, Davies, Clarke and Czerny, 2004). When we purchase a cup of coffee, we enter into a relationship with the growers in Central and South America. We are involved with their working conditions and with the global structures of private ownership and distribution that make selling coffee a profitable business. We are also involved with the barista at the counter who works in the coffee shop for a living; with the fluctuations of supply, demand, competition, and market speculation that determine

the price of coffee; with the marketing strategies that lead us to identify with specific beverage choices and brands; and with the modifications to the natural environment where the coffee is grown, through which it is transported, and where, finally, the paper cups and other waste are disposed of, etc.

Ultimately, over our cup of coffee, we find ourselves in the midst of a long political and historical process that is part of the formation of low wage or subsistence farming in Central and South America, the transfer of wealth to North America, and recently, various forms of resistance to this process like the fair trade movement. Despite the fact that we can be largely unaware of the web of relationships that we have entered into when we sit down to coffee with our friend, a systematic analysis would emphasize that our casual chat over coffee is just the tip of a vast iceberg composed of the activities and circumstances of countless individuals, including the activities and work relationships we ourselves engage in to earn the money to pay for the coffee. These relationships involve us in economic and political structures every time we have a cup of coffee.

Feminism

Another major school of critical sociology is feminism. From the early work of women sociologists like Harriet Martineau, feminist sociology has focused on the power relationships and inequalities between women and men. Inequality between the genders is a

phenomenon that goes back at least 4,000 years (Lerner, 1986). Although the forms and ways in which it has been practised differ between cultures and change significantly through history, its persistence has led to the formulation of the concept of patriarchy. **Patriarchy** refers to a set of institutional structures (like property rights, access to positions of power, relationship to sources of income) that are based on the belief that men and women are dichotomous and unequal categories. Key to patriarchy is what might be called the **dominant gender ideology** toward sexual differences: the assumption that physiological sex differences between males and females are related to differences in their character, behaviour, and ability (i.e., their gender). These differences are used to justify a gendered division of social roles and inequality in access to rewards, positions of power, and privilege. The question that feminists ask therefore is: How does this distinction between male and female, and the attribution of different qualities to each, serve to organize our institutions and to perpetuate inequality between the sexes? How is the family, law, the occupational structure, religious institutions, and the division between public and private spheres of life organized on the basis of inequality between the genders?

Feminism is a distinct type of critical sociology. There are considerable differences between types of feminism, however; for example, the differences often attributed to the first wave of feminism in the 19th and early 20th

centuries, the second wave of feminism from the 1950s to the 1970s, and the third wave of feminism from the 1980s onward. Despite the variations between the different types of feminist approach, there are four characteristics that are common to the feminist perspective:

1. Gender differences are the central focus or subject matter.
2. Gender relations are viewed as a social problem: the site of social inequalities, strains, and contradictions.
3. Gender relations are not immutable: they are sociological and historical in nature, subject to change and progress.
4. Feminism is about an emancipatory commitment to change: the conditions of life that are oppressive for women need to be transformed.

One of the keen sociological insights that emerged with the feminist perspective in sociology is that “the personal is political.” Many of the most immediate and fundamental experiences of social life — from childbirth to who washes the dishes to the experience of sexual violence — had simply been invisible or regarded as unimportant politically or socially. Dorothy Smith’s development of **standpoint theory** was a key innovation in sociology that enabled these issues to be seen and addressed in a systematic way (Smith, 1977). She recognized that the standpoint of many women, and their concerns, are grounded in their everyday lived experience in caregiving work and household labour. However, in the the the abstract world of institutional work, dealings with

schools, medical systems, and government bureaucracies these concerns were "obliterated" (Smith, 1977). Much of society is organized through "relations of ruling," which treat people and relations 'as if' they were abstract bureaucratic categories. Smith argued that the abstract concepts of sociology, at least in the way that sociology was taught in the 1960s and 1970s, only contributed to the problem.

Criticisms of Critical Sociology

Whereas critical sociologists often criticize positivist and interpretive sociology for their conservative biases, the reverse is also true. In part the issue is about whether sociology can be "objective," or value-neutral, or not. However, at a deeper level the criticism is often aimed at the radical nature of critical analyses. Marx's critique of capitalism and the feminist critique of patriarchy for example lead to very interesting insights into how structures of power and inequality work, but from a point of view that sees only the most revolutionary transformation of society as a solution.

Critical sociology is also criticized from the point of view of interpretive sociology for overstating the power of dominant groups to manipulate subordinate groups. For example, media representations of women are said to promote unobtainable standards of beauty or to reduce women to objects of male desire. This type of critique suggests that individuals are controlled by media images rather than recognizing their independent ability to reject media influences or to interpret media images for themselves. In a similar way, interpretive sociology challenges critical sociology for implying that people are purely the products of macro-level historical forces and

struggles rather than individuals with a capacity for individual and collective agency. To be fair, Marx did argue that "Men make their own history;" it is just that they "do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances encountered, given, and transmitted from the past" (Marx, 1851).

Summary

Overall, since social reality is complex and multi-faceted, the possibility of fundamental disagreement exists between the different theoretical approaches in sociology. Is society characterized by conflict or consensus? Is human practice determined by external social structures or is it the product of choice and agency? Does society have a reality over and above the lives of individuals or are the lives of individuals the only reality? Is human experience unique because it revolves around the meanings of social action, or is it essentially no different than any other domain studied by science? The answer to each of these questions is: it is both. Similar to the problem in physics about whether light is a particle or a wave, society appears in one guise or another depending on the perspective one takes or the research tool that one adopts. Using Habermas' schema (discussed previously), sociology takes different forms depending on whether it is to be used for the purposes of administration (e.g., positivism), mutual understanding (e.g., interpretive sociology), or social change (e.g., critical sociology). However, just like the wave/particle uncertainty in physics, the fundamental ambiguity in determining which sociological perspective to adopt does not prevent brilliant insights into the nature of social experience from being generated.

1.4. Why Study Sociology?

Figure 1.19. Tommy Douglas (1904-1986). As premier of Saskatchewan's CCF government, Douglas introduced legislation for the first publicly funded health care plan in Canada in 1961. Sociologist Bernard Blishen (b. 1919) was the research director for the Royal Commission on Health Services which drew up the plan for Canada's national medicare program in 1964. (Photo National Archives of Canada, C-036222)

When Bernard Blishen picked up the phone one day in 1961, he was surprised to hear Chief Justice Emmett Hall on the other end of the line asking him to be the research director for the newly established Royal Commission on Health Services. Publically funded health care had been introduced for the first time in Canada that year, by a socialist Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) government in Saskatchewan, amid bitter controversy. Doctors in Saskatchewan went on strike and private health care insurers mounted an expensive anti-public health care campaign. Because it was a Conservative government commission, appointed by Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, Blishen's colleagues advised him that it was going to be a whitewash document to defend the interests of private medical care. However, Blishen took on the project as a challenge, and when the commission's report was published it advocated that the Saskatchewan plan be adopted nationally (Vaughan, 2004).

Blishen went on to work in the field of medical sociology and also created a widely-used index to measure socioeconomic status known as the Blishen scale. He received the Order of Canada in 2011 in recognition of his contributions to the creation of public health care in Canada.

Since it was first founded, many people interested in sociology have been driven by the scholarly desire to contribute knowledge to this field, while others have seen it as way not only to study society, but also to improve it. Besides the creation of public health care in Canada, sociology has played a crucial role in many important social reforms such as equal opportunity for women in the workplace, improved treatment for individuals with mental and learning disabilities, increased recognition and accommodation for people from different ethnic

backgrounds, the creation of hate crime legislation, the right of Aboriginal populations to preserve their land and culture, and prison system reforms.

The prominent sociologist Peter L. Berger (b. 1929), in his 1963 book *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*, describes a sociologist as “someone concerned with understanding society in a disciplined way.” He asserts that sociologists have a natural interest in the monumental moments of people’s lives, as well as a fascination with banal, everyday occurrences. Berger also describes the “aha” moment when a sociological theory becomes applicable and understood:

> [T]here is a deceptive simplicity and obviousness about some sociological investigations. One reads them, nods at the familiar scene, remarks that one has heard all this before and don’t people have better things to do than to waste their time on truisms — until one is suddenly brought up against an insight that radically questions everything one had previously assumed about this familiar scene. This is the point at which one begins to sense the excitement of sociology (Berger, 1963).

Sociology can be exciting because it teaches people ways to recognize how they fit into the world and how others perceive them. Looking at themselves and society from a sociological perspective helps people see where they connect to different groups based on the many different ways they classify themselves and how society classifies them in turn. It raises awareness of how those classifications — such as economic and status levels, education, ethnicity, or sexual orientation — affect perceptions.

Sociology teaches people not to accept easy explanations. It teaches them a way to organize their

thinking so that they can ask better questions and formulate better answers. It makes people more aware that there are many different kinds of people in the world who do not necessarily think the way they do. It increases their willingness and ability to try to see the world from other people's perspectives. This prepares them to live and work in an increasingly diverse and integrated world.

Making Connections: Sociological Research

Farming and Locavores: How Sociological Perspectives Might View Food Consumption

The consumption of food is a commonplace, a daily occurrence, yet it can also be associated with important moments in our lives. Eating can be an individual or a group action, and eating habits and customs are influenced by our cultures. In the context of society, our nation's food system is at the core of numerous social movements, political issues, and economic debates. Any of these factors might become a topic of sociological study.

A structural-functional approach to the topic of food consumption might be interested in the role of the agriculture industry within the nation's economy and the social system as a whole. Food production is a primary example of Talcott Parsons' function of adaptation: how human systems adapt to environmental systems. In this regard the structural-functionalist would be interested in the potential for disequilibrium in the human/

environment relationship that has resulted from increases in population and the intensification of agricultural production — from the early days of manual-labour farming to modern mechanized agribusiness. In many respects the concerns of environmentalists and others, with respect to the destructive relationship between industrial agriculture and the ecosystem, are the results of a dysfunctional system of adaptation. The concept of sustainable agriculture, promoted by Michael Pollan (2006) and others, points to the changes needed to return the interface between humans and the natural environment to a state of dynamic equilibrium.

A sociologist viewing food consumption through a symbolic interactionist lens would be more interested in micro-level topics of the shared meaning of food, such as the symbolic use of food in religious rituals, the attitudes towards food in fast food restaurants, or the role it plays in the social interaction of a family dinner. This perspective might also study the interactions among group members who identify themselves based on their sharing a particular diet, such as vegans (people who do not eat meat or dairy products) or locavores (people who strive to eat locally-produced food). The increasing concern that people have with their diets speaks to the way that the life of the biological body is as much a symbolic reality, interpreted within contemporary discourses on health risks and beauty, as it is a biological reality.

A critical sociologist might be interested in the power differentials present in the regulation of the

food industry, exploring where people's right to information intersects with corporations' drive for profit and how the government mediates those interests. Critical sociologists might also be interested in the power and powerlessness experienced by local farmers versus large farming conglomerates. In the documentary *Food Inc.*, the plight of farmers resulting from Monsanto's patenting of seed technology is depicted as a product of the corporatization of the food industry. Another topic of study might be how nutrition and diet varies between different social classes. The industrialization of the food chain has created cheaper foods than ever, yet with the trade-off that the poorest people in society eat the food with the least nutritional content.

Sociology in the Workplace

Employers continue to seek people with what are called "transferable skills." This means that they want to hire people whose knowledge and education can be applied in a variety of settings and whose skills will contribute to various tasks. Studying sociology can provide people with this wide knowledge and a skill set that can contribute to many workplaces, including:

- An understanding of social systems and large bureaucracies;
- The ability to devise and carry out research projects to assess whether a program or policy is

working;

- The ability to collect, read, and analyze statistical information from polls or surveys;
- The ability to recognize important differences in people's social, cultural, and economic backgrounds;
- Skill in preparing reports and communicating complex ideas; and
- The capacity for critical thinking about social issues and problems that confront modern society (Department of Sociology, University of Alabama).

Sociology prepares people for a wide variety of careers. Besides actually conducting social research or training others in the field, people who graduate from college with a degree in sociology are hired by government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and corporations in fields such as social services, counseling (e.g., family planning, career, substance abuse), designing and evaluating social policies and programs, health services, polling and independent research, market research, and human resources management. Even a small amount of training in sociology can be an asset in careers like sales, public relations, journalism, teaching, law, and criminal justice.

Key Terms

anomie: A social condition or normlessness in which a lack of clear norms fails to give direction and purpose to individual actions.

capitalism: An economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership and production of goods and their sale in a competitive market.

content: The specific reasons or drives that motivate individuals to interact.

critical sociology: A theoretical perspective that focuses on inequality and power relations in society in order to achieve social justice and emancipation through their transformation.

culture: Includes the group's shared practices, values, beliefs, norms and artifacts.

dialectics: A type of analysis that proposes that social contradiction, opposition and struggle in society drive processes of social change and transformation.

disenchantment of the world: The replacement of magical thinking by technological rationality and calculation.

dominant gender ideology: The belief that physiological sex differences between males and females are related to differences in their character, behaviour, and ability.

dual consciousness: The experience of a fissure or dividing point in everyday life where one crosses a line between irreconcilable forms of consciousness or perspective.

dynamic equilibrium: A stable state in which all parts of a healthy society are working together properly.

dysfunctions: Social patterns that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society.

empiricism: The philosophical tradition that seeks to discover the laws of the operation of the world through careful, methodical, and detailed observation.

egoistic suicide: Suicide which results from the absence of strong social bonds tying the individual to a community.

feminism: The critical analysis of the way gender differences in society structure social inequality.

figuration: The process of simultaneously analyzing the behaviour of an individual and the society that shapes that behaviour.

formal sociology: A sociology that analytically separates the contents from the forms of social interaction to study the common forms that guide human behaviour.

function: The part a recurrent activity plays in the social life as a whole and the contribution it makes to structural continuity.

functionalism (functionalist perspective): A theoretical approach that sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of individuals that make up that society.

global-level sociology: The study of structures and processes that extend beyond the boundaries of states or specific societies.

historical materialism: An approach to understanding society that explains social change, human ideas, and social organization in terms of underlying changes in the economic (or material) structure of society.

interpretive sociology: A perspective that explains human behaviour in terms of the meanings individuals attribute to it.

labelling: A social process in which an individual's social identity is established through the imposition of a definition by authorities.

latent functions: The unrecognized or unintended consequences of a social process.

macro-level sociology: The study of society-wide social structures and processes.

manifest functions: Sought consequences of a social process.

micro-level sociology: The study of specific relationships between individuals or small groups.

mode of production: The way human societies act upon their environment and its resources in order to use them to meet their needs.

multi-perspectival science: A science that is divided into competing or diverse paradigms.

paradigms: Philosophical and theoretical frameworks used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the experiments performed in support of them.

patriarchy: Institutions of male power in society.

positive stage: A stage of social evolution in which people explain events in terms of scientific principles and laws.

positivism (positivist perspective or positivist sociology): The scientific study of social patterns based on methodological principles of the natural sciences.

quantitative sociology: Statistical methods such as surveys with large numbers of participants.

rationalization: The general tendency of modern institutions and most areas of life to be transformed by the application of instrumental reason.

Rationalism: The philosophical tradition that seeks to determine the underlying laws that govern the truth of reason and ideas.

reification: Referring to abstract concepts, complex processes or mutable social relationships as "things."

social action: Actions to which individuals attach *subjective* meanings.

social facts: The external laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashions, rituals, and cultural rules that govern social life.

social reform: An approach to social change that advocates slow, incremental improvements in social institutions rather than rapid, revolutionary change of society as a whole.

social solidarity: The social ties that bind a group of people together such as kinship, shared location, and religion.

society: A group of people whose members interact, reside in a definable area, and share a culture.

sociological imagination: The ability to understand how your own unique circumstances relate to that of other people, as well as to history in general and societal structures in particular.

sociology: The systematic study of society and social interaction.

standpoint theory: The examination of how society is organized and coordinated from the perspective of a particular social location or perspective in society.

structural functionalism: see *functionalism.*

structure: General patterns that persist through time and become habitual or routinized at micro-levels of interaction, or institutionalized at macro or global levels of interaction.

symbolic interactionism: A theoretical perspective through which scholars examine the relationship of

individuals within their society by studying their communication (language and symbols).

theory: A proposed explanation about social interactions or society.

Verstehen: German for “understanding”; in sociology it refers to the use of empathy, or putting oneself in another’s place; to understand the motives and logic of another’s action.

Section Summary

1.1. What Is Sociology?
Sociology is the systematic study of society and social interaction. In order to carry out their studies, sociologists identify cultural patterns and social forces and determine how they affect individuals and groups. They also develop ways to apply their findings to the real world.

1.2. The History of Sociology
Sociology was developed as a way to study and try to understand the changes to society brought on by the Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries. Some of the earliest sociologists thought that societies and individuals’ roles in society could be studied using the same scientific methodologies that were used in the natural sciences, while others believed that is was impossible to predict human behaviour scientifically, and still others debated the value of such predictions. Those perspectives continue to be represented within sociology today.

1.3. Theoretical Perspectives
Sociologists develop theories to explain social events, interactions, and patterns. A theory is a proposed

explanation of those patterns. Theories have different scales. Macro-level theories, such as structural functionalism and conflict theory, attempt to explain how societies operate as a whole. Micro-level theories, such as symbolic interactionism, focus on interactions between individuals.

1.4. Why Study Sociology?

Studying sociology is beneficial both for the individual and for society. By studying sociology people learn how to think critically about social issues and problems that confront our society. The study of sociology enriches students' lives and prepares them for careers in an increasingly diverse world. Society benefits because people with sociological training are better prepared to make informed decisions about social issues and take effective action to deal with them.

Section Quiz

1.1. What Is Sociology?

1. Which of the following best describes sociology as a subject?

1. the study of individual behaviour
2. the study of cultures
3. the study of society and social interaction
4. the study of economics

2. Wright Mills once said that sociologists need to develop a sociological ___________ to study how society affects individuals.

1. culture

2. imagination
3. method
4. tool

3. A sociologist defines society as a group of people who reside in a defined area, share a culture, and who:

1. interact.
2. work in the same industry.
3. speak different languages.
4. practise a recognized religion.

4. Seeing patterns means that a sociologist needs to be able to:

1. compare the behaviour of individuals from different societies.
2. compare one society to another.
3. identify similarities in how social groups respond to social pressure.
4. compare individuals to groups.

1.2. The History of Sociology

5. Which of the following was a topic of study in early sociology?

1. astrology
2. economics
3. physics
4. history

6. Which founder of sociology believed societies changed due to class struggle?

1. Émile Comte
2. Karl Marx
3. Plato
4. Herbert Spencer

7. The difference between positivism and interpretive sociology relates to:

1. whether individuals like or dislike their society.
2. whether research methods use statistical data or person-to-person research.
3. whether sociological studies can predict or improve society.
4. all of the above.

8. Which would a quantitative sociologists use to gather data?

1. a large survey
2. a literature search
3. an in-depth interview
4. a review of television programs

9. Weber believed humans could not be studied purely objectively because they were influenced by:

1. drugs.
2. their culture.
3. their genetic makeup.

4. the researcher.

1.3. Theoretical Perspectives

10. Which of these theories is most likely to look at the social world on a micro-level?

1. structural functionalism
2. conflict theory
3. positivism
4. symbolic interactionism

11. Who believed that the history of society was one of class struggle?

1. Émile Durkheim
2. Karl Marx
3. Erving Goffmann
4. George Herbert Mead

12. Who coined the phrase symbolic interactionism?

1. Herbert Blumer
2. Max Weber
3. Lester F. Ward
4. W. I. Thomas

13. A symbolic interactionist may compare social interactions to:

1. behaviours.
2. conflicts.
3. human organs.

4. theatrical roles.

14. Which research technique would most likely be used by a symbolic interactionist?

1. surveys
2. participant observation
3. quantitative data analysis
4. none of the above

15. Which sociologist described sociology as the study of social forms?

1. Martineau
2. Simmel
3. Weber
4. Becker

1.4. Why Study Sociology?

16. Studying Sociology helps people analyze data because they learn:

1. interview techniques.
2. to apply statistics.
3. to generate theories.
4. all of the above.

17. Berger describes sociologists as concerned with:

1. monumental moments in people's lives.
2. common everyday life events.
3. both a and b.

4. none of the above.

[Quiz answers at the end of the chapter]

Short Answer

1.1. What Is Sociology?

1. What do you think C. Wright Mills meant when he said that to be a sociologist, one had to develop a sociological imagination?
2. Describe a situation in which a choice you made was influenced by societal pressures.

1.2. The History of Sociology

1. What do you make of Karl Marx's contributions to sociology? What perceptions of Marx have you been exposed to in your society, and how do those perceptions influence your views?
2. Do you tend to place more value on qualitative or quantitative research? Why? Does it matter what topic is being studied?

1.3. Theoretical Perspectives

1. Which theory do you think better explains how societies operate — structural functionalism or conflict theory? Why?
2. Do you think the way people behave in social interactions is more due to the cause and effect

of external social constraints or more like actors playing a role in a theatrical production? Why?

1.4. Why Study Sociology?

1. How do you think taking a sociology course might affect your social interactions?
2. What sort of career are you interested in? How could studying sociology help you in this career

Further Research

1.1. What Is Sociology?
Sociology is a broad discipline. Different kinds of sociologists employ various methods for exploring the relationship between individuals and society. Check out more about sociology: http://www.sociologyguide.com/questions/sociological-approach.php.

1.2. The History of Sociology
Many sociologists helped shape the discipline. Learn more about prominent sociologists and how they changed sociology: http://www.macionis.com/resources-for-change/profiles-of-powerful-sociologists/.

1.3. Theoretical Perspectives
People often think of all conflict as violent, but many conflicts can be resolved nonviolently. To learn more about nonviolent methods of conflict resolution check out the Albert Einstein Institution: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/ae-institution.

1.4. Why Study Sociology?
For a nominal fee, the Canadian Sociological Association

has produced an informative pamphlet “Opportunities in Sociology” which includes sections on: (1) The unique skills that set sociology apart as a discipline; (2) An overview of the Canadian labour market and the types of jobs available to Sociology BA graduates; (3) An examination of how sociology students can best prepare themselves for the labour market; (4) An introduction, based on sociological research, of the most fruitful ways to conduct a job search: https://www.fedcan-association.ca/event/en/33/91.

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Solutions to Section Quiz

1 C, | 2 B, | 3 A, | 4 C, | 5 B, | 6 B, | 7 C, | 8 A, | 9 B, | 10 D, | 11 B, | 12 A, | 13 D, | 14 B, | 15 B, | 16 D, | 17 C
[Return to Quiz]

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Long Descriptions

Figure 1.16 Long Description: The Highland Clearances: A painting of men, women, and children looking upset and weary and surrounded by their belongings next to the ocean. Return to Figure 1.16

Figure 1.18 Long Description: Sociologists are placed into quadrants based on whether they privilege structure over agency or see society governed by normative vs. conflictual means.

	Normative	**Conflictual**
Structure	Comte's Positivism and Durkheim's Structural Functionalism	Foucault's Poststructuralism
Agency	Weber's Interpretive Sociology and Mead's Symbolic Interactionism	Martineau's Feminism and Marx's Critical Sociology

[Return to Figure 1.18]

Chapter 3. Culture

Figure 3.1. Graffiti's mix of colourful drawings, words, and symbols is a vibrant expression of culture—or, depending on one's viewpoint, a disturbing expression of the creator's lack of respect for a community's shared space. (Photo courtesy of aikijuanma/Flickr)

Learning Objectives

3.1. What Is Culture?

- Differentiate between culture and society.
- Distinguish between biological and cultural explanations of human behaviour.
- Compare and contrast cultural universalism, cultural relativism, ethnocentrism, and androcentrism.

- Examine the policy of multiculturalism as a solution to the problem of diversity.

3.2. Elements of Culture

- Understand the basic elements of culture: values, beliefs, and norms.
- Explain the significance of symbols and language to a culture.
- Describe the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.
- Distinguish material and nonmaterial culture.

3.3. Culture as Innovation: Pop Culture, Subculture, and Global Culture

- Distinguish two modes of culture: innovation and restriction.
- Discuss the distinction between high culture, pop culture, and postmodern culture.
- Differentiate between subculture and counterculture.
- Understand the role of globalization in cultural change and local lived experience.

3.4. Culture as Restriction: Rationalization and Commodification

- Describe culture as a form of restriction on social life.
- Explain the implications of rationalization and consumerism.

3.5. Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

- Discuss the major theoretical approaches to cultural interpretation.

Introduction to Culture

Figure 3.2. Fast food nation. (Photo courtesy of Jon Bunting/Flickr)

Are there rules for eating at McDonald’s? Generally, we do not think about rules in a fast food restaurant we just do what we have done many times before. But if you step back and observe this everyday behaviour ‘as if’ you had never been to such a restaurant you will notice people who seem that they were trained for the role of fast food customer. They stand in line, pick their items from overhead menus before they order, swipe debit cards to pay, and stand to one side to collect trays of food. After a quick meal, customers wad up their paper wrappers and toss them into garbage cans. This is a food system that has become highly rationalized in Max Weber’s terms. Customers’ movement

through this fast food routine is orderly and predictable, even if no rules are posted and no officials direct the process.

If you want more insight into these unwritten rules, think about what would happen if you behaved according to some other standards. (You would be doing what sociologists call a "breaching experiment" in ethnomethodology*:* deliberately disrupting social norms in order to learn about them.) For example: call ahead for reservations; ask the cashier detailed questions about the food's ingredients or how it is prepared; barter over the price of the burgers; ask to have your meal served to you at your table; or throw your trash on the ground as you leave. Chances are you will elicit hostile responses from the restaurant employees and your fellow customers. Although the rules are not written down, you will have violated deep seated tacit norms that govern behaviour in fast food restaurants.

This example reflects a broader theme in the culture of food and diet. What are the rules that govern what, when, and how we eat? Michael Pollan (b. 1955), for example, contrasts the North American culture of fast food with the intact traditions of eating sit-down, family meals that still dominate in France and other European nations (2006). Despite eating foods that many North Americans think of as unhealthy — butter, wheat, triple-cream cheese, foie gras, wine, etc. — the French, as a whole, remain healthier and thinner than North Americans.

> The French eat all sorts of supposedly unhealthy foods, but they do it according to a strict and stable set of rules: They eat small portions and don't go back for seconds; they don't snack; they seldom eat alone; and communal meals are long, leisurely affairs. (Pollan, 2006)

Their cultural rules fix and constrain what people consider as food and how people consume food. The national cuisine and eating habits of France are well established, oriented to pleasure and tradition, and as Pollan argues, well integrated into French cultural life as a whole.

Figure 3.3. French dessert of raspberry crème brûlée. Does a nation's cuisine represent a rule-bound tradition, an innovative and inventive art, or both? (Photo courtesy of Йоана Петрова/Flickr)

In North America, on the other hand, fast food is just the tip of an iceberg with respect to a larger crisis of diet in which increasing levels of obesity and eating disorders are coupled with an increasing profusion of health diets, weight reducing diets, and food fads. While an alarming number of North American meals are eaten in cars (19 percent, according to Pollan), the counter-trend is the obsession with nutritional science. Instead of an orientation to food based on cultural tradition and pleasure, people are oriented to food in terms of its biochemical constituents (calories, proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, omega fatty acids, saturated and unsaturated fats, etc.). There are Atkins diets, zone diets, Mediterranean diets, paleolithic diets,

vegan diets, gluten free diets, Weight Watchers diets, raw food diets, etc.; an endless proliferation that Pollan attributes to a fundamental anxiety that North Americans have about food and health:

> that taste is not a true guide to what should be eaten; that one should not simply eat what one enjoys; that the important components of food cannot be seen or tasted, but are discernible only in scientific laboratories; and that experimental science has produced rules of nutrition that will prevent illness and encourage longevity. (Levenstein as cited in Pollan, 2006)

The dramatically different food choices and ways of thinking about eating demonstrate that diet is *culturally constructed,* these ‘choices’ are heavily influenced by cultural meanings attributed to food and its nutritional components. Food culture and diet are not infinitely malleable, however. There is an underlying biological reality of nutrition that influences dietary choice and is reflected in our well-being. There are biological reasons that mass produced fast foods are craved by many of us — they are full of fats, sugars and salts that our bodies need and historically have been difficult for many to find enough of. Today, however, most North Americans face the problem of too much access to these ingredients. In his documentary *Super Size Me* (2004), Morgan Spurlock conducted a version of the sociological participant observation study by committing himself to eating only McDonald’s food for 30 days. As a result, he gained 24 pounds, increased his cholesterol and fat accumulation in his liver, and experienced mood swings and sexual dysfunction. It is clear that one cannot survive on fast food alone; although many teenagers and university students have been known to try.

Figure 3.4. Kentucky Fried Chicken instant mashed potato, 1974. (Photo courtesy of Roadsidepictures/Flickr)

Sociologists would argue, therefore, that while humans are biological creatures with particular dietary needs, the proliferation of fast food restaurants, choice of diet, and habits of food consumption reflects **culture**, the beliefs and behaviours that a social group shares. Diet is a product of culture. It is a product of the different meanings we attribute to food and to the relationship we have with our bodies. While diet is a response to the fundamental conditions of biological life, diet is also a tremendous site of cultural innovation and diversity.

Culture in general is a site of two opposing tendencies: cultures lay down sets of rules or norms which constrain, restrict, habitualize, and fix ways of life including diets; cultures also produce endlessly innovative and diverse

solutions to problems like nutrition, hence the multitude of cuisines found around the globe and the way that here in North America diets vary by region, class and ethnicity. Cultures both constrain and continually go beyond constraints.

This raises the distinction between the terms “culture” and “society” and how sociologists conceptualize the relationship between them. In everyday conversation, people rarely distinguish between these terms, but they have slightly different meanings, and the distinction is important to how sociologists examine culture. If **culture** refers to the beliefs, artifacts, and ways of life that a social group shares, a **society** is a group that interacts within a common bounded territory or region. To clarify, a culture represents the beliefs, practices, and material artifacts of a group, while a society represents the social structures, processes, and organization of the people who share those beliefs, practices, and material artifacts. Neither society nor culture could exist without the other, but we can separate them analytically.

In this chapter, we examine the relationship between culture and society in greater detail, paying special attention to the elements and forces that shape culture, including diversity and cultural changes. A final discussion touches on the different theoretical perspectives from which sociologists research culture.

3.1. What Is Culture?

Figure 3.5. What is culture? (Image courtesy of Chris Jones/Flickr)

Humans are social creatures. Since the dawn of *Homo sapiens*, nearly 200,000 years ago, people have grouped together into communities in order to survive. Living together, people developed forms of cooperation which created the common habits, behaviours, and ways of life known as culture — from specific methods of childrearing to preferred techniques for obtaining food. Peter Berger (b. 1929) argued that this is the result of a fundamental human predicament (1967). Unlike many other animals, humans lack the biological programming to live on their own. They require an extended period of dependency in order to survive in the environment. The creation of culture makes this possible by providing a protective shield against the harsh impositions of nature. Culture provides the ongoing stability that enables human existence. This means, however, that the human environment is not nature *per se* but culture itself.

Over the history of humanity, this has lead to an incredible diversity in how humans have imagined and lived life on Earth, the sum total of which Wade Davis (b. 1953) has called the **ethnosphere**. The ethnosphere is the entirety of all cultures' "ways of thinking, ways of being, and ways of orienting oneself on the Earth" (Davis, 2007). It is our collective cultural heritage as a species. A single culture, as the sphere of meanings shared by a single social group, is the means by which that group makes sense of the world and of each other. But there are many cultures and many ways of making sense of the world. Through a multiplicity of cultural inventions, human societies have adapted to the environmental and biological conditions of human existence in many different ways. What do we learn from this?

Firstly, almost every human behaviour, from shopping to marriage to expressions of feelings, is learned. In contemporary Canada, people tend to view marriage as a choice between two people based on mutual feelings of love. In other nations and in other times, marriages have been arranged through an intricate process of interviews and negotiations between entire families, or in other cases, through a direct system such as a mail-order bride. To someone raised in Winnipeg, the marriage customs of a family from Nigeria may seem strange or even wrong. Conversely, someone from a traditional Kolkata family might be perplexed with the idea of romantic love as the foundation for the lifelong commitment of marriage. In other words, the way in which people view marriage depends largely on what they have been taught. Being familiar with these written and unwritten rules of culture helps people feel secure and "normal." Most people want to live their daily lives confident that their behaviours will not be challenged or disrupted. Behaviour based on learned

customs is, therefore, not a bad thing, but it does raise the problem of how to respond to cultural differences.

Figure 3.6. The cultural norms governing public transportation vary in Canada, Austria, Mumbai, and Tokyo. How would a visitor from a rural Canadian town act and feel on this crowded Tokyo train? (Photo courtesy of simonglucas/Flickr)

Secondly, culture is innovative. The existence of different cultural practices reveals the way in which societies find

different solutions to real life problems. The different forms of marriage are various solutions to a common problem, the problem of organizing families in order to raise children and reproduce the species. The basic problem is shared by the different societies, but the solutions are different. This illustrates the point that culture in general is a means of solving problems. It is a tool composed of the capacity to abstract and conceptualize, to cooperate and coordinate complex collective endeavours, and to modify and construct the world to suit human purposes. It is the repository of creative solutions, techniques, and technologies humans draw on when confronting the basic shared problems of human existence. Culture is, therefore, key to the way humans, as a species, have successfully adapted to the environment. The existence of different cultures refers to the different means by which humans use innovation to free themselves from biological and environmental constraints.

Thirdly, culture is also restraining. The beliefs, cultural practices and ways of life that allow societies and their members to thrive in their environments also restrain or limit behaviour and understanding. As was described earlier our choice of marriage partner(s) is strongly influenced by the culture(s) we belong to. Often, we cannot even imagine any other way of eating, of working, of loving than those central to the cultures in which we are raised. Moreover, we are expected to follow the patterns of the culture we find ourselves in and the consequences for breaking cultural rules can range from informal sanctions, a friends silence, to imprisonment or even death.

There is a dynamic within culture of innovation and restriction. The cultural fabric of shared meanings and orientations that allows individuals to make sense of the world and their place within it can either change with

contact with other cultures or with changes in the socioeconomic formation, allowing people to reinvision and reinvent themselves, or it can remain rigid and restrict change. Many contemporary issues to do with identity and belonging, from multiculturalism and hybrid identities to religious fundamentalism, can be understood within this dynamic of innovation and restriction. Similarly, the effects of social change on ways of life, from the new modes of electronic communication to failures to respond to climate change, involve a tension between innovation and restriction.

Making Connections: Sociological Concepts

"Yes, but what does it mean?"

Figure 3.7. In the teaching of traditional Chinese acupuncture, meanings are literally written on the human body (Photo courtesy of Tomas Fano/Flickr)

The premise we will be exploring in this chapter is that the human world, unlike the natural world, cannot be understood unless its meaningfulness is taken into account. Human social life is necessarily conducted through the meanings humans attribute to things, actions, others, and themselves. In a sense, people do not live in direct, immediate contact with the world and each other; instead, they live only indirectly through the medium of the shared meanings provided by culture. The sociology of culture is, therefore, concerned with the study of how things and actions assume meanings, how these meanings orient human behaviour, and how social life is organized around and through meaning.

Max Weber notes that it is possible to imagine situations in which human experience appears direct and unmediated; for example, you are riding your bike and get hit by a car (1968, pp. 94–96). It is quite possible that if you were flying through the air after being hit by a car, you would not be thinking or attributing meaning to the event. You would be simply a physical projectile. But afterwards, when you reconstruct the story for your friends, the police, or the insurance company, the event would become part of your life through this narration of what happened.

Equally important to note here is that the meaning of such an event changes depending on the cultural context. In Canada, when an automobile driver hits a cyclist or pedestrian it is considered an ‘accident’ and often blamed on the actions of the victim (failure to wear bright clothing etc.) whereas in the

Netherlands, such incidents are by default considered the fault of drivers as they are expected to drive in a manner that crashes will be avoided even when ‘imperfect’ behaviour of more vulnerable road users happens. What is considered an accident to most Canadians is understood as legally liable bad driving by the Dutch. While we might feel sorry for a driver who hits a cyclist on a rain soaked evening, the Dutch would be outraged that said driver was so careless.

This is not simply about how the cultural context shapes the meaning we ascribe to similar events as these different meanings have influenced both the laws of road use and even the roads themselves. While in North America, roads are built principally for automobiles, in places such as the Netherlands much of the road space is set aside for other users including cyclists. Like much of Europe, there is no law in the Netherlands for ‘jaywalking’ (crossing a street outside of a crosswalk) as it is expected that pedestrians can cross most roadways at any place.

The problem of meaning in sociological analysis, then, is to determine how events or things acquire meaning (e.g. as interpreted through cultural norms); how the true or right meanings are determined (e.g., through custom or juridical procedures of determining responsibility); how meaning works in the organization of social life (e.g., through laws of traffic circulation and); and how humans gain the capacity to interpret and share meanings in the first place (e.g., through the process of socialization into medical, legal, insurance, and

traffic systems). Sociological research into culture studies all of these problems of meaning.

Culture and Biology

The central argument put forward in this chapter is that human social life is essentially meaningful and, therefore, has to be understood first through an analysis of the cultural practices and institutions that produce meaning. Nevertheless, a fascination in contemporary culture persists for finding biological or genetic explanations for complex human behaviours that would seem to contradict the emphasis on culture.

In one study, Swiss researchers had a group of women smell unwashed T-shirts worn by different men. The researchers argued that sexual attraction had a biochemical basis in the histo-compatibility signature that the women detected in the male pheromones left behind on the T-shirts. Women were attracted to the T-shirts of the men whose immune systems differed from their own (Wedekind et al., 1995). In another study, Dean Hamer (b. 1951) and his colleagues discovered that some homosexual men possessed the same region of DNA on their X chromosome, which led them to argue that homosexuality was determined genetically by a “gay gene” (Hamer et al., 1993). Another study found that the corpus callosum, the region of nerve fibres that connect the left and right brain hemispheres, was larger in women’s brains than in men’s (De Lacoste-Utamsing & Holloway, 1982). Therefore, women were thought to be able to use both sides of their

brains simultaneously when processing visuo-spatial information, whereas men used only their left hemisphere. This finding was said to account for gender differences that ranged from women's supposedly greater emotional intuition to men's supposedly greater abilities in math, science, and parallel parking. In each of these three cases, the authors reduced a complex cultural behaviour — sexual attraction, homosexuality, cognitive ability — to a simple biological determination.

In each of these studies, the scientists' claims were quite narrow and restricted, however these were often misrepresented in the popular media. Nevertheless, they follow a logic of explanation known as **biological determinism**, which argues that the forms of human society and human behaviour are determined by biological mechanisms like genetics, instinctual behaviours, or evolutionary advantages. Within sociology, this type of framework underlies the paradigm of **sociobiology**, which provides biological explanations for the evolution of human behaviour and social organization.

Despite the popularity of this sort of reason, it is misguided from a sociological perspective for a number of reasons. First, as noted above, a distinctive trait of the human species is its ability to adapt quickly using cultural tools to changing conditions. Overly fixed biological imperatives would inhibit the very trait that has made humans (overly) successful. Second, while humans have biological requirements, it is relatively easy to see that our cultural norms often quite successfully lead us to ignore these. Think about reproduction, today many societies around the world have fertility rates lower than replacement. While reproduction is indeed a biological imperative there are a host of cultural reasons for reproduction rates. Finally, a central problem of

sociobiology as a type of sociological explanation is that while human biology does not vary greatly throughout history or between cultures, the forms of human behaviour vary wildly across place and time. Even in a world where globalization is said to have led to homogenization of cultures, travelling to a ‘foreign’ culture can be an overwhelming experience where local behaviours appear bizarre. How similar is your behaviour and life to that of your great grand-mothers?

One example of this is the question of mate choice. Sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists have provided evidence that heterosexual men seek younger and ‘attractive’ mates (signals of healthy ability to bear children) and heterosexual women look for wealth and status (signals of ability to provide for children). However, evidence also shows that in countries where gender inequality is reduced, especially some Scandinavian countries, this cultural norm is diminished (Zentner 2012). What has been presumed to be an biological imperative turns out to be relative to cultural differences in gender relations.

Figure 3.9. The baby's smile: instinctive or learned? (Photo courtesy of Llee Wu/Flickr)

The main consideration to make here is not that biology has no impact on human behaviour, but that the biological explanation is limited. While there may be interesting evolutionary roots our ability to smile, cultural variation in the meaning ascribed to this facial movement mean that in some societies smiling is common and accepted and in others it is considered a sign of stupidity or distrustfulness (Khazan 2016). The physiological "human package" is more or less constant across cultures; whereas, the range of cultural behaviours and beliefs is extremely broad. These sometimes radical differences between cultures have to be accounted for instead by their distinct processes of socialization through which individuals learn how to participate in their societies. From this point of view, as the anthropologist Margaret Mead (1901-1978) put it:

> We are forced to conclude that human nature is almost unbelievably malleable, responding accurately and contrastingly to contrasting cultural conditions. The differences between individuals who are members of

> different cultures, like the differences between individuals within a culture, are almost entirely to be laid to differences in conditioning, especially during early childhood, and the form of this conditioning is culturally determined (1935).

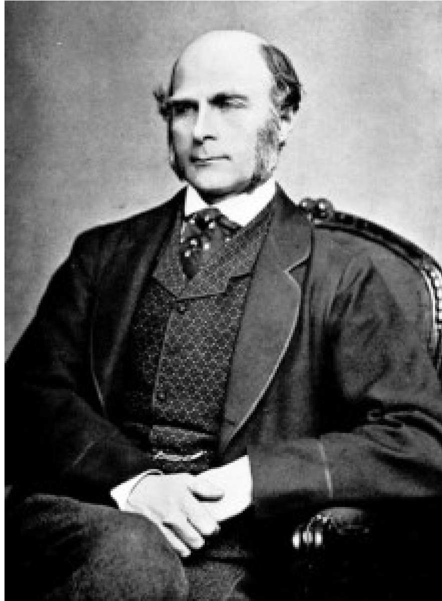

Figure 3.10. Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, was the founder of eugenics (Image coutesy of Wikimedia Commons).

Aside from the explanatory problems of biological determinism, it is important to bear in mind the social consequences of biological determinism, as these ideas have been used to support rigid cultural ideas concerning race, gender, disabilities, etc. that have their legacy in slavery, racism, gender inequality, eugenics programs, and the sterilization of "the unfit." **Eugenics**, meaning "well born" in ancient Greek, was a social movement that sought to improve the human "stock" through selective breeding

and sterilization. Its founder, Francis Galton (1822-1911) defined eugenics in 1883 as “the study of the agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally” (Galton as cited in McLaren, 1990). In Canada, eugenics boards were established by the governments of Alberta and British Columbia to enable the sterilization of the “feeble-minded.” Based on a rigid cultural concept of what a proper human was, and grounded in the biological determinist framework of evolutionary science, 4,725 individuals were proposed for sterilization in Alberta and 2,822 of them were sterilized between 1928 and 1971. The racial component of the program is evident in the fact that while First Nations and Métis peoples made up only 2.5% of the population of Alberta, they accounted for 25% of the sterilizations. Several hundred individuals were also sterilized in British Columbia between 1933 and 1979 (McLaren, 1990).

Cultural Universals

Often, a comparison of one culture to another will reveal obvious differences. But all cultures share common elements. **Cultural universals** are patterns or traits that are globally common to all societies. One example of a cultural universal is the family unit: Every human society recognizes a family structure that regulates sexual reproduction and the care of children. Even so, how that family unit is defined and how it functions vary. In many Asian cultures, for example, family members from all generations commonly live together in one household. In these cultures, young adults will continue to live in the extended household family structure until they marry and join their spouse’s household, or they may remain and

raise their nuclear family within the extended family's homestead. In Canada, by contrast, individuals are expected to leave home and live independently for a period before forming a family unit consisting of parents and their offspring.

Anthropologist George Murdock (1897-1985) first recognized the existence of cultural universals while studying systems of kinship around the world. Murdock found that cultural universals often revolve around basic human survival, such as finding food, clothing, and shelter, or around shared human experiences, such as birth and death, or illness and healing. Through his research, Murdock identified other universals including language, the concept of personal names, and, interestingly, jokes. Humour seems to be a universal way to release tensions and create a sense of unity among people (Murdock, 1949). Sociologists consider humour necessary to human interaction because it helps individuals navigate otherwise tense situations.

Making Connections: Sociological Research

Is Music a Cultural Universal?

Figure 3.13. Queenscliff Music Festival 2013 (Image courtesy of Tony Proudfoot/Flickr)

Imagine that you are sitting in a theatre, watching a film. The movie opens with the hero sitting on a park bench with a grim expression on her face. Cue the music. The first slow and mournful notes are played in a minor key. As the melody continues, the hero turns her head and sees a man walking toward her. The music slowly gets louder, and the dissonance of the chords sends a prickle of fear running down your spine. You sense that she is in danger.Now imagine that you are watching the same movie, but with a different soundtrack. As the scene opens, the music is soft and soothing with a hint of sadness. You see the hero sitting on the park bench

and sense her loneliness. Suddenly, the music swells. The woman looks up and sees a man walking toward her. The music grows fuller, and the pace picks up. You feel your heart rise in your chest. This is a happy moment.

Music has the ability to evoke emotional responses. In television shows, movies, and even commercials, music elicits laughter, sadness, or fear. Are these types of musical cues cultural universals?

In 2009, a team of psychologists, led by Thomas Fritz of the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig, Germany, studied people's reactions to music they'd never heard (Fritz et al., 2009). The research team travelled to Cameroon, Africa, and asked Mafa tribal members to listen to Western music. The tribe, isolated from Western culture, had never been exposed to Western culture and had no context or experience within which to interpret its music. Even so, as the tribal members listened to a Western piano piece, they were able to recognize three basic emotions: happiness, sadness, and fear. Music, it turns out, is a sort of universal language.

Researchers also found that music can foster a sense of wholeness within a group. In fact, scientists who study the evolution of language have concluded that originally language (an established component of group identity) and music were one (Darwin, 1871). Additionally, since music is largely nonverbal, the sounds of music can cross societal boundaries more easily than words. Music allows people to make connections where language might

be a more difficult barricade. As Fritz and his team found, music and the emotions it conveys can be cultural universals.

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

Despite how much humans have in common, cultural differences are far more prevalent than cultural universals. For example, while all cultures have language, analysis of particular language structures and conversational etiquette reveals tremendous differences. In some Middle Eastern cultures, it is common to stand close to others in conversation. North Americans keep more distance, maintaining a large personal space. Even something as simple as eating and drinking varies greatly from culture to culture. If your professor comes into an early morning class holding a mug of liquid, what do you assume she is drinking? In Canada, it’s most likely filled with coffee, not Earl Grey tea, a favourite in England, or yak butter tea, a staple in Tibet.

The way cuisines vary across cultures fascinates many people. Some travellers, like celebrated food writer Anthony Bourdain, pride themselves on their willingness to try unfamiliar foods, while others return home expressing gratitude for their native culture’s fare. Canadians might express disgust at other cultures’ cuisine, thinking it is gross to eat meat from a dog or guinea pig for example, while they do not question their own habit of eating cows or pigs. Such attitudes are an example of **ethnocentrism**, or evaluating and judging another culture

based on how it compares to one's own cultural norms. Ethnocentrism, as sociologist William Graham Sumner (1840-1910) described the term, involves a belief or attitude that one's own culture is better than all others (1906). Almost everyone is a little bit ethnocentric. For example, Canadians tend to say that people from England drive on the "wrong" side of the road, rather than the "other" side. Someone from a country where dogs are considered dirty and unhygienic might find it off-putting to see a dog in a French restaurant.

A high level of appreciation for one's own culture can be healthy; a shared sense of community pride, for example, connects people in a society. But ethnocentrism can lead to disdain or dislike for other cultures, causing misunderstanding and conflict. People with the best intentions sometimes travel to a society to "help" its people, seeing them as uneducated or backward, essentially inferior. In reality, these travellers are guilty of cultural imperialism — the deliberate imposition of one's own cultural values on another culture. Europe's colonial expansion, begun in the 16th century, was often accompanied by a severe cultural imperialism. European colonizers often viewed the people in the lands they colonized as uncultured savages who were in need of European governance, dress, religion, and other cultural practices. On the West Coast of Canada, the Aboriginal *potlatch* (gift-giving) ceremony was made illegal in 1885 because it was thought to prevent Aboriginal peoples from acquiring the proper industriousness and respect for material goods required by civilization. A more modern example of **cultural imperialism** may include the work of international aid agencies who introduce modern technological agricultural methods and plant species from developed countries while overlooking indigenous

varieties and agricultural approaches that are better suited to the particular region.

Ethnocentrism can be so strong that when confronted with all the differences of a new culture, one may experience disorientation and frustration. In sociology, we call this **culture shock**. A traveller from Toronto might find the nightly silence of rural Alberta unsettling, not peaceful. An exchange student from China might be annoyed by the constant interruptions in class as other students ask questions — a practice that is considered rude in China. Perhaps the Toronto traveller was initially captivated with Alberta's quiet beauty, and the Chinese student was originally excited to see an Canadian-style classroom firsthand. But as they experience unanticipated differences from their own culture, their excitement gives way to confusion, discomfort and annoyance. Eventually, as people learn more about a culture, they recover from culture shock.

Culture shock occurs as it can take time to understand the cultural 'rules of the game' that may be drastically different than, or even contradictory to, what one has always known. may appear because people are not always expecting cultural differences. Anthropologist Ken Barger discovered this when conducting participatory observation in an Inuit community in the Canadian Arctic (1971). Originally from Indiana, Barger hesitated when invited to join a local snowshoe race. He knew he'd never hold his own against these experts. Sure enough, he finished last, to his mortification. But the tribal members congratulated him, saying, "You really tried!" In Barger's own culture, he had learned to value victory and trying hard and finishing last seemed particularly embarrassing. To the Inuit people winning was enjoyable, but their culture valued survival skills essential to their environment: How hard someone

tried could mean the difference between life and death. Over the course of his stay, Barger participated in caribou hunts, learned how to take shelter in winter storms, and sometimes went days with little or no food to share among tribal members. Trying hard and working together, two nonmaterial values, were indeed much more important than winning.

Figure 3.14. American anthropologist Ruth Benedict: "The purpose of anthropology is to make the world safe for human differences." (Photo courtesy of Ruth Benedict/Wikimedia Commons)

During his time with the Inuit, Barger learned to engage in cultural relativism. **Cultural relativism** is the practice of

assessing a culture by its own standards rather than viewing it through the lens of one's own culture. The anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1887–1948) argued that each culture has an internally consistent pattern of thought and action, which alone should be the basis for judging the merits and morality of the culture's practices. Cultural relativism requires an open mind and a willingness to consider, and even adapt to, new values and norms. The logic of cultural relativism is at the basis of contemporary policies of multiculturalism. However, indiscriminately embracing everything about a new culture is not always possible. Even the most culturally relativist people from egalitarian societies, such as Canada — societies in which women have political rights and control over their own bodies — would question whether the widespread practice of female genital circumcision in countries such as Ethiopia and Sudan should be accepted as a part of a cultural tradition.

Sociologists attempting to engage in cultural relativism may struggle to reconcile aspects of their own culture with aspects of a culture they are studying. Pride in one's own culture does not have to lead to imposing its values on others. Nor does an appreciation for another culture preclude individuals from studying it with a critical eye. In the case of female genital circumcision, a *universal* right to life and liberty of the person conflicts with the neutral stance of cultural relativism. It is not necessarily ethnocentric to be critical of practices that violate universal standards of human dignity that are contained in the cultural codes of all cultures, (while not necessarily followed in practice). Not every practice can be regarded as culturally relative. Cultural traditions are not immune from power imbalances and liberation movements that seek to correct them.

Feminist sociology is particularly attuned to the way

that most cultures present a male-dominated view of the world as if it were simply *the* view of the world. **Androcentricism** is a perspective in which male concerns, male attitudes, and male practices are presented as "normal" or define what is significant and valued in a culture. Women's experiences, activities, and contributions to society and history are ignored, devalued, or marginalized.

> As a result the perspectives, concerns, and interests of only one sex and class are represented as general. Only one sex and class are directly and actively involved in producing, debating, and developing its ideas, in creating its art, in forming its medical and psychological conceptions, in framing its laws, its political principles, its educational values and objectives. Thus a one-sided standpoint comes to be seen as natural, obvious, and general, and a one-sided set of interests preoccupy intellectual and creative work. (Smith, 1987)

In part this is simply a question of the bias of those who have the power to define cultural values, and in part it is the result of a process in which women have been actively excluded from the culture-creating process. It is still common, for example, to read writing that uses the personal pronoun "he" or the word "man" to represent people in general or humanity. The overall effect is to establish masculine values and imagery as normal. A "policeman" brings to mind a man who is doing a "man's job", when in fact women have been involved in policing for several decades now.

Making Connections: Social Policy and Debate

Multiculturalism in Canada

Figure 3.15. Multiculturalism tree planted in Stanley Park to bring B.C.'s 2012 Multiculturalism Week to a close. The gesture of planting the tree is meant to "symbolize the deep roots and flourishing growth of B.C.'s diverse communities." Is multiculturalism just a gesture or is it a meaningful attempt to recognize and support Canadian diversity? (Image courtesy of the Province of British Columbia/Flickr

One prominent aspect of contemporary Canadian cultural identity is the idea of **multiculturalism**. Canada was the first officially declared multicultural society in which, as Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau declared in 1971, no culture would take precedence over any other. Multiculturalism refers to both the fact of the existence of a diversity of cultures within one territory and to a way of conceptualizing and managing cultural diversity. As

a policy, multiculturalism seeks to both promote and recognize cultural differences while addressing the inevitability of cultural tensions. In the 1988 Multiculturalism Act, the federal government officially acknowledged its role "in bringing about equal access and participation for all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural, and political life of the nation" (Government of Canada, as cited in Angelini & Broderick, 2012).However, the focus on multiculturalism and culture *per se* has not always been so central to Canadian public discourse. Multiculturalism represents a relatively recent cultural development. Prior to the end of World War II, Canadian authorities used the concept of biological race to differentiate the various types of immigrants and Aboriginal peoples in Canada. This focus on biology led to corresponding fears about the quality of immigrant "stock" and the problems of how to manage the mixture of races. In this context, three different models for how to manage diversity were in contention: (1) the American "melting pot" paradigm in which the mingling of races was thought to be able to produce a super race with the best qualities of all races intermingled, (2) strict exclusion or deportation of races seen to be "unsuited" to Canadian social and environmental conditions, or (3) the Canadian "mosaic" that advocated for the separation and compartmentalization of races (Day, 2000).

After World War II, the category of race was replaced by culture and ethnicity in the public discourse, but the mosaic model was retained. Culture came to be understood in terms of the new

anthropological definitions of culture as a deep-seated emotional-psychological phenomenon. In this conceptualization, to be deprived of culture through coercive assimilation would be a type of cultural genocide. As a result, alternatives to cultural assimilation into the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture were debated, and the Canadian mosaic model for managing a diverse population was redefined as multiculturalism. Based on a new appreciation of culture, and with increased immigration from non-European countries, Canadian identity was re-imagined in the 1960s and 1970s as a happy cohabitation of cultures, each of which was encouraged to maintain their cultural distinctiveness. So while the cultural identity of Canadians is diverse, the cultural paradigm in which their coexistence is conceptualized — multiculturalism — has come to be equated with Canadian cultural identity.

However, these developments have not alleviated the problems of cultural difference with which sociologists are concerned. Multicultural policy has sparked numerous, remarkably contentious issues ranging from whether Sikh RCMP officers can wear turbans to whether Mormon sects can have legal polygamous marriages. In 2014, the Parti Québécois in Quebec proposed a controversial Charter of Quebec Values that would, to reinforce the neutrality of the state, ban public employees from wearing "overt and conspicuous" religious symbols and headgear. This position represented a unique Quebec-based concept of multiculturalism known as **interculturalism**. Whereas

multiculturalism begins with the premise that there is no dominant culture in Canada, interculturalism begins with the premise that in Quebec francophone culture is dominant but also precarious in the North American context. It cannot risk further fragmentation. Therefore the intercultural model of managing diversity is to recognize and respect the diversity of immigrants who seek to integrate into Quebec society but also to make clear to immigrants that they must recognize and respect Quebec's common or "fundamental" values.

Critics of multiculturalism identify four related problems:

- Multiculturalism only superficially accepts the equality of all cultures while continuing to limit and prohibit actual equality, participation, and cultural expression. One key element of this criticism is that there are only two official languages in Canada — English and French — which limits the full participation of non-anglophone/ francophone groups.
- Multiculturalism obliges minority individuals to assume the limited cultural identities of their ethnic group of origin, which leads to stereotyping minority groups, ghettoization, and feeling isolated from the national culture.
- Multiculturalism causes

fragmentation and disunity in Canadian society. Minorities do not integrate into existing Canadian society but demand that Canadians adopt or accommodate their way of life, even when they espouse controversial values, laws, and customs (like polygamy or sharia law).

- Multiculturalism is based on recognizing group rights which undermines constitutional protections of individual rights.

On the other hand, proponents of multiculturalism like Will Kymlicka describe the Canadian experience with multiculturalism as a success story. Kymlicka argues that the evidence shows:

"Immigrants in Canada are more likely to become citizens, to vote and to run for office, and to be elected to office than immigrants in other Western democracies, in part because voters in Canada do not discriminate against such candidates. Compared to their counterparts in other Western democracies, the children of immigrants have better educational outcomes, and while immigrants in all Western societies suffer from an "ethnic penalty" in translating their skills into jobs, the size of this ethnic penalty is lowest in Canada. Compared to residents of other Western democracies, Canadians are more likely to say that immigration is beneficial and less likely to have prejudiced views of Muslims. And whereas ethnic diversity has been shown to

> erode levels of trust and social capital in other countries, there appears to be a "Canadian exceptionalism" in this regard."(2012)

3.2. Elements of Culture

Values and Beliefs

The first two elements of culture we will discuss, and perhaps the most crucial, are values and beliefs. **Values** are a culture's standard for discerning desirable states in society (what is true, good, just, or beautiful). Values are deeply embedded and critical for transmitting and teaching a culture's beliefs. **Beliefs** are the tenets or convictions that people hold to be true. Individuals in a society have specific beliefs, but they also share collective values. To illustrate the difference, North Americans commonly believe that anyone who works hard enough will be successful and wealthy. Underlying this belief is the value that wealth is good and desirable.

Values help shape a society by suggesting what is good and bad, beautiful and ugly, and what should be sought or avoided. Consider the value that North American culture places upon youth. Children represent innocence and purity, while a youthful adult appearance signifies sexuality. Shaped by this value, North Americans spend millions of dollars each year on cosmetic products and surgeries to look young and beautiful.

Sometimes the values of Canada and the United States

are contrasted. Americans are said to have an individualistic culture, meaning people place a high value on individuality and independence. In contrast, Canadian culture is said to be more collectivist, meaning the welfare of the group and group relationships are primary values. As we will see below, Seymour Martin Lipset used these contrasts of values to explain why the two societies, which have common roots as British colonies, developed such different political institutions and cultures (Lipset, 1990).

Living up to a culture's values can be difficult. It's easy to value good health, but it's hard to quit smoking. Marital monogamy is valued, but many spouses engage in infidelity. Cultural diversity and equal opportunities for all people are valued in Canada, yet the country's highest political offices have been dominated by white men.

Values often suggest how people should behave, but they do not accurately reflect how people do behave. As we saw in Chapter 2, the classical sociologist Harriet Martineau made a basic distinction between what people say they believe and what they actually do, which are often at odds. Values portray an **ideal culture**, the standards society would like to embrace and live up to. But ideal culture differs from **real culture**, the way society actually is, based on what occurs and exists. In an ideal culture, there would be no traffic accidents, murders, poverty, or racial tension. But in real culture, police officers, lawmakers, educators, and social workers constantly strive to prevent or repair those accidents, crimes, and injustices. Teenagers are encouraged to practice safe sex or abstain. However, the number of unplanned pregnancies among teens reveals that not only is the ideal hard to live up to, but that the value alone is not enough to spare teenagers from the potential consequences of having unprotected sex.

One way societies strive to put values into action is

through rewards, sanctions, and punishments. When people observe the norms of society and uphold its values, they are often rewarded. A boy who helps an elderly woman board a bus may receive a smile and a “thank you.” A business manager who raises profit margins may receive a quarterly bonus. People sanction certain behaviours by giving their support, approval, or permission, or by instilling formal actions of disapproval and non-support. **Sanctions** are a form of **social control**, a way to encourage conformity to cultural norms. Sometimes people conform to norms in anticipation or expectation of positive sanctions: Good grades, for instance, may mean praise from parents and teachers.

When people go against a society’s values, they are punished. A boy who shoves an elderly woman aside to board the bus first may receive frowns or even a scolding from other passengers. A business manager who drives away customers will likely be fired. Breaking norms and rejecting values can lead to cultural sanctions such as earning a negative label — lazy, no-good bum — or to legal sanctions such as traffic tickets, fines, or imprisonment.

Values are not static; they vary across time and between groups as people evaluate, debate, and change collective societal beliefs. Values also vary from culture to culture. For example, cultures differ in their values about what kinds of physical closeness are appropriate in public. It is rare to see two male friends or coworkers holding hands in Canada where that behaviour often symbolizes romantic feelings. But in many nations, masculine physical intimacy is considered natural in public. A simple gesture, such as hand-holding, carries great symbolic differences across cultures.

Figure 3.16. In many parts of Africa and the Middle East, it is considered normal for men to hold hands in friendship. How would Canadians react to these two soldiers? (Photo courtesy of Geordie Mott/ Wikimedia Commons)

Norms

So far, the examples in this chapter have often described how people are expected to behave in certain situations — for example, when buying food or boarding a bus. These examples describe the visible and invisible rules of conduct through which societies are structured, or what sociologists call **norms**. As opposed to values and beliefs which identify desirable states and convictions about how things are, a norm is a generally accepted way of doing things. Norms define how to behave in accordance with what a society has defined as good, right, and important, and most members of the society adhere to them because their violation invokes some degree of sanction. They define the rules that govern behaviour.

Formal norms are established, written rules. They are behaviours worked out and agreed upon in order to suit and serve most people. Laws are formal norms, but so are

employee manuals, college entrance exam requirements, and no running at swimming pools. Formal norms are the most specific and clearly stated of the various types of norms, and the most strictly enforced. But even formal norms are enforced to varying degrees, reflected in cultural values.

For example, money is highly valued in North America, so monetary crimes are punished. It is against the law to rob a bank, and banks go to great lengths to prevent such crimes. People safeguard valuable possessions and install anti-theft devices to protect homes and cars. Until recently, a less strictly enforced social norm was driving while intoxicated. While it is against the law to drive drunk, drinking is for the most part an acceptable social behaviour. Though there have been laws in Canada to punish drunk driving since 1921, there were few systems in place to prevent the crime until quite recently. These examples show a range of enforcement in formal norms.

There are plenty of formal norms, but the list of **informal norms** — casual behaviours that are generally and widely conformed to — is longer. People learn informal norms by observation, imitation, and general socialization. Some informal norms are taught directly — “kiss your Aunt Edna” or “use your napkin” — while others are learned by observation, including observations of the consequences when someone else violates a norm. Children learn quickly that picking your nose is subject to ridicule when they see someone shamed for it by other children. Although informal norms define personal interactions, they extend into other systems as well. Think back to the discussion of fast food restaurants at the beginning of this chapter. In Canada, there are informal norms regarding behaviour at these restaurants. Customers line up to order their food, and leave when they are done.

They do not sit down at a table with strangers, sing loudly as they prepare their condiments, or nap in a booth. Most people do not commit even benign breaches of informal norms. Informal norms dictate appropriate behaviours without the need of written rules.

Making Connections: Sociological Research

Breaching Experiments

Figure 3.17. Harold Garfinkel, founder of ethnomethodology in sociology (Image courtesy of Arlene Garfinkel/Wikimedia Commons).

Sociologist Harold Garfinkel (1917-2011) studied people’s customs in order to find out how tacit and often unconscious societal rules and norms not only influenced behaviour but enabled the social order to exist (Weber, 2011). Like the symbolic

interactionists, he believed that members of society together create a social order. He noted, however, that people often draw on inferred knowledge and unspoken agreements to do so. His resulting book, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967), discusses the underlying assumptions that people use to create "accounts" or stories that enable them to make sense of the world.One of his research methods was known as a breaching experiment. His breaching experiments tested sociological concepts of social norms and conformity. In a breaching experiment, the researcher purposely breaks a social norm or behaves in a socially awkward manner. The participants are not aware an experiment is in progress. For example, he had his students go into local shops and begin to barter with the sales clerks for fixed price goods. "This says $14.99, but I'll give you $10 for it." Often the clerks were shocked or flustered. This breach reveals the unspoken convention in North America that the amount given on the price tag is the price. It also breaks a number of other conventions which seek to make commercial transactions as efficient and impersonal as possible. In another example, he had his students respond to the casual greeting, "How are you?" with a detailed and elaborate description of their state of health and well-being. The point of the experiments was not that the experimenter would simply act obnoxiously or weird in public. Rather, the point is to deviate from a specific social norm in a small way, to subtly break some form of social etiquette, and see what happens. The reactions of outrage, anger, puzzlement, or other

emotions illustrated the deep level at which unspoken social norms constitute social life. They also reveal the extent to which those faced with such unexpected behaviours try to understand and 'normalize' the situation. A cashier for instance might laugh at the 'joke' or might call a manager to 'deal with' the situation.

Breaching experiments uncover and explore the many unwritten social rules we live by. They indicate the degree to which the world we live in is fragile, arbitrary and ritualistic; socially structured by deep, silent, tacit agreements with others of which we are frequently only dimly aware. They also reveal how we will go to some lengths to maintain arbitrary 'normalcy'.

Material and Nonmaterial Culture

Even an action as seemingly simple as commuting to work evidences a great deal of cultural propriety. Take the case of going to work on public transportation. Whether commuting in Dublin, Cairo, Mumbai, or Vancouver, many behaviours will be the same in all locations, but significant differences also arise between cultures. Typically in

Canada, a passenger finds a marked bus stop or station, waits for the bus or train, pays an agent before or after boarding, and quietly takes a seat if one is available. But when boarding a bus in Cairo, passengers might have to run, because buses there often do not come to a full stop to take on patrons. Dublin bus riders are expected to extend an arm to indicate that they want the bus to stop for them. When boarding a commuter train in Mumbai, passengers must squeeze into overstuffed cars amid a lot of pushing and shoving on the crowded platforms. That kind of behaviour would be considered the height of rudeness in Canada, but in Mumbai it reflects the daily challenges of getting around on a train system that is taxed to capacity.

In this example of commuting, the different cultural responses are seen as various solutions to a common problem, the problem of public transportation. The problem is shared, but the solutions are different. Cultural solutions consist of two components: thoughts or perceptual orientations (expectations about personal space, for example) and tangible things (bus stops, trains, and seating capacity). Culture includes both material and non-material elements. **Material culture** refers to the artifacts, technologies, and products of a group of people. Metro passes and bus tokens are part of material culture, as are automobiles, stores, and the physical structures where people worship. **Nonmaterial culture**, in contrast, consists of the knowledge and beliefs, forms of communication, and norms of behaviour of a society. Both material and nonmaterial components of culture are variables within the cultural “package” social groups use to adapt themselves or respond to the tasks of life.

It is important to point out here that material and nonmaterial aspects of culture are linked, and physical objects often symbolize cultural ideas. A bus or transit pass

is a material object, but it represents a form of nonmaterial culture, namely, capitalism, and the acceptance of paying for transportation. Clothing, hairstyles, and jewellery are part of material culture, but the appropriateness of wearing certain clothing for specific events reflects nonmaterial culture. A school building belongs to material culture, but the teaching methods and educational standards are part of education's nonmaterial culture. These material and nonmaterial aspects of culture can vary subtly from region to region. As people travel farther afield, moving from different regions to entirely different parts of the world, certain material and nonmaterial aspects of culture become dramatically unfamiliar. We notice this when we encounter different cultures. As we interact with cultures other than our own, we become more aware of the differences and commonalities between others' worlds and our own.

3.3. Culture as Innovation: Pop Culture, Subculture, Global Culture

Figure 3.22. Pop culture heroes from the early days of pulp fiction. The term "pulp" refers to the cheap and disposable wood-pulp paper the books and magazines were published on (Image courtesy of Terry McCombs/Flickr)

In the introduction of this chapter we noted that culture is the source of the shared meanings through which we interpret and orient ourselves to the world. While cultural practices are in some respects always a response to biological givens or to the structure of the socioeconomic formation, they are not determined by these factors. Culture is innovative; it expresses the human imagination in its capacity to go beyond what is given, to solve problems, to produce **innovations** — new objects, ideas, or ways of being introduced to culture for the first time. At the same time, we are born into cultures that pre-exist us and shape us: Languages, ways of thinking, ways of doing things, and artifacts we do not invent but inherit; they are ready made forms of life that we fit ourselves

into. Culture can, therefore, also be restrictive, imposing forms of life, beliefs, and practices on people, and limiting the possibilities of what we can think and do. As Marx said, “the tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living” (1852).

In the next two sections of this chapter we will examine aspects of culture which are innovative–high culture and popular culture, subculture, and global culture — and aspects of culture which are restrictive — rationalization and consumerism.

High Culture and Popular Culture

Do you prefer listening to opera or hip hop music? Do you like watching horse jumping or NASCAR? Do you read books of poetry or magazines about celebrities? In each pair, one type of entertainment is considered high brow and the other low brow. Sociologists use the term **high culture** to describe a form of cultural experience characterized by formal complexity, eternal values, or intrinsic authenticity such as is provided by the Greek classics, Beethoven’s symphonies, Sergei Diaghilev’s ballets, or James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. People often associate high culture with intellectualism, aesthetic taste, elitism, wealth, and prestige. Pierre Bourdieu (1984) argues high culture is not only a symbol of distinction, but a means of maintaining status and power distinctions through the transfer of **cultural capital**: the knowledge, skills, tastes, mannerisms, speaking style, posture, material possessions, credentials, etc. that a person acquires from his or her family background. Events considered high culture can be expensive and formal — attending a ballet, seeing a play, or listening to a live symphony performance — and the people who are in a position to appreciate these events,

despite the difficulty, are often those who have enjoyed the benefits of an enriched and exclusive cultural background.

The term **popular culture** refers to the pattern of cultural experiences and attitudes that exist in mainstream society: cultural experiences well liked by "the people." Popular culture events might include a parade, a baseball game, or a rock concert. Rock and pop music — "pop" is short for "popular" — are part of popular culture. In modern times, popular culture is often expressed and spread via commercial media such as radio, television, movies, the music industry, publishers, and corporate-run websites. Unlike high culture, popular culture is known and accessible to most people. You can share a discussion of favourite hockey teams with a new coworker, or comment on the TV show *House of Cards* when making small talk in the check-out line at the grocery store. But if you tried to launch into a deep discussion on the classical Greek play *Antigone*, few members of Canadian society today would be familiar with it.

Although high culture may be viewed as superior to popular culture, the labels of high culture and popular culture vary over time and place. Shakespearean plays, considered pop culture when they were written, are now among our society's high culture. In the current "Second Golden Age of Television" (2000s to the present, the first Golden Age was in the 1950s and 1960s), television programming has gone from typical low brow situation comedies, soap operas, and crime dramas to the development of "high-quality" series with increasingly sophisticated characters, narratives, and themes (e.g., *The Sopranos*, *Dexter*, *Breaking Bad*, *Mad Men*, *Game of Thrones*, *Sex Education*, *Normal People*).

Figure 3.23. Celebration Town Hall in the Walt Disney town of Celebration, Florida is an example of postmodern architecture that playfully borrows and blends elements from historical styles (Greek stoa left, grain silo right) instead of inventing new styles in the modern tradition. The Town Hall is also, perhaps unintentionally, ironic because the town has no mayor or local municipal government. Disney Corporation directly administers the town, which is modelled on Walt Disney World resort's nostalgic image of small-town America. (Image courtesy of trevor.patt/Flickr)

Contemporary popular culture is frequently referred to as a postmodern culture. In the era of modern culture, or modernity, there existed a clear distinction between high culture and popular culture: high culture which appealed to a limited and sophisticated audience was comprised of "great works" of culture (classic literature and music for example) or experimental and avante-garde artistic works (literature, music, theater, film) that required significant investment of time and study to "get". Popular culture, on the other hand, was simply the culture of the people; it was immediately accessible and easily digestible, either in the form of folk traditions (stories, folk music) or commercialized mass culture (television, magazines, romance novels, musical theatre).

In **postmodern culture** — the form of culture that

came after modern culture — this distinction begins to break down, and it becomes more common to find various sorts of mash-ups of high and low: Serious literature combined with zombie themes; pop music constructed from recycled samples of original hooks and melodies; symphony orchestras performing the soundtracks of cartoons; architecture that playfully borrows and blends historical styles; etc. Rock music is the subject of many high brow histories and academic analyses, just as the common objects of popular culture are transformed and represented as high art (e.g., Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* or the classic film noir movies of the 1940s and 1950s). The dominant sensibility of postmodern popular culture is both playful and ironic, as if the blending and mixing of cultural references, like in the television show *The Simpsons*, is one big in-joke. Postmodern culture has been referred to as a "culture of quotations" (Jameson, 1985) in the sense that instead of searching for new, authentic forms as in avant-garde modernism, it recycles and remixes (i.e. quotes) elements of previous cultural production.

At a more serious level, postmodern culture is seen to challenge modern culture in a number of key ways. The postmodern eclectic mix of elements from different times and places challenges the modernist concepts of authentic expression and progress; the idea that cultural creations can and should seek new and innovative ways to express the deep meanings of life. The playfulness and irony of postmodern culture seem to undermine the core values of modernity, especially the idea that cultural critique or innovations in architecture, art, and literature, etc. have an important role in, not just entertaining people, but improving the quality of social life. In postmodernity, nothing is to be taken very seriously, even ourselves.

Moreover, in postmodernity everyone with access to a computer and some editing software is seen to be a cultural producer; everyone has an important voice and access to knowledge is simply a matter of crowd-sourcing. The modernist myth of the great creator or genius is rejected in favour of a plurality of voices.

Jean Francois Lyotard (1984) defined postmodern culture as “incredulity towards metanarratives” meaning that postmoderns no longer really believe in the big (i.e., meta) stories and social projects of modernity. Postmoderns are skeptical of the claims that scientific knowledge leads to progress, that political change creates human emancipation, that *Truth* sets us free. Some argue that the outcome of this erosion of authority and decline in consensus around core values is a thorough relativism of values in which no standard exists to judge one thing more significant than another. Everyone will make up their own little stories, each as valid as the next, as we see when creationists seek to debunk the “myths” of evolutionary theory, for example. Others argue that the outcome leads to a necessary critique of the unexamined assumptions of power and authority in modern culture–the rhetoric of “family values” or “scientific progress” lampooned in *The Simpsons,* for example. Instead of the privileged truths of elites and authorities, postmodernity witnesses the emergence of a plurality of different voices that had been relegated to the margins. Culture moves away from homogeneous sameness to heterogeneous diversity.

Subculture and Counterculture

A **subculture** is just as it sounds—a smaller cultural group within a larger culture. People of a subculture are part of the larger culture, but also share a specific identity within

a smaller group. Thousands of subcultures exist within Canada. Ethnic groups share the language, food, and customs of their heritage. Other subcultures are united by shared experiences. For example, biker culture revolves around a dedication to motorcycles. Some subcultures are formed by members who possess traits or preferences that differ from the majority of a society's population. Alcoholics Anonymous offers support to those suffering from alcoholism. The body modification community embraces aesthetic additions to the human body, such as tattoos, piercings, and certain forms of plastic surgery. But even as members of a subculture band together around a distinct identity, they still identify with and participate in the larger society.

Sociologists distinguish subcultures from **countercultures**, which are a type of subculture that explicitly reject the larger culture's norms and values. In contrast to subcultures, which operate relatively smoothly within the larger society, countercultures might actively defy larger society by developing their own set of rules and norms to live by, sometimes even creating communities that operate outside of greater society. The post-World War II period was characterized by a series of "spectacular" youth cultures — teddy boys, beatniks, mods, hippies, bikers, skinheads, rastas, punks, new wavers, ravers, hip-hoppers, and hipsters — who in various ways sought to reject the values of their parents' generation. The hippies, for example, were a subculture that became a counterculture, blending protest against the Vietnam War, technocracy and consumer culture with a back to the land movement, non-Western forms of spirituality, and the practice of voluntary simplicity. Counterculture, in this example, refers to the *cultural* forms of life taken by a political and social protest movement.

Cults, a word derived from *cultus* or the “care” owed to the observance of spiritual rituals, are also considered countercultural groups. They are usually informal, transient religious groups or movements that deviate from orthodox beliefs and often, but not always, involve an intense emotional commitment to the group and allegiance to a charismatic leader. In pluralistic societies like Canada, they represent quasi-legitimate forms of social experimentation with alternate forms of religious practice, community, sexuality and gender relations, proselytizing, economic organization, healing and therapy. However, sometimes their challenge to conventional laws and norms is regarded as going too far by the dominant society. For example, the group Yearning for Zion (YFZ) in Eldorado, Texas existed outside the mainstream, and the limelight, until its leader was accused of statutory rape and underage marriage. The sect’s formal norms clashed too severely to be tolerated by U.S. law, and in 2008 authorities raided the compound, removing more than 200 women and children from the property.

Figure 3.24. Skinhead style consisted of “cropped hair, braces, short, wide Levi jeans or functional Sta-Prest trousers, plain or button-down Ben Sherman shirts and highly polished Doctor Marten boots” (Hebdige, 1979). (Image courtesy of Paul Townsend/Flickr).

The degree to which countercultures reject the larger culture’s norms and values is questionable, however. In the analysis of spectacular, British working class youth subcultures like the teddy boys, mods, and skinheads, Phil Cohen (1972) noted that the style and the focal concerns of the groups could be seen as a “compromise solution between two contradictory needs: the need to create and express autonomy and difference from parents…and the need to maintain parental identifications” (as cited in Hebdige, 1979). In the 1960s and 70s, for example, skinheads shaved their heads, listened to ska music from Jamaica, participated in racist chants at soccer games, and wore highly polished Doctor Marten boots in a manner that deliberately alienated their parents while expressing their own alienation as working class youth with few job prospects in deindustrialized England. At the same time, noted Cohen, their subcultural outfit was more or less a

"caricature of the model worker" their parents aspired to and their attitude simply exaggerated the proletarian, puritanical, and chauvinist traits of their parents' generation. On one hand the invention of skinhead culture was an innovative cultural creation; on the other hand it just exaggerated the already existing contradictions of the skinheads' class situation and that of their parents.

Making Connections: Sociology in the Real World

The Evolution of North American Hipster Subculture

Figure 3.25. Intellectual and trendy, today's hipsters define themselves through cultural irony. [Long description] (Photo courtesy of Lorena Cupcake/Wikimedia Commons)

Skinny jeans, chunky glasses, ironic moustaches, retro-style single speed bicycles and T-shirts with vintage logos—the hipster is a recognizable figure in contemporary North American culture. Predominantly based in metropolitan areas, hipsters

seek to define themselves by a rejection of mainstream norms and fashion styles. As a subculture, hipsters spurn many values and beliefs of North American society, tending to prefer a bohemian lifestyle over one defined by the accumulation of power and wealth. At the same time they evince a concern that borders on a fetish with the pedigree of the music, styles, and objects that identify their focal concerns.When did hipster subculture begin? While commonly viewed as a recent trend among middle-class youth, the history of the group stretches back to the early decades of the 1900s. In the 1940s, black American jazz music was on the rise in the United States. Musicians were known as hepcats and had a smooth, relaxed style that contrasted with more conservative and mainstream expressions of cultural taste. Norman Mailer (1923 – 2007), in his essay *The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster* (1957), defined those who were "hep" or "hip" as largely white youth living by a black jazz-inspired code of resistance, while those who were "square" lived according to society's rules and conventions.As hipster attitudes spread and young people were increasingly drawn to alternative music and fashion, attitudes and language derived from the culture of jazz were adopted. Unlike the vernacular of the day, hipster slang was purposefully ambiguous. When hipsters said, "It's cool, man," they meant not that everything was good, but that it was the way it was.

Figure 3.26. In the 1940s, American hipsters were associated with the "cool" culture of jazz. (Photo courtesy of William P. Gottlieb/Ira and Leonore S. Gershwin Fund Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress)

By the 1950s, another variation on the subculture was on the rise. The beat generation, a title coined by Quebecois-American writer Jack Kerouac (1922 – 1969), was defined as a generation that was nonconformist and anti-materialistic. Prominent in this movement were writers and poets who listened to jazz, studied Eastern religions, experimented with different states of experience, and embraced radical politics of personal liberation. They bummed around, hitchhiked the country, sought experience, and lived marginally. Even in the early stages of the

development of the subculture there was a difference between the emphasis in beat and hipster styles:

> . . . the hipster was . . . [a] typical lower-class dandy, dressed up like a pimp, affecting a very cool, cerebral tone – to distinguish him from the gross, impulsive types that surrounded him in the ghetto – and aspiring to the finer things in life, like very good “tea”, the finest of sounds – jazz or Afro-Cuban . . . [whereas] . . . the Beat was originally some earnest middle-class college boy like Kerouac, who was stifled by the cities and the culture he had inherited and who wanted to cut out for distant and exotic places, where he could live like the “people”, write, smoke and meditate (Goldman as cited in Hebdige, 1979)

While the beat was focused on inner experience, the hipster was focused on the external style.

By the end of the 1950s, the influence of jazz was winding down and many traits of hepcat culture were becoming mainstream. College students, questioning the relevance and vitality of the American dream in the face of post-war skepticism, clutched copies of Kerouac’s *On the Road*, dressed in berets, black turtlenecks, and black-rimmed glasses. Women wore black leotards and grew their hair long. The subculture became visible and was covered in *Life* magazine, *Esquire*, *Playboy*, and other mainstream media. Herb Caen (1916 – 1997), a San Francisco journalist, used the suffix from *Sputnik 1*, the Russian satellite that orbited Earth in 1957, to dub the movement’s followers as “beatniks.” They were subsequently lampooned as

lazy layabouts in television shows like *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis* (1959 – 1963) or dangerous, drug-abusing delinquents in movies like *High School Confidential* (1958).

Figure 3.27. By the late 1950s and early 1960s beatnik subculture was being parodied. [Long Description] (Image courtesy of Sarah/Flickr)

As the beat generation faded, a new related movement began. It too focused on breaking social boundaries, but also advocated freedom of expression, philosophy, and love. It took its name from the generations before; in fact, some theorists claim that the beats themselves coined the term to describe their children. Over time, the "little hipsters" of the 1960s and 70s became known

simply as hippies. Others note that hippie was a derogatory label invented by the mainstream press to discredit and stereotype the movement and its non-materialist aspirations.Contemporary expressions of the hipster rose out of the hippie movement in the same way that hippies evolved from the beats and beats from hepcats. Although today's hipster may not seem to have much in common with the jazz-inspired youth of the 1940s, or the long-haired back to the land movement of the 1960s, an emphasis on nonconformity persists. The sociologist Mark Greif set about investigating the hipster subculture of the United States and found that much of what tied the group together was not a specific set of fashion or music choices, nor a specific point of contention with the mainstream. What has emerged, rather, is an appropriation of consumer capitalism that seeks authenticity in and of itself.In his *New York Times* article "The Hipster in the Mirror" Greif wrote, "All hipsters play at being the inventors or first adopters of novelties: pride comes from knowing, and deciding, what's cool in advance of the rest of the world" (2010). What tends to be cool is an ironic pastiche of borrowed styles or tastes that signify other identities or histories: alternative music (sometimes very obscure), used vintage clothing, organic and artisanal foods and products, single gear bikes, and countercultural values and lifestyles.Young people are often drawn to oppose mainstream conventions. Much as the hepcats of the jazz era opposed common culture with carefully crafted appearances of coolness and relaxation,

modern hipsters reject mainstream values with a purposeful apathy. Ironic, cool to the point of non-caring, and intellectual, hipsters continue to embody a subculture while simultaneously impacting mainstream culture.

Global Culture

The integration of world markets and technological advances of the last decades have allowed for greater exchange between cultures through the processes of **globalization** and **diffusion**. Beginning in the 1970s, Western governments began to deregulate social services while granting greater liberties to private businesses. As a result of this process of neoliberalization, world markets became dominated by unregulated, international flows of capital investment and new multinational networks of corporations. A global economy emerged to replace nationally based economies. We have since come to refer to this integration of international trade and finance markets as globalization. Increased communications and air travel have further opened doors for international business relations, facilitating the flow not only of goods but of information and people as well (Scheuerman, 2010). Today, many Canadian companies set up offices in other nations where the costs of resources and labour are cheaper. When a person in Canada calls to get information about banking, insurance, or computer services, the person taking that call may be working in India or Indonesia.

Alongside the process of globalization is diffusion,

which is the spread of material and nonmaterial culture. While globalization refers to the integration of markets, diffusion relates a similar process to the integration of global cultures. Middle-class North Americans can fly overseas and return with a new appreciation of Thai noodles or Italian gelato. Access to television and the internet has brought the lifestyles and values portrayed in Hollywood sitcoms into homes around the globe. Twitter feeds from public demonstrations in one nation have encouraged political protesters in other countries. When this kind of diffusion occurs, material objects and ideas from one culture are introduced into another.

The increasing flows of global migration and movement also facilitate the diffusion of cultural ideas and artifacts as people from around the world spread out into global **diasporas**: The dispersions of a people from their original homeland. As Arjun Appadurai (1996) suggests, “More people than ever before seem to imagine routinely the possibility that they or their children will live and work in places other than where they were born: this is the wellspring of the increased rates of migration at every level of social, national, and global life.” This likelihood of movement, whether actual or imagined, changes the cultural coordinates of how people see themselves in the world.

All migrants, refugees, temporary foreign workers, or travellers bring their beliefs, attitudes, languages, cuisines, music, religious practices, and other elements of local ways of life with them when they move, and they encounter new ones in the places where they arrive. What would appear to be different in the contemporary era of global migration is the way in which electronic media make it possible for migrants and travellers to keep in touch daily with not only friends and family, but also favourite TV

shows, current events, sports, music, and other elements of culture from home. In the same way, electronic media give migrants access to the culture of their new homes just as they allow local residents to imagine future homes elsewhere in the world. In the era of globalization, the experience of culture is increasingly disembedded from location. The ways people imagine themselves and define their individual attachments, interests, and aspirations criss-cross and intertwine the divisions between cultures formerly established by the territorial boundaries of societies.

Hybridity in cultures is one of the consequences of the increased global flows of capital, people, culture, and entertainment. Hybrid cultures refer to new forms of culture that arise from cross-cultural exchange, especially in the aftermath of the colonial era. On one hand, there are blendings of different cultural elements that had at one time been distinct and locally based: fusion cuisines, mixed martial arts, and New Age shamanism. On the other hand, there are processes of indigenization and appropriation in which local cultures adopt and redefine foreign cultural forms. The classic examples are the cargo cults of Melanesia in which isolated Indigenous peoples "re-purposed" Western goods (cargo) within their own ritualistic practices in order to make sense of Westerners' material wealth. Other examples include Arjun Appadurai's discussion of how the colonial Victorian game of cricket has been taken over and absorbed as a national passion into the culture of the Indian subcontinent (1996). Similarly, Chinese "duplitecture" reconstructs famous European and North American buildings, or in the case of Hallstatt, Austria, entire villages, in Chinese housing developments (Bosker, 2013). As cultural diasporas or emigrant communities begin to introduce their cultural

traditions to new homelands and absorb the cultural traditions they find there, opportunities for new and unpredictable forms of hybrid culture emerge.

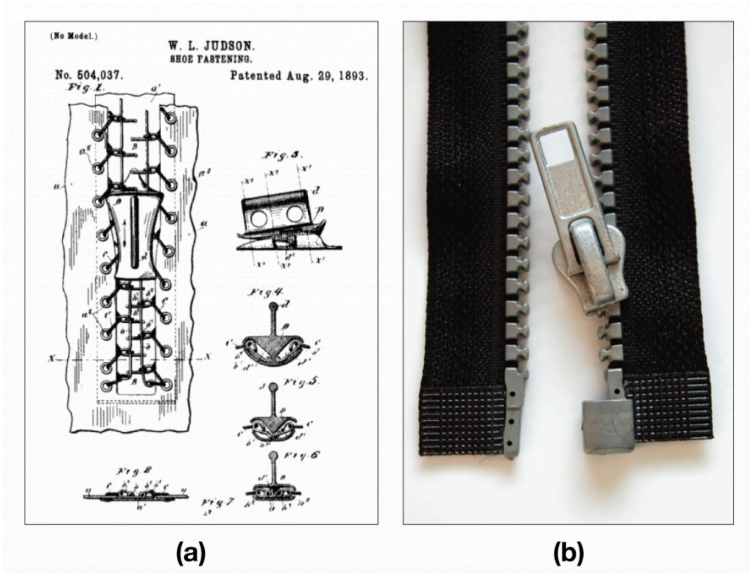

Figure 3.28. Officially patented in 1893 as the "clasp locker" (a), the zipper did not diffuse through society for many decades. Today, it is immediately recognizable around the world. (Photo (a) courtesy of U.S. Patent Office/Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) courtesy of Rabensteiner/Wikimedia Commons)

Making Connections: Big Picture

Is There a Canadian Identity?

Figure 3.29. To what degree does Tim Hortons represent Canadian culture? Is it a cultural icon endangered by its sale to the international consortium 3G Capital, or does it already manipulate Canadians' desire to identify with their national culture in order to sell a product? (Image courtesy of Doug/Flickr).

The recent purchase of the Canadian coffee and donut chain Tim Hortons by 3G Capital, the American-Brazilian consortium that owns Burger King, raised questions about Canadian identity that never seem far from the surface in discussions of Canadian culture. For example, an article by Joe Friesen in *The Globe and Mail* (2014) emphasized the potential loss to Canadian culture by the sale to foreign owners of a successful Canadian-owned business that is also a kind of Canadian institution.

Tim Hortons's self-promotion has always emphasized its Canadianness: from its original ownership partner, Tim Horton (1930 – 1974), who was a Toronto Maple Leafs defenceman, to being a kind of "anti-Starbucks," the place where "ordinary Canadians" go. Friesen's article reads a number of Canadian characteristics into the brand image of Tim Hortons. For example, the personality of Tim Horton himself is equated with Canadianness of the chain: "He wasn't a flashy player, but he was strong and reliable, traits in keeping with Canadian narratives of solidity and self-effacement" (Friesen). How do we understand Canadian culture and Canadian identity in this example? Earlier in the chapter, we described culture as a product of the socioeconomic formation. Therefore, if we ask the question of whether a specific Canadian culture or Canadian identity exists, we would begin by listing a set of distinctive Canadian cultural characteristics and then attempt to explain their distinctiveness in terms of the way the Canadian socioeconomic formation developed.

Seymour Martin Lipset (1990) famously described several characteristics that distinguished Canadians from Americans:

- Canadians are less self-reliant and more dependent on state programs than Americans to provide for everyday needs of citizens.
- Canadians are more "elitist" than Americans in the sense that they are

more respectful and deferential towards authorities.

- Canadians are less individualistic and more collectivistic than Americans, especially in instances where personal liberties conflict with the collective good.
- Overall, Canadians are more conservative than Americans, and less likely to embrace a belief in progress or a forward looking, liberal outlook on political or economic issues.

Lipset's explanation for these differences is that while both Canada and the United States retain elements from their British colonial experiences, like their language and legal systems, their founding historical events were opposites: the United States was created through violent revolution against British rule (1775-1783); whereas, Canada's origins were counter revolutionary. Canada was settled in part by United Empire Loyalists who fled America to remain loyal to Britain, and it did not become an independent nation state until it was created by an act of the British Parliament (the British North America Act of 1867). (Note: The idea that Canada — with its influential socialist tradition responsible for Canada's universal health care, welfare and employment insurance, strong union movement, culture of collective responsibility, etc. — is more conservative than the United States may strike the reader as strange. Lipset's assessment is based on

uniquely American cultural definitions of conservatism and liberalism.) While Lipset's analysis is disputed, especially by those who do not see American and Canadian cultural differences as being so great (Baer et al., 1990), the logic of his analysis is to see the cultural difference between the nations as a variable dependent on their different socioeconomic formations.

In this analysis, the national characteristics that Friesen argues are embodied by Tim Hortons — modesty, unpretentiousness, politeness, respect, etc. — would be seen as qualities that emerged as a result of a uniquely Canadian historical socioeconomic development. However, how well do they actually represent Canadian culture? As we saw earlier in the chapter, one prominent aspect of contemporary Canadian cultural identity is the idea of multiculturalism. The impact of globalization on Canada has been increased cultural diversity (see Chapter 11). The 2011 census noted that visible minorities made up 19.1 percent of the Canadian population, or almost one out of every five Canadians. In Toronto and Vancouver almost half the population are visible minorities. In a certain way, the existence of diverse cultures in Canada undermines the notion that a unified Canadian culture exists. Canada would appear to be a fragmented nation of hyphenated identities — British-Canadians, French-Canadians, Chinese-Canadians, South Asian-Canadians, Caribbean-Canadians, Aboriginal-Canadians, etc. — each with its unique cultural traditions, languages, and viewpoints. In what way are we still able to speak

about *a* Canadian identity except insofar as it is defined by multiculturalism; essentially many identities?

3.4. Culture as Restriction: Commodification

In the previous section we examined culture in its innovative guise. We explored how the art, music and art of 'high culture' can expanding the range of human sensibility and how pop culture, subcultures, and globally hybrid culture create and diffusing new cultural forms. However, culture can also be examined in its restrictive guise, as source of restriction on human possibilities.

Rationalization

Figure 3.30. Harold Lloyd in Safety Last (1923). What is the relationship between time and stress? (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Max Weber's analysis of modern society centres on the concept of **rationalization**. Arguably, the primary focus of Weber's entire sociological *oeuvre* was to determine how and why Western civilization and capitalism developed where and when they did. Why was the West the West? Why did the Western world modernize and develop modern science, industry, military, and democracy first when, for centuries, Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and the Middle East were technically, scientifically, and culturally more advanced than the West?

Weber argued that the modern forms of society developed in the West because of the process of

rationalization: the general tendency of modern institutions and most areas of life to be transformed by the application of instrumental reason — choosing the most efficient means to achieve defined goals — and the overcoming of "magical" thinking (which in Chapter 1 we referred to as the "disenchantment of the world"). In modernity, everything is subject to the cold and rational gaze of the scientist, the technician, the bureaucrat, and the business person. "There are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play… rather… one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted" (Weber, 1919). As the impediments toward rationalization were removed, organizations and institutions were restructured on the principle of maximum efficiency and specialization, while older traditional (inefficient) types of organization were gradually eliminated. Weber's question was, what are the consequences of rationality for everyday life, for the social order, and for the spiritual fate of humanity?

Through rationalization, all of the institutional structures of modern society are reorganized on the principles of efficiency, calculability, and predictability, which are the bases of the "technical and economic conditions of machine production" that Weber refers to in passages from *The Protestant Ethic* (1904). As rationalization transforms the institutional and organizational life of modernity, other forms of social organization are eliminated and other purposes of life—spiritual, moral, emotional, traditional, etc.—become irrelevant. Life becomes irrevocably narrower in its focus, and other values are lost. Our attitude towards our own lives becomes oriented to maximizing our own efficiency and eliminating non-productive pursuits and downtime. This is the key to the metaphor of the **iron cage** by which Weber evokes the new powers of production

and organizational effectiveness, the increasingly narrow specialization of tasks and the loss of the Enlightenment ideals of a well-rounded individual and a “full and beautiful humanity.” Having forgotten its spiritual or other purposes of life, humanity succumbed to an order “now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production” (Weber, 1904). The modern subject in the iron cage is essentially a narrow specialist or bureaucrat, “only a single cog in an ever-moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march” (Weber, 1922).

One of the consequences of the rationalization of everyday life is stress. In 2010, 27 percent of working adults in Canada described their day-to-day lives as highly stressful (Crompton, 2011). Twenty-three percent of all Canadians aged 15 and older reported that most days were highly stressful in 2013 (Statistics Canada, 2014). In the case of stress, rationalization is a double-edged sword in that it allows people to get more things done per unit of time more efficiently in order to “save time,” but ironically efficiency–as a means to an end–tends to replace other goals in life and becomes an end in itself. The focus on efficiency means that people regard time as a kind of limited resource in which to achieve a maximum number of activities. The irrationality in rationalization is: Saving time for what? Are we able to take time for activities (including sleep) which replenish us or enrich us? Even the notions of “taking time” or “spending quality time” with someone uses the metaphor of time as a kind of expenditure in which we use up a limited resource. Stress is in many respects a product of our modern “rational” relationship to time. As we can see in the table below, for a significant number of people, there is simply not enough time in the day to accomplish what we set out to do.

The Commodity, Commodification, and Consumerism as a Way of Life

Figure 3.31. Barbara Kruger's subversive billboard art piece "I shop therefore I am" is here revised as an actual advertising slogan in a Selfridges department store in Birmingham, England. Is this the ultimate in cynical advertising or simply a fact of life in the age of consumerism? (Photo courtesy of Mark Hillary/Flickr)

A **commodity** is simply an object, service, or a "good" that has been produced for sale on the market. **Commodification** is the process through which objects, services, or goods are increasingly turned into commodities, so they become defined more in terms of

their marketability and profitability than by their intrinsic characteristics. Prior to the invention of the commodity market, economic life revolved around bartering or producing for immediate consumption. Real objects like wool or food were exchanged for other real objects or were produced for immediate consumption according to need. The commodity introduces a strange factor into this equation because in the marketplace objects are exchanged for money. They are produced in order to be sold in the market. Their value is determined not by their purpose, or their ability to satisfy a need (i.e., their "use value"), but by their monetary value or "exchange value" (i.e., the price that they can be sold for). When we ask what something is worth, we are usually referring to its price.

This monetization of value is strange in the first place because the medium of money allows for incomparable, concrete things or use values to be quantified and compared. Twenty dollars will get you a chicken, a novel, or a hammer; these fundamentally different things all become equivalent. It is strange in the second place because the use of money to define the value of commodities makes the commodity appear to stand alone, as if its value was independent of the labour that produced it or the needs it was designed to satisfy. We see the object and imagine the qualities it will endow us with: a style, a fashionability, a personality type, or a tribal affiliation (e.g., PC people vs. Mac people). We do not recognize the labour and the social relationships of work that produced it, nor the social relationship that tie us to its producers when we purchase it. Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) called this phenomenon **commodity fetishism** (1867).

Figure 3.32. The Mac vs. PC ad campaign plays on the idea that the computer you purchase defines your style of life, or vice versa. In this way commodities and their branding strategies insinuate themselves into our self-definitions [Long Description] (Image courtesy of Jose Antonio Gelado/Flickr)

With the increased importance of maintaining high levels of commodity turn over and consumption that emerged with the system of late capitalism, commodity fetishism plays a powerful role in producing ever new wants and desires. **Consumerism** becomes a way of life. Consumerism refers to the way in which we define ourselves in terms of the commodities we purchase. To the degree that our identities become defined by the pattern of our consumer preferences, the commodity no longer exists to *serve* our needs but to *define* our needs. As Barbara Kruger put it, the motto of consumer culture is not "I think therefore I am" but "I shop therefore I am." Thinking is precisely what consumerism entices us *not* to do, except in so far as we calculate the prices of things.

3.5. Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

Music, fashion, technology, and values — all are products of culture. But what do they mean? How do sociologists perceive and interpret culture based on these material and nonmaterial items? Let's finish our analysis of culture by reviewing material and nonmaterial items in the context of three theoretical perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Functionalists view society as a system in which all parts work — or function — together to create society as a whole. In this way, societies need culture to exist. Cultural norms function to support the fluid operation of society, and cultural values guide people in making choices. Talcott Parsons (1902 – 1979) referred to the function of culture as "latent pattern maintenance" meaning that the cultural practices serve the function of maintaining social patterns of behaviour and facilitating orderly, non-disruptive change. Culture functions to ensure that a society remains stable.

By focusing on the function that culture plays in maintaining the stable equilibrium of society as a whole, functionalism can often provide interesting insights into cultural activities that seem irrational and bizarre on the surface. Bronislaw Malinowski (1884 – 1942) described the way that the Trobriand Islanders of New Guinea used magic at each stage of preparation for fishing (1925). From a rationalized, calculative point of view, magic ritual has nothing to do with the ability to catch fish. Fishing is a practical activity. However, as Malinowski pointed out, fishing for the Trobriand Islanders was also a risky and uncertain activity. It was dangerous; weather was unpredictable; the whereabouts of fish variable. Magic provided the fishermen with a sense of control over their

environment and a sense of confidence that enabled them to venture out into the dangerous waters day after day. Whether magic "worked" or not, it performed an important and rational function in the economic life of the Islanders. It provided a stable pattern of meaning that empowered the fishermen to risk their lives to bring back an essential food resource.

Functionalists argue that cultural practices play a similar role in modern societies. The game of hockey, for example, in which highly-skilled men and women chase a disk of rubber around a frozen sheet of ice, risking injury and expending energy for nonproductive purposes, is on the surface of it an irrational and crazy activity. Yet millions of people watch hockey; millions of dollars are spent on it; millions of people's identities are defined by their fandom; and millions of people's collective sense of self-worth can hang on the fortunes and failures of their favourite hockey teams. Hockey is both, practically speaking, useless and yet clearly a highly valued activity. Why? As Durkheim argued with respect to religious rituals, sports like hockey bring people together with a common purpose, we cheer for our team, celebrate a goal or a win and mourn a loss. Hockey provides the basis for group solidarity or a moral sense of group togetherness. Even alone in front of a TV we are not alone, we a fan. In a highly individualistic society, hockey functions to remind us that we are part of a larger group.

In addition, many people point to the latent functions of hockey. For those who play the game it is a source of exercise. As many Canadians know, it is often easier to get a good physical workout when you are chasing a puck or a hockey ball than it is to convince yourself to go jogging in the cold or to do another repetition down at the gym. We send our children to play hockey so that they have

an outlet for energies that might otherwise be directed to negative activities and it provides important lessons on the value of team play and practice. It is also a significant revenue generator and source of employment for not only the players and workers in the teams but for the servers in restaurants and pubs, the maintenance and custodial people in arenas, the hotel and the airline workers. More than just a game, indeed!

Figure 3.33. This statue of Superman stands in the centre of Metropolis, Illinois. His pedestal reads "Truth — Justice — The American Way." How would a functionalist interpret this statue? What does it reveal about the values of American culture? (Photo courtesy of David Wilson/Flickr)

Symbolic interactionism is a sociological perspective that is most concerned with the face-to-face interactions between members of society. Interactionists see culture as being created and maintained by the ways people interact and how individuals interpret each other's actions.

Proponents of this theory conceptualize human interactions as a continuous process of deriving meaning from both objects in the environment and the actions of others. This is where the term "symbolic" comes into play. Every object and action has a symbolic meaning, and language serves as a means for people to represent and communicate their interpretations of these meanings to others. Those who believe in symbolic interactionism perceive culture as highly dynamic and fluid, as it is dependent on how meaning is interpreted and how individuals interact when conveying these meanings.

A symbolic interactionist approach to fashion, for example, would emphasize that fashion is a language that we use to interpret who others are and communicate who we are. Clothing fashions in particular represent an extremely intricate language of interpersonal communication, as anyone who has gone shopping for clothes with a friend is well aware. What variables are involved in the question: "Does this look good on me?" Clothes are never simply "functional," because even the most functional and practical Mountain Equipment Co-op style clothing makes a statement about the wearer. Georg Simmel (1858-1918) noted that, while extremely transitory, the establishment of fashions always has to contend with two seemingly contradictory tendencies — the desire of individuals to fit in and conform to what is fashionable, and the desire of individuals to stand out as individuals (1904). Being fashionable involves a highly nuanced negotiation between these two poles.

Critical sociologists view social structure as inherently unequal and based on power differentials related to issues like class, gender, race, and age. For a critical sociologist, culture is not a unified tradition that is experienced the same way by all people in a society. The female genital

mutilation practiced by several social groups in Africa and Asia is a cultural practice that is rooted in gender inequality. It is an example of a cultural practice that reinforces and perpetuates inequalities and differences in power. Unlike the functionalists, who examine culture in terms of its function in social cohesion, or symbolic interactionists, who emphasize how people come to mutual understandings through cultural practices and interactions, critical sociologists examine how inequalities and power relationships are maintained by a culture's value system.

Figure 3.34. Women serving in the armed forces during World War I, including nurses, were the only women who were allowed to vote in federal elections. It was not until 1919 that the rest of women in Canada could vote federally. (Photo Courtesy of William Rider-Rider/Wikimedia Commons)

Some norms, formal and informal, are practiced at the expense of others. Following Confederation in 1867, women were not allowed to vote in federal elections in Canada until 1919, and it was not until 1940 that they could vote in provincial elections in Quebec. (Women property

owners had been able to vote prior to Confederation.) It was not until 1947 and 1948 that Canadians of Japanese, Chinese, and South Asian origins were permitted to vote. Aboriginal Canadians, who had been able to vote in some regions up until 1898, had their rights revoked and were not permitted to vote federally again until 1960. In each case of discrimination, it was the dominant culture's attitudes toward the subordinate groups that served as the rationale for refusing them the franchise. For example, in 1898 the Member of Parliament for Saint John argued that "Indians knew no more of politics 'than a child two years old'" (Elections Canada, 2014). Because of prevailing paternalistic and racist attitudes, it was argued that Aboriginal people would somehow be more susceptible to manipulation by politicians than other Canadians.

For all we use fashion as a source of messaging, do we think about the conditions under which it is produced? While our shopping habits send enormous wealth into the hands of fashion corporations and their owners, workers, often women and children toil for pennies in dangerous conditions. For many years even the biggest hockey stars were paid modestly with short careers and no pensions. While players created unions to get a bigger share of the financial rewards even today many careers end early, often with chronic injury and the wages are but a fraction of the larger riches of the sport. Feminist critical sociologists would note that "Canada's game" is dominated by white men and few woman can even manage to get a pay cheque as a player. Three are relatively few players of colour and those that have made it report facing racism from coaches, other players and fans alike. Hockey from this vantage reproduces economic, gender and racial inequality.

Culture as Source of Innovation and Constraint

Figure 3.35. This child's clothing may be culturally specific, but her facial expression is universal. (Photo courtesy of Beth Rankin/Flickr)

Culture in general is a site of two opposing tendencies: One is the way that cultures around the world lay down sets of rules or norms which constrain, restrict, habitualize and fix forms of life; the other is the way that cultures produce endlessly innovative and diverse solutions to problems like nutrition. Cultures both constrain and continually go beyond constraints.

While we may like to consider ourselves unique individuals, we must acknowledge the impact of culture; we inherit thought and language that shapes our perceptions and patterns our behaviour, including about issues of family and friends, and faith and politics. In this sense culture defines the normative patterns that constrain us to live according to the given rules. On the other hand, the incredible variety of ways of thinking, ways of being, and ways of orienting oneself on the Earth, which Wade Davis calls the ethnosphere, attests to the endlessly innovative responses to the human condition that culture

affords. Human possibilities are not determined by society or biology. Culture also reflects the imaginative capacity of human beings to go beyond what is given.

To an extent, culture is a social comfort. After all, sharing a similar culture with others is precisely what defines societies. Nations would not exist if people did not coexist culturally. There could be no societies if people did not share heritage and language, and civilization would cease to function if people did not agree to similar values and systems of social control. Culture is preserved through transmission from one generation to the next, but it also evolves through processes of innovation, discovery, and cultural diffusion. We may be restricted by the confines of our own culture, but also we have the ability to question values and make conscious decisions. No better evidence of this freedom exists than the amount of cultural diversity within our own society and around the world. The more we study another culture, the better we become at understanding our own.

Key Terms

androcentricism: A perspective in which male concerns, male attitudes, and male practices are presented as "normal" or define what is significant and valued in a culture.

beliefs: Tenets or convictions that people hold to be true.

commodity: An object, service, or good that has been produced for sale on the market.

commodity fetishism: Regarding commodities as objects with inherent qualities independent of the labour

that produced them or the needs they were designed to satisfy.

commodification: The process through which objects, services, or goods are turned into commodities.

consumerism: The tendency to define ourselves in terms of the commodities we purchase.

counterculture: A group that rejects and opposes society's widely accepted cultural patterns.

cultural imperialism: The deliberate imposition of one's own cultural values on another culture.

cultural relativism: The practice of assessing a culture by its own standards, and not in comparison to another culture.

cultural universals: Patterns or traits that are globally common to all societies.

culture: Shared beliefs, values, and practices.

culture lag: The gap of time between the introduction of material culture and nonmaterial culture's acceptance of it.

culture shock: An experience of personal disorientation when confronted with an unfamiliar way of life.

detournement: The conscious subversion of messages, signs, and symbols by altering them slightly.

diaspora: The dispersion of a people from their original homeland.

diffusion: The spread of material and nonmaterial culture from one culture to another.

discoveries: Things and ideas found from what already exists.

ethnocentrism: Evaluating another culture according to the standards of one's own culture.

folkways: Norms based on social preferences that direct appropriate behaviour in the day-to-day practices and expressions of a culture.

formal norms: Established, written rules.

geneticism: A form of biological determinism that suggests the qualities of human life are caused by genes.

globalization: The integration of international trade and finance markets.

high culture: Forms of cultural experience characterized by formal complexity, eternal values, or intrinsic authenticity.

hybridity: New forms of culture that arose from cross-cultural exchange in the aftermath of the colonial era.

ideal culture: The standards a society would like to embrace and live up to.

informal norms: Casual behaviours that are generally and widely conformed to.

innovation: New objects or ideas introduced to a culture for the first time.

invention: Combining pieces of existing reality into new forms.

iron cage: Max Weber's metaphor for the modern condition of life circumscribed by the demand for maximum efficiency.

language: A symbolic system of communication.

material culture: The objects or belongings of a group of people.

mores: Norms based on social requirements which are based on the moral views and principles of a group.

nonmaterial culture: The ideas, attitudes, and beliefs of a society.

norms: The visible and invisible rules of conduct through which societies are structured.

popular culture: Mainstream, widespread patterns among a society's population.

postmodern culture: The form of culture that comes after modern culture characterized by the playful mixture of forms and "incredulity towards metanarratives".

real culture: The way society really is; based on what actually occurs and exists.

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: The idea that people understand the world based on their form of language.

sanctions: A way to authorize or formally disapprove of certain behaviours.

social control: A way to encourage conformity to cultural norms.

society: The structure of a social group of people who interact within a definable territory and who share a culture.

socioeconomic formation: The concrete set of social structures that form around a specific mode of production or economic system.

subculture: A group that shares a specific identity apart from a society's majority, even as the members exist within a larger society.

symbol: Gestures or objects that have meanings associated with them that are recognized by people who share a culture.

taboos: Strong prohibitions based on deeply held sacred or moral beliefs.

values: A culture's standard for discerning desirable states in society (what is true, good, just, or beautiful).

Section Summary

3.1. What Is Culture?

Though "society" and "culture" are often used interchangeably, they have different meanings. A society is a group of people sharing a community and culture. Culture generally describes the shared behaviours and beliefs of these people, and includes material and nonmaterial elements. Our experience of cultural difference is influenced by our ethnocentrism and androcentrism.

3.2. Elements of Culture

A culture consists of many elements, such as the values and beliefs of its society. Culture is also governed by norms, including laws, mores, and folkways. The symbols and language of a society are key to developing and conveying culture.

3.3. Pop Culture, Subculture, and Cultural Change

Sociologists recognize high culture and popular culture within societies. Societies also comprise many subcultures—smaller groups that share an identity. Countercultures reject mainstream values and create their own cultural rules and norms. Through invention or discovery, cultures evolve via new ideas and new ways of thinking. In many modern cultures, the cornerstone of innovation is technology; the rapid growth of which can lead to cultural lag. Technology is also responsible for the spread of both material and nonmaterial culture that contributes to globalization.

3.5. Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

There are three major theoretical approaches toward the interpretation of culture. A functionalist perspective acknowledges that there are many parts of culture that work together as a system to fulfill society's needs. Functionalists view culture as a reflection of society's values. An interactionist is primarily interested in culture as experienced in the daily interactions between individuals and the symbols that make up a culture. Critical sociologists see culture as inherently unequal, based on factors like gender, class, race, and age. Various cultural and sociological occurrences can be explained by these theories; however, there is no one "right" view through which to understand culture.

Section Quiz

3.1. What Is Culture?

1. The terms __________________ and _______________ are often used interchangeably, but have nuances that differentiate them.

1. imperialism and relativism
2. culture and society
3. society and ethnocentrism
4. ethnocentrism and xenocentrism

2. The American flag is a material object that denotes the United States of America; however, there are certain connotations that many associate with the flag, like bravery and freedom. In this example, what are bravery and freedom?

1. symbols
2. language
3. material culture
4. nonmaterial culture

3. The belief that one's culture is inferior to another culture is called?

1. ethnocentrism
2. nationalism
3. xenocentrism
4. imperialism

4. Rodney and Elise are American students studying abroad in Italy. When they are introduced to their host families, the families kiss them on both cheeks. When Rodney's host brother introduces himself and kisses Rodney on both cheeks, Rodney pulls back in surprise. Where he is from, unless they are romantically involved, men do not kiss one another. This is an example of:

1. culture shock
2. imperialism
3. ethnocentrism
4. xenocentrism

5. Most cultures have been found to identify laughter as a sign of humour, joy, or pleasure. Likewise, most cultures recognize music in some form. Music and laughter are examples of:

1. relativism

2. ethnocentrism
3. xenocentrism
4. universalism

3.2. Elements of Culture

6. A nation's flag is:

1. a symbol
2. a value
3. a culture
4. a folkway

7. The existence of social norms, both formal and informal, is one of the main things that inform ____________, otherwise known as a way to encourage social conformity.

1. values
2. sanctions
3. social control
4. mores

8. The biggest difference between mores and folkways is that:

1. mores are primarily linked to morality, whereas folkways are primarily linked to being commonplace within a culture
2. mores are absolute, whereas folkways are temporary
3. mores refer to material culture, whereas folkways refer to nonmaterial culture

4. mores refer to nonmaterial culture, whereas folkways refer to material culture

9. The notion that people cannot feel or experience something that they do not have a word for can be explained by:

1. linguistics
2. Sapir-Whorf
3. ethnographic imagery
4. bilingualism

10. Cultural sanctions can also be viewed as ways that society:

1. establishes leaders
2. determines language
3. regulates behaviour
4. determines laws

3.3. Pop Culture, Subculture, and Cultural Change
11. An example of high culture is ____________, whereas an example of popular culture would be _____________.

1. Dostoevsky style in film; *American Idol* winners
2. medical marijuana; film noir
3. country music; pop music
4. political theory; sociological theory

12. The Ku Klux Klan is an example of what part of culture?

1. Counterculture
2. Subculture
3. Multiculturalism
4. Afrocentricity

13. Modern-day hipsters are an example of:

1. ethnocentricity
2. counterculture
3. subculture
4. high culture

14. Your 83-year-old grandmother has been using a computer for some time now. As a way to keep in touch, you frequently send emails of a few lines to let her know about your day. She calls after every email to respond point by point, but she has never emailed a response back. This can be viewed as an example of:

1. cultural lag
2. innovation
3. ethnocentricity
4. xenophobia

15. Some jobs today advertise in multinational markets and permit telecommuting in lieu of working from a primary location. This broadening of the job market and the way that jobs are performed can be attributed to:

1. cultural lag
2. innovation
3. discovery

4. globalization

16. The major difference between invention and discovery is:

1. invention is based on technology, whereas discovery is usually based on culture
2. discovery involves finding something that already exists, but invention puts things together in a new way
3. invention refers to material culture, whereas discovery can be material or theoretic, like laws of physics
4. invention is typically used to refer to international objects, whereas discovery refers to that which is local to one's culture

17. That McDonald's is found in almost every country around the world is an example of:

1. globalization
2. diffusion
3. culture lag
4. xenocentrism

3.5. Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

18. A sociologist conducts research into the ways that Hispanic American students are historically underprivileged in the American education system. What theoretical approach is the sociologist using?

1. symbolic interactionism
2. functionalism

3. conflict theory
4. ethnocentrism

19. The Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011 grew to be an international movement. Supporters believe that the economic disparity between the highest economic class and the mid to lower economic classes is growing at an exponentially alarming rate. A sociologist who studies that movement by examining the interactions between members at Occupy camps would most likely use what theoretical approach?

1. symbolic interactionism
2. functionalism
3. conflict theory
4. ethnocentrism

20. What theoretical perspective views society as having a system of interdependent inherently connected parts?

1. sociobiology
2. functionalism
3. conflict theory
4. ethnocentrism

21. The “American Dream”—the notion that anybody can be successful and rich if they work hard enough—is most commonly associated with which sociological theory?

1. sociobiology
2. functionalism
3. conflict theory

4. ethnocentrism

[Quiz answers at end of chapter]

Short Answer

3.1. What Is Culture?

1. Examine the difference between material and nonmaterial culture in your world. Identify ten objects that are part of your regular cultural experience. For each, then identify what aspects of nonmaterial culture (values and beliefs) that these objects represent. What has this exercise revealed to you about your culture?
2. Do you feel that feelings of ethnocentricity or xenocentricity are more prevalent in U.S. culture? Why do you believe this? What issues or events might inform this?

3.2. Elements of Culture

1. What do you think of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis? Do you agree or disagree with it? Cite examples or research to support your point of view.
2. How do you think your culture would exist if there were no such thing as a social "norm"? Do you think chaos would ensue or relative peace could be kept? Explain.

3.3. Pop Culture, Subculture, and Cultural Change

1. Identify several examples of popular culture and describe how they inform larger culture. How prevalent is the effect of these examples in your everyday life?
2. Consider some of the specific issues or concerns of your generation. Are any ideas countercultural? What subcultures have emerged from your generation? How have the issues of your generation expressed themselves culturally? How has your generation made its mark on society's collective culture?
3. What are some examples of cultural lag that are present in your life? Do you think technology affects culture positively or negatively? Explain.

3.5. Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

1. Consider a current social trend that you have witnessed, perhaps situated around family, education, transportation, or finances. For example, many veterans of the Armed Forces, after completing tours of duty in the Middle East, are returning to college rather than entering jobs as veterans as previous generations did. Choose a sociological approach—functionalism, conflict theory, or symbolic interactionism—to describe, explain, and analyze the social issue you choose. Afterwards, determine why you chose the approach you did. Does it suit your own way of thinking? Or did it offer the best method to illuminate the social issue?

Further Research

3.1. What Is Culture?

In January 2011, a study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America presented evidence indicating that the hormone oxytocin could regulate and manage instances of ethnocentrism. [PDF]: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/oxytocin

3.2. Elements of Culture

The science-fiction novel, *Babel-17*, by Samuel R. Delaney was based upon the principles of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Read an excerpt from *Babel-17*: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Babel-17

3.3. Pop Culture, Subculture, and Cultural Change

The Beats were a counterculture that birthed an entire movement of art, music, and literature—much of which is still highly regarded and studied today. The man responsible for naming the generation was Jack Kerouac; however, the man responsible for introducing the world to that generation was John Clellon Holmes, a writer often lumped in with the group. In 1952 he penned an article for the *New York Times Magazine* titled "This Is the Beat Generation." Read that article and learn more about Clellon Holmes and the Beats: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/The-Beats

Popular culture meets counterculture as Oprah Winfrey interacts with members of the Yearning for Zion cult.: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Oprah

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Solutions to Section Quiz

1 B, | 2 D, | 3 C, | 4 A, | 5 D, | 6 A, | 7 C, | 8 A, | 9 B, | 10 C, | 11 A, | 12 A, | 13 C, | 14 A, | 15 D, | 16 B, | 17 B, | 18 C, | 19 A, | 20 B, | 21 C, [Return to Quiz]

Image Attributions

Figure 3.3. Ruth Benedict (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ruth_Benedict.jpg) is in the public domain (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Public_domain#Material_in_the_public_domain)

Figure 3.7. Multilingual City by Michael Gil (http://www.flickr.com/photos/13907834@N00/4414065031) used under CC-BY 2.0 license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

Figure 3.13. Canadian nurses voting 1917 by William Rider-Rider (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Canadian_nurses_voting_1917.jpg) is in public domain

Long Descriptions

Figure 3.25 Long description: A young woman leans against an old-style blue bike. She wears bright clothes, large glasses, knee high socks and an owl backpack." [Return to Figure 3.25]

Figure 3.27 Long description: Betty the Beatnik with a collection of fashion choices including black, long sleeve shirts and turtlenecks, black pants, and long black dresses. [Return to Figure 3.27]

Figure 3.32 Long description: One man in an ill-fitting suit holds a sign ductaped together that says, "cobble, together, assorted software, to do music, movies and websites.'; The other man is dressed casually and holds a simple sign that says, "I come with iLife." [Return to Figure 3.32]

Chapter 4. Socialization

Figure 5.1. Socialization is how we learn the norms and beliefs of our society. From our earliest family and play experiences, we are made aware of societal values and expectations. (Photo courtesy of Seattle Municipal Archives/Flickr)

Learning Objectives

5.1. Theories of Self Development

- Describe the self as a social structure.
- Explain the four stages of role development in child socialization.
- Analyze the formation of a gender schema in the socialization of gender roles.

5.2. Why Socialization Matters

- Analyze the importance of socialization for individuals and society.
- Explain the nature versus nurture debate.
- Describe both the conformity of behaviour in society and the existence of individual uniqueness.

5.3. Agents of Socialization

- Learn the roles of families and peer groups in socialization.
- Understand how we are socialized through formal institutions like schools, workplaces, and the government.

5.4. Socialization Across the Life Course

- Explain how people are socialized into new roles at age-related transition points.
- Describe when and how resocialization occurs.

Introduction to Socialization

Figure 5.2. Victor, the wild boy or "feral child" of Aveyron, France grew up alone in the woods until age 12. He was only able to learn rudimentary language and social skills. Victor was the subject of the Francois Truffault film L'Enfant Sauvage (1970). (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

In the summer of 2005, police detective Mark Holste followed an investigator from the Department of Children and Families to a home in Plant City, Florida. They were there to look into a statement from the neighbour concerning a shabby house on Old Sydney Road. A small girl was reported peering from one of its broken windows. This seemed odd because no one in the neighbourhood had seen a young child in or around the home, which had

been inhabited for the past three years by a woman, her boyfriend, and two adult sons.

Who Was the Mysterious Girl in the Window?

Entering the house, Detective Holste and his team were shocked. It was the worst mess they had ever seen: infested with cockroaches, smeared with feces and urine from both people and pets, and filled with dilapidated furniture and ragged window coverings.

Detective Holste headed down a hallway and entered a small room. That is where he found a little girl with big, vacant eyes staring into the darkness. A newspaper report later described the detective's first encounter with the child:

> She lay on a torn, moldy mattress on the floor. She was curled on her side … her ribs and collarbone jutted out … her black hair was matted, crawling with lice. Insect bites, rashes and sores pocked her skin…. She was naked — except for a swollen diaper.… Her name, her mother said, was Danielle. She was almost seven years old. (DeGregory, 2008)

Detective Holste immediately carried Danielle out of the home. She was taken to a hospital for medical treatment and evaluation. Through extensive testing, doctors determined that, although she was severely malnourished, Danielle was able to see, hear, and vocalize normally. Still, she would not look anyone in the eyes, did not know how to chew or swallow solid food, did not cry, did not respond to stimuli that would typically cause pain, and did not know how to communicate either with words or simple gestures such as nodding "yes" or "no." Likewise, although tests showed she had no chronic diseases or genetic abnormalities, the only way she could stand was with

someone holding onto her hands, and she "walked sideways on her toes, like a crab" (DeGregory, 2008).

What had happened to Danielle? Put simply: beyond the basic requirements for survival, she had been neglected. Based on their investigation, social workers concluded that she had been left almost entirely alone in rooms like the one where she was found. Without regular interaction—the holding, hugging, talking, the explanations and demonstrations given to most young children—she had not learned to walk or to speak, to eat or to interact, to play or even to understand the world around her. From a sociological point of view, Danielle had not had been socialized.

Socialization is the process through which people are taught to be proficient members of a society. It describes the ways that people come to understand societal norms and expectations, to accept society's beliefs, and to be aware of societal values. It also describes the way people come to be aware of themselves and to reflect on the suitability of their behaviour in their interactions with others. Socialization occurs as people engage and disengage in a series of roles throughout life. Each **role**, like the role of son or daughter, student, friend, employee, etc., is defined by the behaviour expected of a person who occupies a particular position.

Socialization is not the same as socializing (interacting with others, like family, friends, and coworkers); to be precise, it is a sociological process that occurs through socializing. As Danielle's story illustrates, even the most basic of human activities are learned. You may be surprised to know that even physical tasks like sitting, standing, and walking had not automatically developed for Danielle as she grew. Without socialization, Danielle had not learned about the material culture of her society (the tangible

objects a culture uses): For example, she could not hold a spoon, bounce a ball, or use a chair for sitting. She also had not learned its nonmaterial culture, such as its beliefs, values, and norms. She had no understanding of the concept of family, did not know cultural expectations for using a bathroom for elimination, and had no sense of modesty. Most importantly, she hadn't learned to use the symbols that make up language—through which we learn about who we are, how we fit with other people, and the natural and social worlds in which we live.

In the following sections, we will examine the importance of the complex process of socialization and learn how it takes place through interaction with many individuals, groups, and social institutions. We will explore how socialization is not only critical to children as they develop, but how it is a lifelong process through which we become prepared for new social environments and expectations in every stage of our lives. But first, we will turn to scholarship about self development, the process of coming to recognize a sense of a "self" that is then able to be socialized.

5.1. Theories of Self Development

Danielle's case underlines an important point that sociologists make about socialization, namely that the human **self** does not emerge "naturally" as a process driven by biological mechanisms. What is a self? What does it mean to have a self? The self refers to a person's distinct sense of identity. It is who we are for ourselves and who we are for others. It has consistency and continuity through time and a coherence that distinguishes us as persons. However, there is something always precarious and incomplete about the self. Selves change through the

different stages of life; sometimes they do not measure up to the ideals we hold for ourselves or others, and sometimes they can be wounded by our interactions with others or thrown into crisis. It is clear, however, that the self does not develop in the absence of socialization. The self is a social product.

Figure 5.3. "What iss he, my preciouss?" Gollum in The Hobbit lived in isolation under the Misty Mountains for 500 years. To the degree that he had a coherent self, it was because he still had a robust and ongoing internalized conversation with the ring of power, his "precious." (Image courtesy of Brenda Clarke/Flickr)

Even when the self is alone for extended periods of time (hermits, prisoners in isolation, etc.), an internal conversation goes on that would not be possible if the

individual had not been socialized already. The examples of feral children like Victor of Aveyron or children like Danielle who have been raised under conditions of extreme social deprivation attest to the difficulties these individuals confront when trying to develop this reflexive quality of humanity. They often cannot use language, form intimate relationships, or play games. So socialization is not simply the process through which people learn the norms and rules of a society, it also is the process by which people become aware of themselves as they interact with others. It is the process through which people are able to become people in the first place.

Theories of Self Development

When we are born, we have a genetic makeup and biological traits. However, who we are as human beings develops through social interaction. Many scholars, both in the fields of psychology and sociology, have described the process of self development as a precursor to understanding how that "self" becomes socialized.

Making Connections: Sociological Concepts

Sociology or Psychology: What's the Difference?

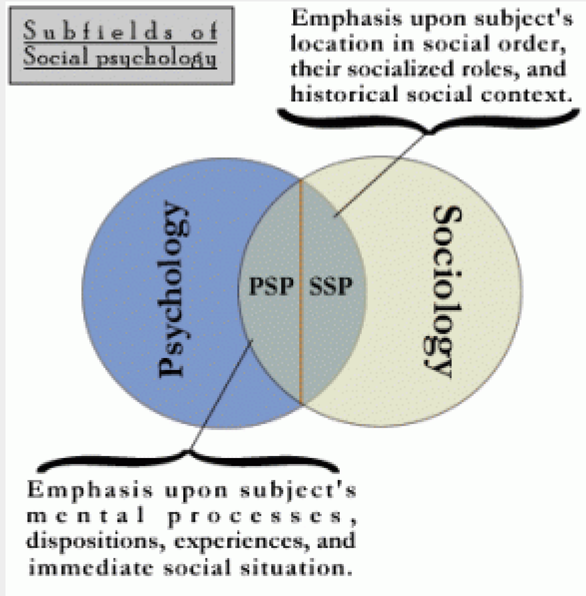

Figure 5.6. Social psychology (SP): The overlap between sociological social psychology (SSP) and psychological social psychology (PSP) [Long Description] (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

You might be wondering: If sociologists and psychologists are both interested in people and their behaviour, how are these two disciplines different? What do they agree on, and where do their ideas diverge? The answers are complicated, but the distinction is important to scholars in both fields.As

a general difference, we might say that while both disciplines are interested in human behaviour, psychologists are focused on how the mind influences that behaviour, while sociologists study the role of society in shaping both behaviour and the mind. Psychologists are interested in people's mental development and how their minds process their world. Sociologists are more likely to focus on how different aspects of society contribute to an individual's relationship with the world. Another way to think of the difference is that psychologists tend to look inward to qualities of individuals (mental health, emotional processes, cognitive processing), while sociologists tend to look outward to qualities of social context (social institutions, cultural norms, interactions with others) to understand human behaviour.Émile Durkheim (1958–1917) was the first to make this distinction in research, when he attributed differences in suicide rates among people to social causes (religious differences) rather than to psychological causes (like their mental well-being) (Durkheim, 1897). Today, we see this same distinction. For example, a sociologist studying how a couple gets to the point of their first kiss on a date might focus her research on cultural norms for dating, social patterns of romantic activity in history, or the influence of social background on romantic partner selection. How is this process different for seniors than for teens, for example? A psychologist would more likely be interested in the person's romantic history, psychological type, or the mental processing of sexual desire.The point that sociologists like

Durkheim would make is that an analysis of individuals at the psychological level cannot adequately account for social variability of behaviours, for example, the difference in suicide rates of Catholics and Protestants, or the difference in dating scripts across cultures or historical periods. Sometimes sociology and psychology can combine in interesting ways, however. Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979) argued that the neurotic personality was a product of an earlier Protestant ethic style of competitive capitalism; whereas, late postindustrial consumer capitalism is conducive to narcissistic personality structures (the "me" society).

Charles Horton Cooley

Figure 5.7. Do contemporary social media like Facebook present a new mode of "looking glass self" today? [Long Description] (Image courtesy of Joelle L/Fickr)

One of the pioneering contributors to sociological perspectives on self-development was the American Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929). Cooley asserted that people's self understanding is constructed, in part, by their perception of how others view them — a process termed "the **looking glass self**" (Cooley, 1902). According to Cooley, our sense of self is based on what we think other people see (1902). We imagine how we must appear to others, then react to this speculation. We don don certain clothes, prepare our hair in a particular manner, wear makeup, use cologne, and the like — all with the notion that our presentation of ourselves is going to affect how others perceive us. We expect a certain reaction, and, if

lucky, we get the one we desire and feel good about it. In Cooley's words, "the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgement of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification" (Cooley, 1902).

Here, the self or "self idea" is thoroughly social. It is not an expression of the internal essence of the individual, or of the individual's unique psychology which emerges as the individual matures. While early experiences might have particular significance our 'self' is an ongoing construction, profoundly shaped by our interaction with those around us as we take on, and leave behind particular social roles. The case of Danielle, for example, illustrates what happens when social interaction is absent from early experience: She had no ability to see herself as others would see her. From Cooley's point of view, she had no "self." Without others, or without society, the self cannot exist.

George Herbert Mead

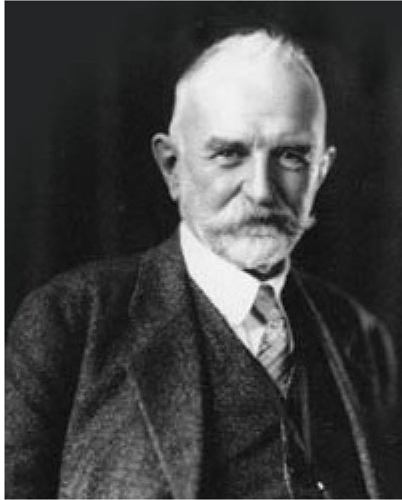

Figure 5.8. George Herbert Mead, along with Cooley, is considered the founder of the symbolic interactionist tradition in sociology (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Later, George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) advanced a more detailed sociological approach to the self. He agreed that the self, as a person's distinct identity, is only developed through social interaction: "[I]t is impossible to conceive of a self arising outside of social experience" (Mead, 1934). However, Mead broke the self down into two components or "phases," the "**I**" and the "**me**." The "me" represents the part of the self in which one recognizes the "organized sets of attitudes" of others toward the self. It is who we are in other's eyes: our roles, our "personalities," our public personas. The "I," on the other hand, represents the part of the self that acts on its own initiative or responds to the organized attitudes of others. It is the novel, spontaneous,

unpredictable part of the self: the part of the self that embodies the possibility of change or undetermined action. The self is always caught up in a *social* process in which one flips back and forth between two distinguishable phases, the I and the me, as one mediates between one's own individual actions and individual responses to various social situations and the attitudes of the community. While the self is dependent on our interaction with others, we are not mere reflections of our social world. This flipping back and forth is the condition of our being able to be social.

How do we get from being newborns to being humans with "selves"? In Mead's theory of childhood development, the child develops through stages in which the child's increasing ability to play roles attests to his or her increasing solidification of a social sense of self. Mead developed a specifically sociological theory of the path of development that all people go through by focusing on the developing capacity to put oneself in the place of another, or *role play*: the **four stages of child socialization**.

Four Stages of Child Socialization

During the **preparatory stage**, children are only capable of imitation: They have no ability to imagine how others see things. They copy the actions of people with whom they regularly interact, such as their mothers and fathers. A child's baby talk is a reflection of its inability to make an object of him- or herself. The separation of I and me does not yet exist in an organized manner to enable the child to relate to him- or herself.

This is followed by the **play stage**, during which children begin to imitate and take on roles that another person might have. Thus, children might try on a parent's point of view by acting out "grownup" behaviour, like

playing dress up and acting out the mom role, or talking on a toy cell phone the way they see their father do.

> He plays that he is, for instance, offering himself something, and he buys it; he gives a letter to himself and takes it away; he addresses himself as a parent, as a teacher; he arrests himself as a policeman…. The child says something in one character and responds in another character, and then his responding in another character is a stimulus to himself in the first character, and so the conversation goes on. (Mead, 1934)

However, children are still not able to take on roles in a consistent and coherent manner. Role play is very fluid and transitory, and children flip in and out of roles easily. They "pass[..] from one role to another just as a whim takes [them]" (Mead, 1934).

During the **game stage**, children learn to consider several specific roles at the same time and how those roles interact with each other. They learn to understand interactions involving different people with a variety of purposes. They understand that role play in each situation involves following a consistent set of rules and expectations. For example, a child at this stage is likely to be aware of the different responsibilities of people in a restaurant who together make for a smooth dining experience: someone seats you, another takes your order, someone else cooks the food, while yet another person clears away dirty dishes, etc.

Figure 5.9. In the game of baseball each player "must know what everyone else is going to do in order to carry out his [or her] own play" (Mead, 1934). (Image courtesy of Public Affairs Office Fort Wainwright/Flickr).

Mead uses the example of a baseball game. At one point in learning to play baseball, children do not get it that when they hit the ball they need to run, or that after their turn someone else gets a turn to bat. In order for baseball to work, the players not only have to know what the rules of the game are, and what their specific role in the game is (batter, catcher, first base, etc.), but know simultaneously the role of every other player on the field. They have to see the game from the perspective of others. Finally, children develop, understand, and learn the idea of the **generalized other**, the common behavioural expectations of general society. By this stage of development, an individual is able to internalize how he or she is viewed, not simply from the perspective of several specific others, but from the perspective of the generalized other or "organized community."

The Socialization of Gender

Figure 5.10. Royal Style Cinderella Disney Princess (Image courtesy of Mike Mozart/Flickr)

How do girls and boys learn different gender roles? Gender differences in the ways boys and girls play and interact develop from a very early age, sometimes despite the efforts of parents to raise them in a gender neutral way. Little boys seem inevitably to enjoy running around playing with guns and projectiles, while little girls like to study the effects of different costumes on toy dolls. Peggy Orenstein (2012) describes how her two-year-old daughter happily wore her engineer outfit and took her Thomas the Tank Engine lunchbox to the first day of preschool. It only took one little boy to say to her that "*girls* don't like trains!" for her to ditch Thomas and move on to more gender "appropriate" concerns like princesses.

What is most interesting for sociologists is that the gender schemas of young children develop with respect to external cultural signs of gender rather than biological markers of genital differences. Sandra Bem (1989) showed

young children photos of either a naked child or a child dressed in boys or girls clothing. The younger children had difficulty classifying the naked photos but could classify the clothed photos. They did not have an understanding of biological sex constancy — i.e. the ability to determine sex based on anatomy regardless of gender signs — but used cultural signs of gender like clothing or hair style to determine gender. Moreover, it was the gender schema and not the recognition of anatomical differences that first determined their choice of gender-typed toys and gender-typed play groups. Bem suggested that "children who can label the sexes but do not understand anatomical stability are not yet confident that they will always remain in one gender group" (1989).

If gender preferences are not inborn or biologically hard-wired, how do sociologists explain them? As the Thomas the Tank Engine example suggests, **doing gender** — performing tasks based upon the gender assigned by society — is learned through interaction with others in much the same way that Mead and Cooley described for socialization in general. Children learn gender through direct feedback from others, particularly when they are censured for violating gender norms. Gender is in this sense an *accomplishment* rather than an innate trait.

From a very early age children develop a **gender schema**, a rudimentary image of gender differences, that enables them to make decisions about appropriate styles of play and behaviour (Fagot & Leinbach, 1989). As they integrate their sense of self into this developing schema, they gradually adopt consistent and stable gender roles. Consistency and stability do not mean that the gender roles that are learned are permanent, however, as would be suggested by a biological or hard-wired model of gender. Physical expressions of gender such as "throwing like a

girl" can be transformed into a new stable gender schema when the little girl joins a softball league.

Fagot and Leinbach's (1986, 1989) research into the development of gender schemas showed that very young children, averaging about two years old, could not correctly classify photographs of adults and children by their gender; whereas, slightly older children, averaging 2.5 years old, could. They concluded that the younger children had not yet developed a gender schema. They also observed that the older children who could correctly classify the photos by gender demonstrated gender specific play; they tended to choose same-gender play groups and girls were less aggressive in their play. The older children were integrating their sense of self into their gender schemas and behaving accordingly.

It is however, what happened between these early years where children did not have a clear gender schema and later when this became well imbedded in their sense of self. When the researchers studied children at home, they found that children at age 1.5 could not assign gender to photographs correctly and did not engage in gender-typed play. However, by age 2.25 years about half of the children could classify the photos and were engaging in gender specific play. These "early labellers" were distinguished from those who could not classify photos by the way their parents interacted with them. Parents of early adopters were more likely to 'teach this schema through positive and negative responses to gender-typed toy play. This is what we mean that we do gender and that gender itself is an accomplishment. The teaching of gender happens through interaction and gender for very young children is a mysterious new role. As children start to learn about gender from parents and others, like any of us when taking on role that we are unfamiliar with, they make mistakes.

What matters most however is how others react. Subtle positive reinforcements, “you like that blue shirt don’t you”, and negative reinforcements, “bows are for girls” send messages about what a good performance is for ourselves and others. By a very early age we are well versed in this schema and these roles — we have become a girl or boy.

Of course, we know that in much of the world, through history and increasingly in this society, gender has not been understood in such a binary. This is what is meant when sociologists, historians and anthropologists speak of the social construction of gender, a subject we will learn more about in our chapter on sex, gender and sexuality.

Making Connections: Sociology in the Real World

What a Pretty Little Lady!

Figure 5.11. Peggy Orenstein on "princess culture": "Within a month [of starting preschool], Daisy threw a tantrum when I tried to wrestle her into pants. As if by osmosis she had learned the names and gown colors of every Disney Princess — I didn't even know what a Disney Princess was. She gazed longingly into the tulle-draped windows of the local toy stores and for her third birthday begged for a "real princess dress" with matching plastic high heels" (Orenstein, 2012). (Image courtesy of Dave Jacquin/Flickr)

"What a cute dress!" "I like the ribbons in your hair." "Wow, you look so pretty today." According to Lisa Bloom, author of *Think: Straight Talk for Women to Stay Smart in a Dumbed Down World*, most of us use pleasantries like these when we first meet little girls. "So what?" you might ask. Bloom

asserts that we are too focused on the appearance of young girls, and as a result our society is socializing them to believe that how they look is of vital importance. Bloom may be on to something. How often do you tell a little boy how attractive his outfit is, how nice looking his shoes are, or how handsome he looks today? To support her assertions, Bloom cites, as one example, that about 50 percent of girls ages three to six worry about being fat (Bloom, 2011). We're talking about kindergarteners who are concerned about their body image. Sociologists are acutely interested in of this type of gender socialization, where societal expectations of how boys and girls should *be* — how they should behave, what toys and colours they should like, and how important their attire is — are reinforced. One solution to this type of gender socialization is being experimented with at the Egalia preschool in Sweden, where children develop in a genderless environment. All of the children at Egalia are referred to with neutral terms like "friend" instead of he or she. Play areas and toys are consciously set up to eliminate any reinforcement of gender expectations (Haney, 2011). Egalia strives to eliminate all societal gender norms from these children's preschool world. Extreme? Perhaps. So what is the middle ground? Bloom suggests that we start with simple steps: When introduced to a young girl, ask about her favourite book or what she likes. In short, engage her mind not her outward appearance (Bloom, 2011).

5.2. Theoretical Questions and Why Socialization

Matters

Socialization is critical both to individuals and to the societies in which they live. It illustrates how completely intertwined human beings and their social worlds are. First, it is through teaching culture to new members that a society perpetuates itself. If new generations of a society do not learn its way of life, it ceases to exist. Whatever is distinctive about a culture must be transmitted to those who join it in order for a society to survive and it is socialization that is central to this.

Figure 5.12. Socialization teaches us our society's expectations for dining out. The manners and customs of different cultures (When can you use your hands to eat? How should you compliment the cook? Who is the "head" of the table?) are learned through socialization. (Photo courtesy of Niyam Bhushan/Flickr)

Socialization is just as essential to us as individuals. Social interaction provides the means via which we gradually become able to see ourselves through the eyes of others, learning who we are and how we fit into the world around

us. In addition, to function successfully in society, we have to learn the basics of both material and nonmaterial culture, everything from how to dress ourselves to what is suitable attire for a specific occasion; from when we sleep to what we sleep on; and from what is considered appropriate to eat for dinner to how to use the stove to prepare it. Most importantly, we have to learn language — whether it is the dominant language or one common in a subculture, whether it is verbal or through signs — in order to communicate and to think. As we saw with Danielle, without socialization we literally have no self. We are unable to function socially.

Nature *versus* Nurture or Nature *and* Nurture

Some experts assert that who we are is a result of **nurture** — the relationships and caring that surround us. Others argue that who we are is based entirely in genetics. According to this belief, our temperaments, interests, and talents are set before birth. From this perspective, then, who we are depends on **nature**.

Figure 5.13. Identical twins may look alike, but their differences can give us clues to the effects of socialization. (Photo courtesy of D. Flam/Flickr)

One way that researchers attempt to prove the impact of nature is by studying twins. Some studies followed identical twins who were raised separately. The pairs shared the same genetics, but, in some cases, were socialized in different ways. Instances of this type of situation are rare, but studying the degree to which identical twins raised apart are the same or different can give researchers insight into how our temperaments, preferences, and abilities are shaped by our genetic makeup versus our social environment.For example, in 1968, twin girls born to a mentally ill mother were put up for adoption.

However, they were also separated from each other and raised in different households. The parents, and certainly the babies, did not realize they were one of five pairs of twins who were made subjects of a scientific study (Flam, 2007).

In 2003, the two women, by then age 35, were reunited. Elyse Schein and Paula Bernstein sat together in awe, feeling like they were looking into a mirror. Not only did they look alike, but they behaved alike, using the same hand gestures and facial expressions (Spratling, 2007). Studies like this point to the genetic roots of our temperament and behaviour.

On the other hand, studies of identical twins have difficulty accounting for divergences in the development of inherited diseases. In the case of schizophrenia, epidemiological studies show that there is a strong biological component to the disease. The closer our familial connection to someone with the condition, the more likely we will develop it. However, even if our identical twin develops schizophrenia we are less than 50 percent likely to develop it ourselves. Why is it not 100 percent likely? What occurs to produce the divergence between genetically identical twins (Carey, 2012)? The growing field of epigenetics reveals that the expression of our genetic inheritance depends much more than we have thought on environmental conditions.

In the end, however, as we noted in Ch.3, sociologists generally consider this a false debate. It is possible to acknowledge that humans are biological creatures with genetic predispositions and biological needs *and* to recognize that human behaviour is much, much more than this. The huge variations in human cultures that the anthropological record reveals that our socio-cultural environment has a significant impact. Whatever the

similarities based in shared genetics, the lives of Elyse and Paula were each profoundly marked by their social environments. The life chances of these women and their very sense of self can only be fully understood by examining their social class, the gender expectations of their society and their interaction with parents, peers, co-workers … and each other. Whatever the role of genes or biology in our lives, genes are never expressed in a vacuum. Environmental influence always matters.

Making Connections: Case Study

The Life of Chris Langan, the Smartest Man You've Never Heard Of

Figure 5.14. Christopher Michael Langan (left), stands with a relative during the 1950's, in San Francisco, CA. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Bouncer. Firefighter. Factory worker. Cowboy. Chris Langan (b. 1952) has spent the majority of his adult life just getting by with jobs like these. He has no college degree, few resources, and a past filled with much disappointment. Chris Langan also has an IQ of over 195, nearly 100 points higher than the average person (Brabham, 2001). So why didn't Chris become a neurosurgeon, professor, or aeronautical engineer? According to Macolm Gladwell in his book *Outliers: The Story of Success* (2008), Chris didn't possess the set of social skills necessary to succeed on such a high level — skills that aren't innate, but learned.Gladwell looked to a recent study conducted by sociologist Annette Lareau in which she closely shadowed 12 families from various economic backgrounds and examined their parenting techniques. Parents from lower-income families followed a strategy of "accomplishment of natural growth," which is to say they let their children develop on their own with a large amount of independence; parents from higher-income families, however, "actively fostered and accessed a child's talents, opinions, and skills" (Gladwell, 2008). These parents were more likely to engage in analytical conversation, encourage active questioning of the establishment, and foster development of negotiation skills. The parents were also able to introduce their children to a wide range of activities, from sports to music to accelerated academic programs. When one middle class child was denied entry to a gifted and talented program, the mother petitioned the school and arranged additional testing until her daughter was admitted.

Lower-income parents, however, were more likely to unquestioningly obey authorities such as school boards. Their children were not being socialized to comfortably confront the system and speak up (Gladwell, 2008).

What does this have to do with Chris Langan, deemed by some as the smartest man in the world (Brabham, 2001)? Chris was born in severe poverty, and he was moved across the country with an abusive and alcoholic stepfather. Chris's genius went greatly unnoticed. After accepting a full scholarship to Reed College, his funding was revoked after his mother failed to fill out necessary paperwork. Unable to successfully make his case to the administration, Chris, who had received straight A's the previous semester, was given F's on his transcript and forced to drop out. After enrolling in Montana State University, an administrator's refusal to rearrange his class schedule left him unable to find the means necessary to travel the 16 miles to attend classes. What Chris has in brilliance, he lacks in practical intelligence, or what psychologist Robert Sternberg defines as "knowing what to say to whom, knowing when to say it, and knowing how to say it for maximum effect" (Sternberg et al., 2000). Such knowledge was never part of his socialization.

Chris gave up on school and began working an array of blue-collar jobs, pursuing his intellectual interests on the side. Though he's recently garnered attention from work on his "Cognitive Theoretic

> Model of the Universe," he remains weary and resistant of the educational system.
>
> As Gladwell concluded, "He'd had to make his way alone, and no one—not rock stars, not professional athletes, not software billionaires, and not even geniuses—ever makes it alone" (2008).

Individual and Society

How do sociologists explain both the conformity of behaviour in society and the existence of individual uniqueness? The concept of socialization raises a classic problem of sociological analysis: the problem of agency. How is it possible for there to be individual differences, individual choice, or individuality at all if human development is about assuming socially defined roles? Since Western society places such value on individuality, in being oneself or in resisting peer pressure and other pressures to conform, the question of where society ends and where the individual begins often is foremost in the minds of students of sociology. Numerous debates in the discipline focus on this question.

However, from the point of view emphasized in this chapter, it is a false question. As noted previously, for Mead the individual "agent" already is a "social structure." No separation exists between the individual and society; the individual is thoroughly social from the inside out and vice versa. This in no way entails individuals in any society are homogenous. Sociologists argue that individuals vary because the social environments to which

they adapt vary. No two individuals have experienced exactly the same set of interactions in the same social and environmental context. Children gradually develop stable and consistent orientations to world, each to some degree unique because each is formed from the vantage point unique to the place in society the child occupies. Individual variation and individual agency are possible because society itself varies in each social situation. Indeed, the configuration of society itself differs according to each individual's contribution to each social situation.

Theoretical Perspectives on Socialization

Sociologists all recognize the importance of socialization for healthy individual and societal development. But how do scholars working in the three major theoretical paradigms approach this topic? Structural functionalists would say that socialization is essential to society, both because it trains members to operate successfully within it and because it perpetuates culture by transmitting it to new generations. Every society has social roles that need to be fulfilled and to do so successfully individuals need to 'learn' the expected behaviours, skills and attitudes.

A critical sociologist might argue that the norms and behaviours that socialization teaches us are those that benefit the dominant groups in society. In capitalist societies socialization instills values of individuality, hard work, 'survival of the fittest' and self-reliance rather than cooperation and social responsibility. We learn to blame the poor for their situation and to celebrate the success of billionaires. Socialization reproduces inequality from generation to generation by conveying different expectations and norms to those with different social characteristics. For example, individuals are socialized with different expectations about their place in society

according to their gender, social class, and race. As in the life of Chris Langan, this creates different and unequal opportunities. Feminist critical sociologists would note that patriarchal attitudes and behaviours, including ideas about childrearing and care work are learned and relearned. This perspective would also argue that it is through socialization that we learn racist, homophobic and other ideas that harm vulnerable and unequal populations. Most importantly, it is through socialization that we 'learn' to accept such inequalities as 'normal'. This perspective would also note that it is through interacting with others that we can be 'resocialized' to question existing social arrangements a process that happens amongst friends, when participating in social movements … and in sociology classes.

A symbolic interactionist studying socialization is concerned with face-to-face exchanges and symbolic communication. For example, dressing baby boys in blue and baby girls in pink is one small way that messages are conveyed about differences in gender roles. For the symbolic interactionist, though, how these messages are formulated and how they are interpreted are always situational, always renewed, and defined by the specific situations in which the communication occurs. Socialization is not a book of social rules that we are given but an ongoing process of interaction with others in specific situations.

5.3. Agents of Socialization

Socialization helps people learn to function successfully in their social worlds. How does the process of socialization occur? How do we learn to use the objects of our society's material culture? How do we come to adopt the beliefs,

values, and norms that represent its nonmaterial culture? This learning takes place through interaction with various agents of socialization, like peer groups and families, plus both formal and informal social institutions.

Social Group Agents

Social groups often provide the first experiences of socialization. Families, and later peer groups, communicate expectations and reinforce norms. People first learn to use the tangible objects of material culture in these settings, as well as being introduced to the beliefs and values of society.

Family

Family is the first agent of socialization. Mothers and fathers, siblings and grandparents, plus members of an extended family all teach a child what he or she needs to know. For example, they show the child how to use objects (such as clothes, computers, eating utensils, books, bikes); how to relate to others (some as "family," others as "friends," still others as "strangers" or "teachers" or "neighbours"); and how the world works (what is "real" and what is "imagined"). As you are aware, either from your own experience as a child or your role in helping to raise one, socialization involves teaching and learning about an unending array of objects and ideas.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that families do not socialize children in a vacuum. Many social factors impact how a family raises its children. For example, we can use sociological imagination to recognize that individual behaviours are affected by the historical period in which they take place. Sixty years ago, it would not have

been considered especially strict for a father to hit his son with a wooden spoon or a belt if the child misbehaved, but today that same action might be considered child abuse.

Sociologists recognize that race, social class, religion, and other societal factors play an important role in socialization. For example, poor families usually emphasize obedience and conformity when raising their children, while wealthy families emphasize judgment and creativity (National Opinion Research Center, 2008). This may be because working-class parents have less education and more repetitive-task jobs for which the ability to follow rules and to conform helps. Wealthy parents tend to have better education and often work in managerial positions or in careers that require creative problem solving, so they teach their children behaviours that would be beneficial in these positions. This means that children are effectively socialized and raised to take the types of jobs that their parents already have, thus reproducing the class system (Kohn, 1977). Likewise, children are socialized to abide by gender norms, perceptions of race, and class-related behaviours.

In Sweden, for instance, stay-at-home fathers are an accepted part of the social landscape. A government policy provides subsidized time off work — 68 weeks for families with newborns at 80 percent of regular earnings — with the option of 52 of those weeks of paid leave being shared between both mothers and fathers, and eight weeks each in addition allocated for the father and the mother. This encourages fathers to spend at least eight weeks at home with their newborns (Marshall, 2008). As one stay-at-home dad said, being home to take care of his baby son “is a real fatherly thing to do. I think that’s very masculine” (Associated Press, 2011). Overall, 90 percent of Swedish men participate in the paid leave program.

In Canada on the other hand, outside of Quebec, parents can share 35 weeks of paid parental leave at 55 percent of their regular earnings or an extended leave of up to 69 weeks at a much lower 33 percent of earnings (max. $354/ week). As late as 2015, Les than 12% of men participated. In Quebec, however, where in addition to 32 weeks of shared parental leave, a second parent (in heterosexual households the man) also receives five weeks of paid leave (and this is lost if this other parent does not take it) , the participation rate of men is 48 percent. Encouraged by this the Canadian government recently rolled out a program similar to Quebec's, providing a use-it-or-lose-it 5 extra weeks for the second parent. Researchers note that a father's involvement in child raising has a positive effect on the parents' relationship (including a lower risk of divorce), the father's personal growth, and the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children (Marshall, 2008). How will this effect differ in Sweden and Canada as a result of the different nature of their paternal leave policies?

Figure 5.15. The socialized roles of dads and moms vary by society. (Photo courtesy of Nate Grigg/Flickr)

Peer Groups

A **peer group** is made up of people who are not necessarily friends but who are similar in age and social status and who share interests. Peer group socialization begins in the earliest years, such as when kids on a playground teach younger children the norms about taking turns or the rules of a game or how to shoot a basket. As children grow into teenagers, this process continues. Peer groups are important to adolescents in a new way, as they begin to develop an identity separate from their parents and exert independence. This is often a period of parental-child conflict and rebellion as parental values come into conflict with those of youth peer groups. Peer groups provide their own opportunities for socialization since kids usually engage in different types of activities with their peers than they do with their families. Peer groups provide adolescents' first major socialization experience outside

the realm of their families. They are especially influential, therefore, with respect to preferences in music, style, clothing, etc., sharing common social activities, and learning to engage in romantic relationships. With peers, adolescents experiment with new experiences outside the control of parents: sexual relationships, drug and alcohol use, political stances, hair and clothing choices, and so forth. Interestingly, studies have shown that although friendships rank high in adolescents' priorities, this is balanced by parental influence. Conflict between parents and teenagers is usually temporary and in the end families exert more influence than peers over educational choices and political, social, and religious attitudes.

Peer groups might be the source of rebellious youth culture, but they can also be understood as agents of social integration. The seemingly spontaneous way that youth in and out of school divide themselves into cliques with varying degrees of status or popularity prepares them for the way the adult world is divided into status groups. The racial characteristics, gender characteristics, intelligence characteristics, and wealth characteristics that lead to being accepted in more or less popular cliques in school are the same characteristics that divide people into status groups in adulthood.

Institutional Agents

The social institutions of our culture also inform our socialization. Formal institutions — like schools, workplaces, and the government — teach people how to behave in and navigate these systems. Other institutions, like the media, contribute to socialization by inundating us with messages about norms and expectations.

School

Most Canadian children spend about seven hours a day and 180 days a year in school, which makes it hard to deny the importance school has on their socialization. In elementary and junior high, compulsory education amounts to over 8,000 hours in the classroom (OECD, 2013). Students are not only in school to study math, reading, science, and other subjects — the manifest function of this system. Schools also serve a latent function in society by socializing children into behaviours like teamwork, following a schedule, and using textbooks.

Figure 5.16. These kindergarteners are not just learning to read and write; they are being socialized to norms like keeping their hands to themselves, standing in line, and singing the national anthem. (Photo courtesy of Bonner Springs Library/Flickr)

School and classroom rituals, led by teachers serving as role models and leaders, regularly reinforce what society expects from children. Sociologists describe this aspect of schools as the **hidden curriculum**, the informal teaching

done by schools.For example, in North America, schools have built a sense of competition into the way grades are awarded and the way teachers evaluate students. Students learn to evaluate themselves within a hierarchical system of A, B, C, etc. students (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). However, different lessons can be taught by different instructional techniques. When children participate in a relay race or a math contest, they learn that there are winners and losers in society. When children are required to work together on a project, they practice teamwork with other people in cooperative situations. Bowles and Gintis argue that the hidden curriculum prepares children for a life of conformity in the adult world. Children learn how to deal with bureaucracy, rules, expectations, to wait their turn, and to sit still for hours during the day. The latent functions of competition, teamwork, classroom discipline, time awareness, and dealing with bureaucracy are features of the hidden curriculum.

Schools also socialize children by teaching them overtly about citizenship and nationalism. In the United States, children are taught to say the Pledge of Allegiance. Most school districts require classes about U.S. history and geography. In Canada, on the other hand, critics complain that students do not learn enough about national history, which undermines the development of a sense of shared national identity (Granatstein, 1998). Textbooks in Canada are also continually scrutinized and revised to update attitudes toward the different cultures in Canada as well as perspectives on historical events; thus, children are socialized to a different national or world history than earlier textbooks may have done. For example, recent textbook editions include information about the mistreatment of First Nations which more accurately reflects those events than in textbooks of the past. In this

regard, schools educate students explicitly about aspects of citizenship important for being able to participate in a modern, heterogeneous culture.

Making Connections: Sociology in the Real World

Controversial Textbooks

Figure 5.17. 1809 map of Korea and Japan by Edinburgh cartographer John Pinkerton. (Courtesy of Geographicus Rare Antique Maps/Wikimedia Commons).

On August 13, 2001, 20 South Korean men gathered in Seoul. Each chopped off one of his own fingers because of textbooks. These men took drastic measures to protest eight middle school textbooks approved by Tokyo for use in Japanese middle schools. According to the Korean

government (and other East Asian nations), the textbooks glossed over negative events in Japan's history at the expense of other Asian countries (The Telegraph, 2001).In the early 1900s, Japan was one of Asia's more aggressive nations. Korea was held as a colony by the Japanese between 1910 and 1945. Today, Koreans argue that the Japanese are whitewashing that colonial history through these textbooks. One major criticism is that they do not mention that, during World War II, the Japanese forced Korean women into sexual slavery. The textbooks describe the women as having been "drafted" to work, a euphemism that downplays the brutality of what actually occurred. Some Japanese textbooks dismiss an important Korean independence demonstration in 1919 as a "riot." In reality, Japanese soldiers attacked peaceful demonstrators, leaving roughly 6,000 dead and 15,000 wounded (Crampton, 2002).

Although it may seem extreme that these people were so enraged about how events are described in a textbook that they would resort to dismemberment, the protest affirms that textbooks are a significant tool of socialization in state-run education systems.

The Workplace

Just as children spend much of their day at school, most Canadian adults at some point invest a significant amount of time at a place of employment. Although socialized into their culture since birth, workers require new socialization into a workplace both in terms of material culture (such as

how to operate the copy machine) and nonmaterial culture (such as whether it is okay to speak directly to the boss or how the refrigerator is shared).

Different jobs require different types of socialization. In the past, many people worked a single job until retirement. Today, the trend is to switch jobs at least once a decade. Between the ages of 18 and 44, the average baby boomer of the younger set held 11 different jobs (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). This means that people must become socialized to, and socialized by, a variety of work environments.

Religion

While some religions may tend toward being an informal institution, this section focuses on practices related to formal institutions. Religion is an important avenue of socialization for many people. Canada is full of synagogues, temples, churches, mosques, and similar religious communities where people gather to worship and learn. Like other institutions, these places teach participants how to interact with the religion's material culture (like a mezuzah, a prayer rug, or a communion wafer). For some people, important ceremonies related to family structure — like marriage and birth — are connected to religious celebrations. Many of these institutions uphold gender norms and contribute to their enforcement through socialization. From ceremonial rites of passage that reinforce the family unit, to power dynamics which reinforce gender roles, religion fosters a shared set of socialized values that are passed on through society.

Making Connections: Sociology in the Real World

Girls and Movies

Figure 5.18. Some people are concerned about the way girls today are socialized into a "princess culture." (Photo courtesy of Emily Stanchfield/Flickr)

Pixar is one of the largest producers of children's movies in the world and has released large box office draws, such as *Toy Story*, *Cars*, *The Incredibles*, and *Up*. What Pixar has never before produced is a movie with a female lead role. This changed with Pixar's movie *Brave* in 2012. Before *Brave*, women in Pixar served as supporting characters and love interests. In *Up*, for example, the only human female character dies within the first ten minutes of the film. For the millions of girls watching Pixar films, there are few strong characters or roles for them to relate to. If they do

not see possible versions of themselves, they may come to view women as secondary to the lives of men.The animated films of Pixar's parent company, Disney, have many female lead roles. Disney is well known for films with female leads, such as *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *Mulan*. Many of Disney's movies star a female, and she is nearly always a princess figure. If she is not a princess to begin with, she typically ends the movie by marrying a prince or, in the case of Mulan, a military general. Although not all "princesses" in Disney movies play a passive role relative to male characters, they typically find themselves needing to be rescued by a man, and the happy ending they all search for includes marriage.

Alongside this prevalence of princesses, many parents express concern about the culture of princesses that Disney has created. Peggy Orenstein addresses this problem in her popular book, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*. Orenstein wonders why every little girl is expected to be a "princess" and why pink has become an all-consuming obsession for many young girls. Another mother wondered what she did wrong when her three-year-old daughter refused to do "non-princessy" things, including running and jumping. The effects of this princess culture can have negative consequences for girls throughout life. An early emphasis on beauty and sexiness can lead to eating disorders, low self-esteem, and risky sexual behaviour among older girls.

What should we expect from Pixar's *Brave*, the

> company's first film to star a female character? Although *Brave* features a female lead, she is still a princess. Will this film offer any new type of role model for young girls? (Barnes, 2010; O'Connor, 2011; Rose, 2011).

Government

Although we do not think about it, many of the rites of passage people go through today are based on age norms established by the government. To be defined as an "adult" usually means being 18 years old, the age at which a person becomes legally responsible for themselves. And 65 is the start of "old age" since most people become eligible for senior benefits at that point.

Each time we embark on one of these new categories — adult, taxpayer, senior — we must be socialized into this new role. Seniors, for example, must learn the ropes of obtaining pension benefits. This government program marks the points at which we require socialization into a new category.

Mass Media

Mass media refers to the distribution of impersonal information to a wide audience via television, newspapers, radio, and the internet. With the average person spending over four hours a day in front of the TV (and children averaging even more screen time), media greatly influences social norms (Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout, 2005; Oliveira, 2013). Statistics Canada reports that for the

sample of people they surveyed about their time use in 2010, 73 percent said they watched 2 hours 52 minutes of television on a given day (see the Participants column in Table 5.1 below). Television continues to be the mass medium that occupies the most free time of the average Canadian, but the internet has become the fastest growing mass medium. In the Statistics Canada survey, television use on a given day declined from 77 percent to 73 percent between 1998 and 2010, but computer use increased amongst all age groups from 5 percent to 24 percent and averaged 1 hour 23 minutes on any given day. People who played video games doubled from 3 percent to 6 percent between 1998 and 2010, and the average daily use increased from 1 hour 48 minutes to 2 hours 20 minutes (Statistics Canada, 2013). People learn about objects of material culture (like new technology, transportation, and consumer options), as well as nonmaterial culture—what is true (beliefs), what is important (values), and what is expected (norms).

Table 5.1. Average time per day spent on various activities for participants ag over, grouped by sex, Canada, 2010

[Skip Table]

Activity group	Population			Participants			Particip	
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Ma
	hours and minutes			hours and minutes			perc	
1. Television, reading, and other passive leisure	**02:29**	**02:39**	**02:20**	**03:08**	**03:19**	**02:58**	**79**	**8**
Watching television	02:06	02:17	01:55	02:52	03:03	02:41	73	7
Reading books, magazines, newspapers	00:20	00:18	00:23	01:26	01:29	01:25	24	2
Other passive leisure	00:03	00:03	00:02	01:04	01:16	00:52	4	4
2. Active leisure	**01:13**	**01:27**	**00:59**	**02:22**	**02:42**	**02:01**	**51**	**5**
Active sports	00:30	00:37	00:23	01:54	02:12	01:34	26	2
Computer use	00:20	00:23	00:17	01:23	01:32	01:14	24	2
Video games	00:09	00:14	00:04	02:20	02:40	01:38	6	9

[Skip Table]

Activity group	Population			Participants			Particip	
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	M
	hours and minutes			hours and minutes			perc	
Other active leisure	00:14	00:13	00:15	02:05	02:06	02:04	11	1

Note: Average time spent is the average over a 7-day week.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2010 (Statistics Canada, 20
this survey asked approximately 15,400 Canadians aged 15 and over to report
journal details of the time they spent on various activities on a given day. Bec
were reporting about a given day, the figures sited about the average use of te
other media differ from reports provided by BBM and other groups on the ave
weekly usage, like the figure of 4 hours per day of TV cited in Roberts, Foehr
Rideout (2005) above.

5.4. Socialization Across the Life Course

Socialization isn't a one-time or even a short-term event. We are not stamped by some socialization machine as we move along a conveyor belt and thereby socialized once and for all. In fact, socialization is a lifelong process. Human development is not simply a product of the biological changes of physical maturation or the cognitive changes of psychological development, but follows a pattern of engaging and disengaging from a succession of roles that does not end with childhood but continues through the course of our lives.

In Canada, socialization throughout the life course is determined greatly by age norms and "time-related rules and regulations" (Setterson, 2002). As we grow older, we

encounter age-related transition points that require socialization into a new role, such as becoming school age, entering the workforce, or retiring. At each point in life, as an individual sheds previous roles and assumes new ones, institutions or situations are involved, which requires both learning and revising one's self-definition: You are no longer living at home; you have a job! You are no longer a child; you in the army! You are no longer single; you are going to have a child! You are no longer free; you are going to jail! You are no longer in mid-life; it is time to retire!

Many of life's social expectations are made clear and enforced on a cultural level. Through interacting with others and watching others interact, the expectation to fulfill roles becomes clear. While in elementary or middle school, the prospect of having a boyfriend or girlfriend may have been considered undesirable. The socialization that takes place in high school changes the expectation. By observing the excitement and importance attached to dating and relationships within the high school social scene, it quickly becomes apparent that one is now expected not only to be a child and a student, but a significant other as well.

Adolescence in general is a period stretching from puberty to about 18 years old, characterized by the role adjustment from childhood to adulthood. It is a stage of development in which the self is redefined through a more or less arduous process of "socialized anxiety" (Davis, 1944), re-examination and reorientation. As Jean Piaget described it, adolescence is a "decisive turning point … at which the individual rejects, or at least revises his estimate of everything that has been inculcated in him, and acquires a personal point of view and a personal place in life" (1947). It involves a fundamental "growth process" according to Edgar Friedenberg "to define the self through

the clarification of experience and to establish self esteem" (1959).

Making Connections: Sociology in the Real World

Gap Year: How Different Societies Socialize Young Adults

Figure 5.19. Prince William, who took a gap year after secondary school. (Photo courtesy of Alexandre Goulet/ Wikimedia Commons)

Have you ever heard of a gap year? It's a common custom in British society. When teens finish their secondary schooling (i.e., high school), they often take a year "off" before entering college. Frequently, they might take a job, travel, or find other ways to experience another culture. Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge, spent his gap year practising survival skills in Belize, teaching English

in Chile, and working on a dairy farm in the United Kingdom (Prince of Wales, 2012a). His brother, Prince Harry, advocated for AIDS orphans in Africa and worked as a jackeroo (a novice ranch hand) in Australia (Prince of Wales, 2012b).In Canada, this life transition point is socialized quite differently, and taking a year off is generally frowned upon. Instead, Canadian youth are encouraged to pick career paths by their mid-teens, to select a university or college and a major by their late teens, and to have completed all university schooling or technical training for their career by their early 20s.

In other nations, this phase of the life course is tied into conscription, a term that describes compulsory military service. Egypt, Austria, Switzerland, Turkey, and Singapore all have this system in place. Youth in these nations (often only males) are expected to undergo a number of months or years of military training and service.

How might your life be different if you lived in one of these countries? Can you think of similar social norms — related to life age-transition points — that vary from country to country?

In some cultures, adolescence is marked and ritualized through a clear **rite of passage,** a ritual that marks a life cycle transition from a previous status to a new status. Wade Davis described the rite of passage of Algonquin boys of northeastern North America when they hit puberty: Traditionally, the boys were isolated from the rest of the tribe in longhouses for two or three weeks and consumed nothing but a hallucinogenic plant from the *datura*

family (1985). During the long disorienting period of intoxication brought on by the plant the boys would forget what it meant to be a child and learn what it was to be a man.

In modern North American society, the rites of passage are not so clear cut or socially recognized. Already in 1959, Friedenberg argued that the process was hindered because of the pervasiveness of mass media that interfered with the expression of individuality crucial to this stage of life. Nevertheless, North American adolescence provided a similar trial by fire entry into adulthood: “The juvenile era provides the solid earth of life; the security of having stood up for yourself in a tough and tricky situation; the comparative immunity of knowing for yourself just exactly how the actions that must not be mentioned feel…the calm gained from having survived among comrades, that makes one ready to have friends” (Friedenberg, 1959).

Graduation from formal education — high school, vocational school, or college — involves a formal, ceremonial rite of passage yet again and socialization into a new set of expectations. Educational expectations vary not only from culture to culture, but from social class to social class. While middle- or upper-class families may expect their daughter or son to attend a four-year university after graduating from high school, other families may expect their child to immediately begin working full-time, as others within their family may have done before them.

In the process of socialization, adulthood brings a new set of challenges and expectations, as well as new roles to fill. As the aging process moves forward, social roles continue to evolve. Pleasures of youth, such as wild nights out and serial dating, become less acceptable in the eyes of society. Responsibility and commitment are emphasized as pillars of adulthood, and men and women are expected

to “settle down.” During this period, many people enter into marriage or a civil union, bring children into their families, and focus on a career path. They become partners or parents instead of students or significant others. Just as young children pretend to be doctors or lawyers, play house, and dress up, adults also engage **anticipatory socialization**, the preparation for future life roles. Examples would include a couple who cohabitate before marriage, or soon-to-be parents who read infant care books and prepare their home for the new arrival. University students volunteer, take internships, or enter co-op programs to get a taste for work in their chosen careers. As part of anticipatory socialization, adults who are financially able begin planning for their retirement, saving money, and looking into future health care options. The transition into any new life role, despite the social structure that supports it, can be difficult.

Socialization is ongoing throughout adulthood in another sense as well. The study of contemporary society reveals an increasing fluidity of roles, as opposed to previous eras when one could expect to be married only once, live in one location, or to have a single career. This experience is part of what Zygmunt Bauman has called **liquid modernity**, “a society in which the conditions under which its members act change faster than it takes the ways of acting to consolidate into habits and routines” (2005). As opposed to previous eras when one could expect to have a predictable sequence of role transitions — from school to work to retirement, from single to married to parenting to empty nest, etc. — the expectation today is that the individual will experience an increasing fluidity of roles. It is more difficult to view socialization as a smooth and uninterrupted process. Rather, life is increasingly fragmented, “cut into a

succession of ill-connected episodes” (Bauman, 2004). As a result, social identities have become more flexible, more adaptable to unpredictable transitions, more open to taking on new roles or picking and choosing from a globalized palette of cultural values and practices.

Bauman observes that this has lead to a new basis of calculation when it comes to passing through the stages of transition in the adult life cycle. In the absence of any clear, permanent, institutional structures of continuity and stable transition through the life course, people are thrown back on themselves to provide their own continuity. Jobs disappear overnight, marriages end, friends and family move, and online communities emerge. Under these circumstances each life choice is regarded as temporary and provisional and, thereby, it involves a calculated trade off between maximizing flexibility or commitment. It is a risk to put all one’s eggs in one basket. The individual has to continually decide “which one of the alternative identities to select and how long to hold on to it once the choice has been made?” (Bauman, 2004). Therefore, individuals enter jobs with an eye to their exit strategy, seizing opportunities to continually retrain, upgrade skills, and make contacts to be prepared for a better job to show up. They enter into amorous relationships on the basis of what Bauman calls “confluent love:” “a relationship that lasts only as long as, and not a moment longer than, the satisfaction it brings to both partners” (2004). In love, dumping the partner is a normal event to be planned for. They cultivate a wider network of “weak ties” rather than committing to deep friendships.

Making Connections: Sociology in the Real World

The Long Road to Adulthood for Millennials

Figure 5.20. Generation Y. (Image courtesy of Patrick Marione/Flickr)

Millennials, sometimes also called Gen Y, is a term that describes the generation born during the early 1980s to early 1990s. They are the generation that is currently between the ages of 18 and 33. While the recession was in full swing, many were in the process of entering, attending, or graduating from high school and college. With employment

prospects at historical lows, large numbers of graduates were unable to find work, sometimes moving back in with their parents and struggling to pay back student loans.According to *The New York Times*, this economic stall is causing the Millennials to postpone what most North Americans consider to be adulthood: “The traditional cycle seems to have gone off course, as young people remain untethered to romantic partners or to permanent homes, going back to school for lack of better options, traveling, avoiding commitments, competing ferociously for unpaid internships or temporary … jobs, forestalling the beginning of adult life” (Henig, 2010).

In Canada:

- 30 percent of Millennials find it difficult to support themselves on their low wages
- 44 percent find it difficult to pay for their education
- 38 percent are strapped by loan payments
- 51 percent still live with their parents
- 90 percent feel overwhelmed and experience excessive stress (Tsintziras, 2013)

The five milestones, Henig writes, that define adulthood, are “completing school, leaving home, becoming financially independent, marrying, and having a child” (2010). These social milestones are taking longer for Millennials to attain, if they are

attained at all. Sociologists wonder what long-term impact this generation's situation may have on society as a whole. It is possible that adulthood will need to be redefined with new milestones. Meanwhile, preliminary survey research on Generation Z, born after 2000, suggests that these children of the post-boomer Generation X are both completely fluent in digital technology and raised to be more self-reliant. It is also estimated that for each Generation Z member to enter the workforce, three baby boomers will be retiring. However, the world they confront is characterized by monumental global risks such as climate change, geopolitical insecurity and increasing inequality (Bland, 2016).

Resocialization

In the process of **resocialization**, old behaviours that were helpful in a previous role are removed because they are no longer of use. Resocialization is necessary when a person moves to a senior care centre, goes to boarding school, or serves time in jail. In the new environment, the old rules no longer apply. The process of resocialization is typically more stressful than normal socialization because people have to unlearn behaviours that have become customary to them.

The most common way resocialization occurs is in a **total institution** where people are isolated from society and are forced to follow someone else's rules. A ship at sea is a total institution, as are religious convents, asylums, prisons, or some cult organizations. They are places cut off

from a larger society. The 15,000 Canadians who lived in federal prisons or penitentiaries at the end of 2012 are also members of a total institution (Sapers, 2013). As another example, every branch of the military is a total institution.

Figure 5.21. In basic training, soldiers are taught to walk, move, and look like each other (Photo courtesy of Staff Sergeant Desiree N. Palacios, U.S. Air Force/Wikimedia Commons)

Many individuals are resocialized into an institution through a two-part process. First, members entering an institution must leave behind their old identity through what is known as a degradation ceremony. In a **degradation ceremony**, new members lose the aspects of their old identity and are given new identities. The process is sometimes gentle. To enter a senior care home, an elderly person often must leave a family home and give up many belongings which were part of his or her long-standing identity. Though caretakers guide the elderly compassionately, the process can still be one of loss. In many cults, this process is also gentle and happens in an environment of support and caring.In other situations, the

degradation ceremony can be more extreme. Erving Goffman referred to the process of being stripped of ones external identity as a “mortification of the self” (1961). New prisoners lose freedom, rights (including the right to privacy), and personal belongings. When entering the army, soldiers have their hair cut short. Their old clothes are removed and they wear matching uniforms. These individuals must give up any markers of their former identity in order to be resocialized into an identity as a soldier.

After new members of an institution are stripped of their old identity, they build a new one that matches the new society. In the military, soldiers go through basic training together, where they learn new rules and bond with one another. They follow structured schedules set by their leaders. Soldiers must keep their areas clean for inspection, march in correct formations, and salute when in the presence of superior officers.

Figure 5.22. Riverview mental hospital, Port Coquitlam, B.C. (Image courtesy of Niall Williams/ Flickr)

In *Asylum* (1961), Goffman provides an acute analysis of some of the perverse implications of resocialization within the structure of total institutions. In institutions of resocialization, inmates pass through a standard sequence of changes with respect to how their capacity to act “morally” (i.e., as someone answerable for their actions) is established, recognized, and affirmed by others (and by themselves), which Goffman refers to as their **moral**

career. Goffman observed that the strategems for securing recognition of viable selfhood or moral capacity from others — mental patients from ward staff, for example — often undermined the stated goals of rehabilitation. As it was the psychiatric authorities who decided who had viable selfhood and who did not, and as tangible benefits of status and privileges were at stake, the setting of the mental institution provided the conditions under which *amoral strategies* of self became effective. Patients found that "it is not very practicable to sustain solid claims about oneself" because these were easily torn down by staff after glancing at the patients records (Goffman, 1961). Instead it was easier give up the goal of "moral" rehabilitation and just mimic what the staff wanted to get privileges.

> Learning to live under conditions of imminent exposure and wide fluctuation in regard, with little control over the granting or withholding of this regard, is an important step in the socialization of the patient, a step that tells something important about what it is like to be an inmate in a mental hospital. Having one's past mistakes and present progress under constant moral review seems to make for a special adaptation consisting of a less than moral attitude to ego ideals. One's shortcomings and successes become too central and fluctuating an issue in life to allow the usual commitment of concern for other persons' views of them. It is not very practicable to try to sustain solid claims about oneself. The inmate tends to learn that degradations and reconstructions of the self need not be given too much weight, at the same time learning that staff and inmates are ready to view an inflation or deflation of a self with some indifference. He learns that a defensible picture of self can be seen as something outside oneself that can be constructed, lost, and rebuilt, all with great speed and some equanimity. He learns about the viability of taking up a standpoint — and

> hence a self — that is outside the one which the hospital can give and take away from him.
>
> The setting, then, seems to engender a kind of cosmopolitan sophistication, a kind of civic apathy. In this unserious yet oddly exaggerated moral context, building up a self or having it destroyed becomes something of a shameless game, and learning to view this process as a game seems to make for some demoralization, the game being such a fundamental one. In the hospital, then, the inmate can learn that the self is not a fortress, but rather a small open city; he can become weary of having to show pleasures when held by troops of his own, and weary of how to show displeasure when held by the enemy. Once he learns what it is like to be defined by society as not having a viable self, this threatens definition — the threat that helps attach to the self society accords them — is weakened. The patient seems to gain a new plateau when he learns that he can survive while acting in a way that society sees as destructive of him. (Goffman, 1961)

Learning to deal with life after having lived in a total institution requires yet another process of resocialization. In the Canadian military, soldiers learn discipline and a capacity for hard work. They set aside personal goals to achieve a mission, and they take pride in the accomplishments of their units. Many soldiers who leave the military transition these skills into excellent careers. Others find themselves lost upon leaving, uncertain about the outside world, and what to do next. The process of resocialization to civilian life is not a simple one.

Key Terms

adolescence: A period stretching from puberty to about

18-years-old characterized by the role adjustment from childhood to adulthood.

agency: The ability to choose and act independently of external constraints.

anticipatory socialization: When we prepare for future life roles.

degradation ceremony: The process by which new members of a total institution lose aspects of their old identity and are given new ones.

doing gender: When people perform tasks based upon the gender assigned to them by society.

game stage: The stage in child development in which children begin to recognize and interact with others on the basis of fixed norms and roles.

generalized other: The common behavioural expectations of general society.

hidden curriculum: The informal teaching done in schools that socializes children to societal norms.

I and me: The two components or phases of the self-reflective self.

liquid modernity: The fluid and transitory nature of modern life, which is increasingly fragmented and cut into a succession of ill-connected episodes.

looking glass self: The self or self-image that arises as the reaction to the judgement of others.

mass media: The distribution of impersonal information to a wide audience via television, newspapers, radio, and the internet.

moral career: A standard sequence of changes in a person's moral capacity to be answerable for their actions.

moral development: The way people learn what is "good" and "bad" in society.

nature: The influence of our genetic makeup on self development.

nurture: The role that our social environment plays in self development.

peer group: A group made up of people who are similar in age and social status and who share interests.

play stage: A time when children begin to imitate and take on roles that another person might have.

preparatory stage: A time when children are only capable of imitation and have no ability to imagine how others see things.

resocialization: The process by which old behaviours are removed and new behaviours are learned in their place.

rite of passage: A ritual that marks a life cycle transition from a previous status to a new status.

role: The behaviour expected of a person who occupies a particular position.

self: A person's distinct sense of identity as developed through social interaction.

socialization: The process wherein people come to understand societal norms and expectations, to accept society's beliefs, and to be aware of societal values.

stages of child socialization: The four stages of child development (preparatory, play, game, and generalized other) in which the child develops the capacity to assume social roles.

total institution: An institution in which members are required to live in isolation from the rest of society.

Section Summary

5.1. Theories of Self Development

Psychological theories of self development have been broadened by sociologists who explicitly study the role of society and social interaction in self development. Charles Cooley and George Mead both contributed significantly to the sociological understanding of the development of self. Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan developed their ideas further, researching how our sense of morality develops. Gilligan added the dimension of gender differences to Kohlberg's theory.

5.2. Why Socialization Matters

Socialization is important because it helps uphold societies and cultures; it is also a key part of individual development. Research demonstrates that who we are is affected by both nature (our genetic and hormonal makeup) and nurture (the social environment in which we are raised). Sociology is most concerned with the way that society's influence affects our behaviour patterns, made clear by the way behaviour varies across class and gender.

5.3. Agents of Socialization

Our direct interactions with social groups, like families and peers, teach us how others expect us to behave. Likewise, a society's formal and informal institutions socialize its population. Schools, workplaces, and the media communicate and reinforce cultural norms and values.

5.4. Socialization Across the Life Course

Socialization is a lifelong process recurring as we enter new phases of life, such as adulthood or old age. Resocialization is a process that removes the socialization we have developed over time and replaces it with newly-learned rules and roles. Because it involves removing old

habits that have been built up, resocialization can be a stressful and difficult process.

Section Quiz

5.1. Theories of Self Development

1. Socialization, as a sociological term, describes:

    1. How people interact during social situations.
    2. How people learn societal norms, beliefs, and values.
    3. A person's internal mental state when in a group setting.
    4. The difference between introverts and extroverts.

2. The Harlows' study on rhesus monkeys showed:

    1. Rhesus monkeys raised by other primate species are poorly socialized.
    2. Monkeys can be adequately socialized by imitating humans.
    3. Food is more important than social comfort.
    4. Social comfort is more important than food.

3. What occurs in Lawrence Kohlberg's conventional level?

    1. Children develop the ability to have abstract thoughts.
    2. Morality is developed by pain and pleasure.
    3. Children begin to consider what society considers moral and immoral.

4. Parental beliefs have no influence on children's morality.

4. What did Carol Gilligan believe earlier researchers into morality had overlooked?

1. The justice perspective
2. Sympathetic reactions to moral situations
3. The perspective of females
4. How social environment affects how morality develops

5. What is one way to distinguish between psychology and sociology?

1. Psychology focuses on the mind, while sociology focuses on society.
2. Psychologists are interested in mental health, while sociologists are interested in societal functions.
3. Psychologists look inward to understand behaviour, while sociologists look outward.
4. All of the above.

6. How did nearly complete isolation as a child affect Danielle's verbal abilities?

1. She could not communicate at all.
2. She never learned words, but she did learn signs.
3. She could not understand much, but she could use gestures.
4. She could understand and use basic language

like "yes" and "no."

5.2. Why Socialization Matters

7. Why do sociologists need to be careful when drawing conclusions from twin studies?

1. The results do not apply to singletons.
2. The twins were often raised in different ways.
3. The twins may turn out to actually be fraternal.
4. The sample sizes are often small.

8. From a sociological perspective, which factor does not greatly influence a person's socialization?

1. Gender
2. Class
3. Blood type
4. Race

9. Chris Langan's story illustrates that:

1. Children raised in one-parent households tend to have higher IQs.
2. Intelligence is more important than socialization.
3. Socialization can be more important than intelligence.
4. Neither socialization nor intelligence affects college admissions.

5.3. Agents of Socialization

10. Why are wealthy parents more likely than poor parents to socialize their children toward creativity and problem solving?

1. Wealthy parents are socializing their children toward the skills of white-collar employment.
2. Wealthy parents are not concerned about their children rebelling against their rules.
3. Wealthy parents never engage in repetitive tasks.
4. Wealthy parents are more concerned with money than with a good education.

11. How do schools prepare children to one day enter the workforce?

1. With a standardized curriculum
2. Through the hidden curriculum
3. By socializing them in teamwork
4. All of the above

12. Which one of the following is not a way people are socialized by religion?

1. People learn the material culture of their religion.
2. Life stages and roles are connected to religious celebrations.
3. An individual's personal, internal experience of a divine being leads to their faith.
4. Places of worship provide a space for shared group experiences.

13. Which of the following is a manifest function of schools?

1. Understanding when to speak up and when to be silent
2. Learning to read and write
3. Following a schedule
4. Knowing locker room etiquette

14. Which of the following is typically the earliest agent of socialization?

1. School
2. Family
3. Mass media
4. Workplace

5.4. Socialization Across the Life Course

15. Which of the following is not an age-related transition point when Canadians must be socialized to new roles?

1. Infancy
2. School age
3. Adulthood
4. Senior citizen

16. Which of the following is true regarding Canadian socialization of recent high school graduates?

1. They are expected to take a year off before college.
2. They are required to serve in the military for one year.

3. They are expected to enter college, trade school, or the workforce shortly after graduation.
4. They are required to move away from their parents.

[Quiz answers at the end of chapter]

Short Answer

5.1. Theories of Self Development

1. Think of a current issue or pattern that a sociologist might study. What types of questions would the sociologist ask, and what research methods might he or she employ? Now consider the questions and methods a psychologist might use to study the same issue. Comment on their different approaches.
2. Explain why it's important to use both male and female participants when conducting research. What sociological topics might show gender differences? Provide some examples to illustrate your ideas.

5.2. Why Socialization Matters

1. Why are twin studies an important way to learn about the relative effects of genetics and socialization on children? What questions about human development do you believe twin studies are best for answering? What types of

questions would twin studies not be as helpful?

2. Why do you think that people like Chris Langan continue to have difficulty even after they are helped through societal systems? What is it they've missed that prevents them from functioning successfully in the social world?

5.3. Agents of Socialization

1. Do you think it is important that parents discuss gender roles with their young children, or is gender a topic better left for later? How do parents consider gender norms when buying their children books, movies, and toys? How do you believe they should consider it?
2. Based on your observations, when are adolescents more likely to listen to their parents or to their peer groups when making decisions? What types of dilemmas lend themselves toward one social agent over another?

5.4. Socialization Across the Life Course

1. Consider a person who is moving into a university residence, or attending university or boarding school, or even a child beginning kindergarten. How is the process the student goes through a form of socialization? What new cultural behaviours must the student adapt to?
2. Do you think resocialization requires a total institution? Why or why not? Can you think of any other ways someone could be resocialized?

Further Research

5.1. Theories of Self Development
Lawrence Kohlberg was most famous for his research using moral dilemmas. He presented dilemmas to boys and asked them how they would judge the situations. Read about Kohlberg's most famous moral dilemma, known as the Heinz dilemma: http://www.simplypsychology.org/kohlberg.html.

5.2. Why Socialization Matters
Learn more about five other sets of twins who grew up apart and discovered each other later in life: https://lornareiko.wordpress.com/2009/10/08/identical-twins-who-were-separated-at-birth-what-are-they-like/.

5.3. Agents of Socialization
See the controversy surrounding one Canadian couple's refusal socialize their child into gender norms: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1389593/Kathy-Witterick-David-Stocker-raising-genderless-baby.html.

5.4. Socialization Across the Life Course
Homelessness is an endemic problem among veterans. Many soldiers leave the military or return from war and have difficulty resocializing into civilian life. Learn more about this problem of homeless veterans.http://openstaxcollege.org/l/NCHV

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Solutions to Section Quiz

1 B, | 2 D, | 3 C, | 4 C, | 5 D, | 6 A, | 7 D, | 8 C, | 9 C, | 10 A, | 11 D, | 12 C, | 13 B, | 14 B, | 15 A, | 16 C, [Return to Quiz]

Image Attributions

Figure 5.8. Prince William by Alexandre Goulet (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2007_WSJ_Prince_William.jpg) used Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en)

Long Descriptions

Figure 5.6 Long Description: Psychology and sociology have some overlap. Sociological social psychology (SSP) emphasizes a subject's location in social order, their socialized roles, and historical social context. Psychological social psychology (PSP) emphasizes a subject's mental processes, dispositions, experiences, and immediate social situation. [Return to Figure 5.6].

Figure 5.7 Long Description: A girl wears a sweater and jeans and looks into a mirror. The mirror represents Facebook and shows her reflection wearing a long, professional dress. [Return to Figure 5.7].

Chapter 5. Education

Figure 16.1. Filmmaker Victor Masayesva teaches about Hopi Indian culture in an aboriginal studies class at Point Grey Secondary, Vancouver. Schools teach us far more than reading, writing, and arithmetic. They also socialize us to cultural norms and expectations. (Photo courtesy of Victor Masayesva/flickr)

Learning Objectives

16.1. Education around the World

- Identify differences in educational resources around the world.
- Describe the concept of universal access to education.

16.2. Theoretical Perspectives on Education

- Define manifest and latent functions of education.
- Explain and discuss how functionalism, conflict theory, feminism, and interactionism view issues of education.

Introduction to Education

From the moment a child is born, his or her education begins. At first, education is an informal process in which an infant watches others and imitates them. As the infant grows into a young child, the process of education becomes more formal through play dates and preschool. Once in grade school, academic lessons become the focus of education as a child moves through the school system. But even then, education is about much more than the simple learning of facts.

Our education system also socializes us to our society. We learn cultural expectations and norms, which are reinforced by our teachers, our textbooks, and our classmates. (For students outside the dominant culture, this aspect of the education system can pose significant challenges.) You might remember learning your multiplication tables in grade 2 and also learning the social rules of taking turns on the swings at recess. You might recall learning about the Canadian parliamentary process in a social studies course as well as learning when and how to speak up in class.

Schools can be agents of change or conformity, teaching individuals to think outside of the family and the local

norms into which they were born, while at the same time acclimatizing them to their tacit place in society. They provide students with skills for communication, social interaction, and work discipline that can create pathways to both independence and obedience.

In terms of socialization, the modern system of mass education is second only to the family in importance. It promotes two main socializing tasks: homogenization and social sorting. Students from diverse backgrounds learn a standardized curriculum that effectively transforms diversity into homogeneity. Students learn a common knowledge base, a common culture, and a common sense of society's official priorities, and perhaps more importantly, they learn to locate their place within it. They are provided with a unifying framework for participation in institutional life and at the same time are sorted into different paths. Those who demonstrate facility within the standards established by curriculum or through the informal patterns of status differentiation in student social life are set on trajectories to high-status positions in society. Those who do less well are gradually confined to lower, subordinate positions in society. Within the norms established by school curriculum and teaching pedagogies, students learn from a very early age to identify their place as A, B, C, etc. level vis-à-vis their classmates. In this way, schools are profound agencies of normalization.

16.1. Education around the World

Figure 16.2. These children are at a library in Singapore, where students are outperforming North American students on worldwide tests. (Photo courtesy of kodomut/flickr)

Education is a social institution through which a society's children are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms. Every nation in the world is equipped with some form of education system, though those systems vary greatly. The major factors affecting education systems are the resources and money that are utilized to support those systems in different nations. As you might expect, a country's wealth has much to do with the amount of money spent on education. Countries that do not have such basic amenities as running water are unable to support robust education systems or, in many cases, any formal schooling at all. The result of this worldwide educational inequality is a social concern for many countries, including Canada.

International differences in education systems are not solely a financial issue. The value placed on education,

the amount of time devoted to it, and the distribution of education within a country also play a role in those differences. For example, students in South Korea spend 220 days a year in school, compared to the 190 days (180 days in Quebec) a year of their Canadian counterparts. Canadian students between the ages of 7 and 14 spend an average of 7,363 hours in compulsory education compared to an average of 6,710 hours for all member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (Statistics Canada, 2012).

These differences do translate into differences in student success. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests, attempt to compare students on reading, math and science skills. Recent tests show Canada does quite well (reading skills, 5th out of 65 countries, math 8th out of 65 countries, and science, 7th out of 65 countries) (Knighton, Brochu, and Gluszynski, 2010). Students at the top of the rankings hailed from Shanghai, Finland, Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore. The United States on the other hand was 17th in reading skills and had fallen from 15th to 25th in the rankings for science and math (National Public Radio, 2010).

Some have attributed the poor showing by U.S. students to be at least in part to the inequalities of their system. In this system, low socio-economic status students do poorly while more advantaged students perform very well. Canadian students' average scores were high over all but were also highly equitable, meaning that the difference in performance between high scorers and low scorers was relatively low (Knighton, Brochu, and Gluszynski, 2010). This is attributed

in part to the fact that educational funding in Canada is more equitably distributed. Similarly, researches noted that in Shanghai and Singapore, differences between advantaged and disadvantaged students was much lower than in the U.S. (National Public Radio, 2010).

Analysts determined that the nations and city-states at the top of the rankings had several things in common. For one, they had well-established standards for education with clear goals for all students. They also recruited teachers from the top 5 to 10% of university graduates each year, which is not the case for most countries (National Public Radio, 2010).

However, there is no one educational model for student success. While many high-scoring countries focus on long hours in school and an emphasis on testing, in Finland, another top scorer, students spend much less time in school, have very little homework, and are seldom tested. While there exists a clear national policy, schools and teachers are given wide leeway in how this is implemented. Value is placed on creativity, cooperation, inclusion, art and music, student well-being and free time much of it spent outside (World Economic Forum 2018).

Formal and Informal Education

As already mentioned, education is not solely concerned with the basic academic concepts that a student learns in the classroom. Societies also educate their children, outside of the school system, in matters of everyday practical living. These two types of learning are referred to as formal education and informal education.

Formal education describes the learning of academic

facts and concepts through a formal curriculum. Arising from the tutelage of ancient Greek thinkers, centuries of scholars have examined topics through formalized methods of learning. Three hundred years ago few people knew how to read and write. Education was available only to the higher classes; they had the means to access scholarly materials, plus the luxury of leisure time that could be used for learning. The rise of capitalism and its accompanying social changes made education more important to the economy and therefore more accessible to the general population. Around 1900, Canada and the United States were the first countries to come close to the ideal of universal participation of children in school. The idea of universal mass education is therefore a relatively recent idea, one that is still not achieved in many parts of the world.

The modern Canadian educational system is the result of this progressive expansion of education. Today, basic education is considered a right and responsibility for all citizens. Expectations of this system focus on formal education, with curricula and testing designed to ensure that students learn the facts and concepts that society believes are basic knowledge.

In contrast, **informal education** describes learning about cultural values, norms, and expected behaviours by participating in a society. This type of learning occurs both through the formal education system and at home. Our earliest learning experiences generally happen via parents, relatives, and others in our community. Through informal education, we learn how to dress for different occasions, how to perform regular life routines like shopping for and preparing food, and how to keep our bodies clean.

Figure 16.4. Parents teaching their children to cook provide an informal education. (Photo courtesy of eyeliam/flickr)

Cultural transmission refers to the way people come to learn the values, beliefs, and social norms of their culture. Both informal and formal education include cultural transmission. For example, a student will learn about cultural aspects of modern history in a Canadian history classroom. In that same classroom, the student might learn the cultural norm for asking a classmate out on a date through passing notes and whispered conversations.

Access to Education

Another global concern in education is **universal access**. This term refers to people's equal ability to participate in an education system. On a world level, access might be more difficult for certain groups based on race, class, or gender (as was the case in Canada earlier in our nation's history, a dynamic we still struggle to overcome). The modern idea of universal access arose in Canada as a concern for people with disabilities. In Canada, one way in which universal education is supported is through provincial governments covering the cost of free public education. Of course, the way this plays out in terms of school budgets and taxes makes this an often-contested topic on the national, provincial, and community levels.

Table 16.1. Total spending per student in elementary and secondary schools dollars, base year=2002)" (Table courtesy of Statistics Canada)

[Skip Tab

School Year		Canada	NFL	PEI	NS	NB	QB
2006/ 2007	Dollars	9,640	8,413	7,701	8,523	8,937	9,327
	Percentage change	3.9	4.5	9.8	4.4	4.9	9.1
2007/ 2008	Dollars	9,645	9,272	8,043	8,896	9,135	9,657
	Percentage change	2.0	10.2	4.4	4.4	2.2	3.5
2008/ 2009	Dollars	10,186	9,977	8,690	9,226	9,969	9,916
	Percentage change	5.6	7.6	8.0	3.7	9.1	2.7
2009/ 2010	Dollars	10,616	11,297	10,032	9,884	10,283	10,143
	Percentage change	4.2	13.2	15.5	7.1	3.1	2.3
2010/ 2011	Dollars	10,778	11,033	9,506	10,127	10,525	10,539
	Percentage change	1.5	-2.3	-5.2	2.5	2.4	3.9

Although school boards across the country had attempted to accommodate children with special needs in their educational systems through a variety of means from the 19th century on, it was not until the implementation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 that the question of universal access to education for disabled children was seen in terms of a Charter right (Siegel and Ladyman 2000). Many provincial jurisdictions

implemented educational policy to integrate special needs students into the classroom with mainstream students. For example, policy in British Columbia was revised in the mid-1990s to include specific measures to define students with special needs, develop individual education plans, and find school placements for students with special needs (Siegel and Ladyman 2000). In Ontario, Bill 82 was passed in 1980, establishing five principles for special education programs and services for special needs students: Universal access, education at public expense, an appeal process, ongoing identification and continuous assessment, and appropriate programming (Morgan 2003).

Today, the optimal way to include differently able students in standard classrooms is still being researched and debated. “Inclusion” is a method that involves complete immersion in a standard classroom, whereas “mainstreaming” balances time in a special-needs classroom with standard classroom participation. There continues to be social debate surrounding how to implement the ideal of universal access to education.

16.2. Theoretical Perspectives on Education

While it is clear that education plays an integral role in individuals’ lives as well as society as a whole, sociologists view that role from many diverse points of view. Functionalists believe that education equips people to perform different functional roles in society. Critical sociologists view education as a means of widening the gap in social inequality. Feminist theorists point to evidence that sexism in education continues to prevent women from achieving a full measure of social equality. Symbolic interactionists study the dynamics of the classroom, the interactions between students and teachers, and how those

affect everyday life. In this section, you will learn about each of these perspectives.

Functionalism

Functionalists view education as one of the more important social institutions in a society. They contend that education contributes two kinds of functions: manifest (or primary) functions, which are the intended and visible functions of education; and latent (or secondary) functions, which are the hidden and unintended functions.

Manifest Functions

There are several major manifest functions associated with education. The first is socialization. Beginning in preschool and kindergarten, students are taught to practise various societal roles. The French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), who established the academic discipline of sociology, characterized schools as "socialization agencies that teach children how to get along with others and prepare them for adult economic roles" (Durkheim 1898).

This socialization also involves learning the rules and norms of the society as a whole. In the early days of compulsory education, students learned the dominant culture. Today, since the culture of Canada is increasingly diverse, students may learn a variety of cultural norms, not only that of the dominant culture.

School systems in Canada also transmit the core values of the nation through manifest functions like social control. One of the roles of schools is to teach students conformity to law and respect for authority. Obviously, such respect, given to teachers and administrators, will help a student

navigate the school environment. This function also prepares students to enter the workplace and the world at large, where they will continue to be subject to people who have authority over them. Fulfillment of this function rests primarily with classroom teachers and instructors who are with students all day.

Figure 16.6. The teacher's authority in the classroom is a way in which education fulfills the manifest functions of social control. (Photo courtesy of Tulane Public Relations/flickr)

Education also provides one of the major methods used by people for upward social mobility. This function is referred to as **social placement**. University and graduate schools are viewed as vehicles for moving students closer to the careers that will give them the financial freedom and security they seek. As a result, university students are often more motivated to study areas that they believe will be advantageous on the social ladder. A student might value business courses over a class in Victorian poetry because he or she sees business class as a stronger vehicle for financial success.

Latent Functions

Education also fulfills latent functions. Much goes on in school that has little to do with formal education. For example, you might notice an attractive fellow student when he gives a particularly interesting answer in class — catching up with him and making a date speaks to the latent function of courtship fulfilled by exposure to a peer group in the educational setting.

The educational setting introduces students to social networks that might last for years and can help people find jobs after their schooling is complete. Of course, with social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn, these networks are easier than ever to maintain. Another latent function is the ability to work with others in small groups, a skill that is transferable to a workplace and that might not be learned in a homeschool setting.

The educational system, especially as experienced on university campuses, has traditionally provided a place for students to learn about various social issues. There is ample opportunity for social and political advocacy, as well as the ability to develop tolerance to the many views represented on campus. In 2011, the Occupy Wall Street movement swept across university campuses all over Canada, leading to demonstrations in which diverse groups of students were unified with the purpose of changing the political climate of the country.

Table 16.2. Manifest and Latent Functions of Education. According to functionalist theory, education contributes to both manifest and latent functi

Manifest Functions: Openly stated functions with intended goals	Socialization	Transmission of culture	Social control	Social placement	Cultur innova
Latent Functions: Hidden, unstated functions with sometimes unintended consequences	Courtship	Social networks	Working in groups	Creation of generation gap	Politic and so integra

Functionalists recognize other ways that schools educate and enculturate students. One of the most important values students in Canada learn is that of individualism — the valuing of the individual over the value of groups or society as a whole. In countries such as Japan and China, where the good of the group is valued over the rights of the individual, students do not learn as they do in Canada that the highest rewards go to the "best" individual in academics as well as athletics. One of the roles of schools in Canada is fostering self-esteem; conversely, schools in Japan focus on fostering social esteem — the honouring of the group over the individual.

In Canada, schools also fill the role of preparing students for competition and cooperation in life. Obviously, athletics foster both a cooperative and competitive nature, but even in the classroom, students learn both how to work

together and how to compete against one another academically. Schools also fill the role of teaching patriotism. Although Canadian students do not have to recite a pledge of allegiance each morning, like students in the United States, they do take social studies classes where they learn about common Canadian history and identity.

Figure 16.7. Starting each day with the Pledge of Allegiance is one way in which American students are taught patriotism. How do Canadian students learn patriotism? (Photo courtesy of Jeff Turner/ flickr)

Another role of schools, according to functionalist theory, is that of **sorting**, or classifying students based on academic merit or potential. The most capable students are identified early in schools through testing and classroom achievements. Exceptional students are often placed in accelerated programs in anticipation of successful university attendance. Other students are guided into vocational training programs with emphasis on shop and home economics.

Functionalists also contend that school, particularly in

recent years, is taking over some of the functions that were traditionally undertaken by family. Society relies on schools to teach about human sexuality as well as basic skills such as budgeting and job applications — topics that at one time were addressed by the family.

Critical Sociology

Critical sociologists do not believe that public schools reduce social inequality. Rather, they believe that the educational system reinforces and perpetuates social inequalities arising from differences in class, gender, race, and ethnicity. Where functionalists see education as serving a beneficial role, critical sociologists view it more critically. To them, it is important to examine how educational systems preserve the status quo and guide people of lower status into subordinate positions in society.

Figure 16.8. Critical sociologists see the education system as a means by which those in power stay in power. (Photo courtesy Thomas Ricker/flickr)

The fulfillment of one's education is closely linked to

social class. Students of low socioeconomic status are generally not afforded the same opportunities as students of higher status, no matter how great their academic ability or desire to learn. For example, 25 of every 100 low-income Canadian 19-year-olds attend university compared to 46 of every 100 high-income Canadian 19-year-olds (Berger, Motte, and Parkin 2009). Barriers like the cost of higher education, but also more subtle cultural cues, undermine the promise of education as a means of providing equality of opportunity.

Picture a student from a working-class home who wants to do well in school. On a Monday, he's assigned a paper that's due Friday. Monday evening, he has to babysit his younger sister while his divorced mother works. Tuesday and Wednesday he works stocking shelves after school until 10:00 p.m. By Thursday, the only day he might have available to work on that assignment, he is so exhausted he cannot bring himself to start the paper. His mother, though she would like to help him, is so tired herself that she isn't able to give him the encouragement or support he needs. Since English is her second language, she has difficulty with some of his educational materials. They also lack a computer and printer at home, which most of his classmates have, so they have to rely on the public library or school system for access to technology. As this story shows, many students from working-class families have to contend with helping out at home, contributing financially to the family, having poor study environments, and lacking material support from their families. This is a difficult match with education systems that adhere to a traditional curriculum that is more easily understood and completed by students of higher social classes.

Such a situation leads to social class reproduction, extensively studied by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

He researched how, parallel to economic capital (as analyzed by Marx), **cultural capital**, or the accumulation of cultural knowledge that helps one navigate a culture, alters the experiences and opportunities available to French students from different social classes. Bourdieu emphasized that like economic capital, cultural capital in the form of cultural taste, knowledge, patterns of speech, clothing, proper etiquette, etc. is difficult and time consuming to acquire. Members of the upper and middle classes have more cultural capital than families of lower-class status, and they can pass it on to their children from the time that they are toddlers. As a result, the educational system maintains a cycle in which the dominant culture's values are rewarded. Instruction and tests cater to the dominant culture and leave others struggling to identify with values and competencies outside their social class. For example, there has been a great deal of discussion over what standardized tests such as the IQ test and aptitude tests truly measure. Many argue that the tests group students by cultural ability rather than by natural intelligence.

The cycle of rewarding those who possess cultural capital is found in formal educational curricula as well as in the **hidden curriculum**, which refers to the type of nonacademic knowledge that one learns through informal learning and cultural transmission. The hidden curriculum is never formally taught but it is implied in the expectation that those who accept the formal curriculum, institutional routines, and grading methods will be successful in school. This hidden curriculum reinforces the positions of those with higher cultural capital, and serves to bestow status unequally.

Critical sociologists also point to **tracking**, a formalized sorting system that places students on "tracks" (advanced

versus low achievers) that perpetuate inequalities. While educators may believe that students do better in tracked classes because they are with students of similar ability and may have access to more individual attention from teachers, critical sociologists feel that tracking leads to self-fulfilling prophecies in which students live up (or down) to teacher and societal expectations (Education Week 2004).

As noted above, IQ tests have been attacked for being biased — for testing cultural knowledge rather than actual intelligence. For example, a test item may ask students what instruments belong in an orchestra. To correctly answer this question requires certain cultural knowledge — knowledge most often held by more affluent people who typically have more exposure to orchestral music. On the basis of IQ and aptitude testing, students are frequently sorted into categories that place them in enriched program tracks, average program tracks, and special needs or remedial program tracks. Though experts in testing claim that bias has been eliminated from tests, conflict theorists maintain that this is impossible. The tests are another way in which education does not provide equal opportunities, but instead maintains an established configuration of power.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory aims to understand the mechanisms and roots of gender inequality in education, as well as their societal repercussions. Like many other institutions of society, educational systems are characterized by unequal treatment and opportunity for women. Almost two-thirds of the world's 862 million illiterate people are women, and the illiteracy rate among women is expected to increase

in many regions, especially in several African and Asian countries (UNESCO 2005; World Bank 2007).

In Canada women's educational attainments have since the early 1980's surpassed that of men. Women now make up 56% of all post-secondary students and 58% of graduates from post-secondary institutions in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2013). Canadian women in fact have the highest percentage of higher educational attainment among all OECD countries at 55%. A university education is also more financially advantageous for women in Canada than men relatively speaking. Women with a higher education degree earn on average 50% more than they would without higher education compared to 39% more for men. However, men with higher education were more likely to have a job than women with higher education (84.7% to 78.5%), and women earned less than men in absolute terms with their education: 74 cents for each dollar earned by men for ages 24 to 64 (OECD, 2012). From a feminist perspective, women might be staying longer in school as they need this to compete in an unequal job market.

A Statistics Canada study released in 2011 showed that, among full-time employed men and women aged 25 to 29 with a graduate or professional degree, women still earned only 96 cents for every dollar earned by men in 2005. (With a bachelor`s degree they earned 89 cents for every dollar earned by men.) This trend was similar among all fields of study except for physical and life sciences, and technologies and health, parks, recreation and fitness where women actually earned more than men (Turcotte, 2011).

When women face limited opportunities for education, their capacity to achieve equal rights, including financial independence, are limited. Feminist theory seeks to

promote women's rights to equal education (and its resultant benefits) across the world.

Grade Inflation: When Is an A Really a C?

Consider a large-city newspaper publisher. Ten years ago, when culling résumés for an entry-level copywriter, they were well assured that if they selected a grad with a GPA of 3.7 or higher, they would have someone with the writing skills to contribute to the workplace on day one. But over the last few years, they have noticed that A-level students do not have the competency evident in the past. More and more, they find themselves in the position of educating new hires in abilities that, in the past, had been mastered during their education.

This story illustrates a growing concern referred to as **grade inflation** — a term used to describe the observation that the correspondence between letter grades and the achievements they reflect has been changing (in a downward direction) over time. Put simply, what used to be considered C-level, or average, now often earns a student a B, or even an A. For example, in 2010, 70% of first-year students in Canadian universities reported having an A-minus average or greater in high school, and increase of 40% from the early 1980s (Dehaas, 2011).

Why is this happening? Research on this emerging issue is ongoing, so no one is quite sure yet. Some cite the alleged shift toward a culture that rewards effort instead of product (i.e., the amount of work a student puts in raises the grade, even if the resulting product is poor quality). Another oft-cited contributor is the pressure many of today's instructors feel to earn positive course evaluations from their students — records that can tie into teacher compensation, award of tenure, or the future career of a

young grad teaching entry-level courses. The fact that these reviews are commonly posted online exacerbates this pressure.

Other studies do not agree that grade inflation exists at all. In any case, the issue is hotly debated, with many being called upon to conduct research to help us better understand and respond to this trend (Mansfield 2001; National Public Radio 2004).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism sees education as one way that the labelling theory can be demonstrated in action. A symbolic interactionist might say that this labelling has a direct correlation to those who are in power and those who are being labelled. For example, low standardized test scores or poor performance in a particular class often lead to a student being labelled as a low achiever. Such labels are difficult to "shake off," which can create a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton 1968).

In his book *High School Confidential*, Jeremy Iverson details his experience as a Stanford graduate posing as a student at a California high school. One of the problems he identifies in his research is that of teachers applying labels that students are never able to lose. One teacher told him, without knowing he was a bright graduate of a top university, that he would never amount to anything (Iverson 2006). Iverson obviously didn't take this teacher's false assessment to heart. However, when an actual 17-year-old student hears this from a person with authority, it is no wonder that the student might begin to "live down to" that label.

The labelling with which symbolic interactionists concern themselves extends to the very degrees that

symbolize completion of education. **Credentialism** embodies the emphasis on certificates or degrees to show that a person has a certain skill, has attained a certain level of education, or has met certain job qualifications. These certificates or degrees serve as a symbol of what a person has achieved, allowing the labelling of that individual.

Indeed, as these examples show, labelling theory can significantly impact a student's schooling. This is easily seen in the educational setting, as teachers and more powerful social groups within the school dole out labels that are adopted by the entire school population.

Key Terms

credentialism: The emphasis on certificates or degrees to show that a person has a certain skill, has attained a certain level of education, or has met certain job qualifications.

cultural capital: Cultural knowledge that serves (metaphorically) as currency to help one navigate a culture.

cultural transmission: The way people come to learn the values, beliefs, and social norms of their culture.

education: A social institution through which a society's children are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms.

formal education: The learning of academic facts and concepts.

grade inflation: The idea that the achievement level associated with an A today is notably lower than the achievement level associated with A-level work a few decades ago.

hidden curriculum: The type of nonacademic

knowledge that one learns through informal learning and cultural transmission.

informal education: Learning about cultural values, norms, and expected behaviours through participation in a society.

social placement: The use of education to improve one's social standing.

sorting: Classifying students based on academic merit or potential.

tracking: A formalized sorting system that places students on "tracks" (advanced, low achievers) that perpetuate inequalities.

universal access: The equal ability of all people to participate in an education system.

Section Summary

16.1. Education around the World

Educational systems around the world have many differences, though the same factors — including resources and money — affect each of them. Educational distribution is a major issue in many nations, including in the United States, where the amount of money spent per student varies greatly by state. Education happens through both formal and informal systems; both foster cultural transmission. Universal access to education is a worldwide concern.

16.2. Theoretical Perspectives on Education

The major sociological theories offer insight into how we understand education. Functionalists view education as an important social institution that contributes both manifest and latent functions. Functionalists see education as

serving the needs of society by preparing students for later roles, or functions, in society. Critical sociologists see schools as a means for perpetuating class, racial-ethnic, and gender inequalities. In the same vein, feminist theory focuses specifically on the mechanisms and roots of gender inequality in education. The theory of symbolic interactionism focuses on education as a means for labelling individuals.

Section Quiz

16.1. Education around the World

1. What are the major factors affecting education systems throughout the world?

1. Resources and money
2. Student interest
3. Teacher interest
4. Transportation

2. What do nations that are top-ranked in science and math have in common?

1. They are all in Asia.
2. They recruit top teachers.
3. They spend more money per student.
4. They use cutting-edge technology in classrooms.

3. Informal education ________________.

1. Describes when students teach their peers
2. Refers to the learning of cultural norms

3. Only takes place at home
4. Relies on a planned instructional process

4. Learning from classmates that most students buy lunch on Fridays is an example of ________.

1. Cultural transmission
2. Educational access
3. Formal education
4. Informal education

5. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was an impetus for __________.

1. Access to education
2. Average spending on students
3. Desegregation of schools
4. Higher salaries for teachers

16.2. Theoretical Perspectives on Education

6. Which of the following is *not* a manifest function of education?

1. Cultural innovation
2. Courtship
3. Social placement
4. Socialization

7. Because she plans on achieving success in marketing, Tammie is taking courses on managing social media. This is an example of ________.

1. Cultural innovation

2. Social control
3. Social placement
4. Socialization

8. Which theory of education focuses on the ways in which education maintains the status quo?

1. Critcal sociology
2. Piaget's theory
3. Functionalist theory
4. Symbolic interactionism

9. Which theory of education focuses on the labels acquired through the educational process?

1. Critical sociology
2. Feminist theory
3. Functionalist theory
4. Symbolic interactionism

10. What term describes the assignment of students to specific education programs and classes on the basis of test scores, previous grades, or perceived ability?

1. Hidden curriculum
2. Labelling
3. Self-fulfilling prophecy
4. Tracking

11. Functionalist theory sees education as serving the needs of __________.

1. Families
2. Society
3. The individual
4. All of the above

12. Rewarding students for meeting deadlines and respecting authority figures is an example of ________.

1. A latent function
2. A manifest function
3. Informal education
4. Transmission of moral education

13. What term describes the separation of students based on merit?

1. Cultural transmission
2. Social control
3. Sorting
4. Hidden curriculum

14. Critical sociologists see sorting as a way to ________.

1. Challenge gifted students
2. Perpetuate divisions of socioeconomic status
3. Help students who need additional support
4. Teach respect for authority

15. Critical sociologists see IQ tests as being biased. Why?

1. They are scored in a way that is subject to human error.
2. They do not give children with learning disabilities a fair chance to demonstrate their true intelligence.
3. They don't involve enough test items to cover multiple intelligences.
4. They reward affluent students with questions that assume knowledge associated with upper-class culture.

[Quiz answers at end of chapter]

Short Answer

16.1. Education around the World

1. Has there ever been a time when your formal and informal educations in the same setting were at odds? How did you overcome that disconnect?
2. Do you believe free access to schools has achieved its intended goal? Explain.

16.2. Theoretical Perspectives on Education

1. Thinking of your school, what are some ways that a conflict theorist would say that your school perpetuates class differences?
2. Which sociological theory best describes your view of education? Explain why.

3. Based on what you know about symbolic interactionism and feminist theory, what do you think proponents of those theories see as the role of the school?

Further Research

16.1. Education around the World

Though it's a struggle, education is continually being improved in the developing world. To learn how educational programs are being fostered worldwide, explore the Education section of the Center for Global Development's website: http://www.cgdev.org/topics/education

16.2. Theoretical Perspectives on Education

Can tracking actually improve learning? This 2009 article from *Education Next*
explores the debate with evidence from Kenya. http://educationnext.org/tracking-improve-learning/

The National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest) is committed to ending the bias and other flaws seen in standardized testing. Their mission is to ensure that students, teachers, and schools are evaluated fairly. You can learn more about their mission, as well as the latest in news on test bias and fairness, at their website: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/fair_test

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Solutions to Section Quiz

1 A, | 2 B, | 3 B, | 4 A, | 5 A, | 6 B, | 7 C, | 8 A, | 9 D, | 10 D, | 11 D, | 12 D, | 13 C, | 14 B, | 15 D, | [Return to Quiz]

Image Attributions

Figure 16.1 Living seasons in a Hopi village by U.S. Embassy Canada (https://www.flickr.com/photos/us_mission_canada/8197704623/in/set-72157632038837142) used under CC BY 2.0 license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

Chapter 6. Social Inequality in Canada

Figure 9.1. The car a person drives can be seen as a symbol of money and power. What does a Rolls-Royce signify about its owner? Why? (Photo courtesy of dave_7/Flickr)

Learning Objectives

9.1. What Is Social Inequality?

- Break the concept of social inequality into its component parts: social differentiation, social stratification, and social distributions of wealth, income, power, and status.

- Define the difference between equality of opportunity and equality of condition.
- Distinguish between caste and class systems.
- Distinguish between class and status.
- Identify the structural basis for the different classes that exist in capitalist societies.

9.2. Social Inequality and Mobility in Canada

- Define the difference between relative and absolute poverty.
- Describe the current trend of increasing inequalities of wealth and income in Canada.
- Distinguish the the differences between Marx’s and Weber’s definitions of social class and explain why they are significant.
- Characterize the social conditions of the owning class, the middle class, and the traditional working class in Canada.
- Apply the research on social mobility to the question of whether Canada is a meritocracy.
- Recognize cultural markers that are used to display class identity.

9.3. Global Stratification and Inequality

- Define global inequality.
- Describe different sociological models for understanding global inequality.
- Understand how sociological studies identify worldwide inequalities.

[9.4. Theoretical Perspectives on Social Inequality]

- Understand and apply functionalist, critical sociological and interpretive perspectives on social inequality.

Introduction to Social Inequality in Canada

Figure 9.2. The Ted Rogers statue with Ted Rogers Centre for Heart Research in the background. Who gets monumentalized in Canada, and who gets forgotten? (Image courtesy of Oaktree/Wikimedia Commons)

When he died in 2008, Ted Rogers Jr., then CEO of Rogers Communications, was the fifth-wealthiest individual in

Canada, holding assets worth $5.7 billion. In his autobiography (2008) he credited his success to a willingness to take risks, work hard, bend the rules, be on the constant look-out for opportunities, and be dedicated to building the business. In many respects, he saw himself as a self-made billionaire who started from scratch, seized opportunities, and created a business through his own initiative.

The story of Ted Rogers is not exactly a rags to riches one, however. His grandfather, Albert Rogers, was a director of Imperial Oil (Esso) and his father, Ted Sr., became wealthy when he invented an alternating current vacuum tube for radios in 1925. Ted Rogers Sr. went from this invention to manufacturing radios, owning a radio station, and acquiring a licence for TV broadcasting.

However, Ted Sr. died when Ted Jr. was five years old, and the family businesses were sold. His mother took Ted Jr. aside when he was eight and told him, "Ted, your business is to get the family name back" (Rogers, 2008). The family was still wealthy enough to send him to Upper Canada College, the famous private school that also educated the children from the Black, Eaton, Thompson, and Weston families. Ted seized the opportunity at Upper Canada to make money as a bookie, taking bets on horse racing from the other students. Then he attended Osgoode Hall Law School, where reportedly his secretary went to classes and took notes for him. He bought an early FM radio station when he was still in university and started in cable TV in the mid-1960s. By the time of his death, Rogers Communications was worth $25 billion. At that time just three families, the Rogers, Shaws, and Péladeaus, owned much of the cable service in Canada.

At the other end of the spectrum are the Aboriginal gang members in the Saskatchewan Correctional Centre

who we discussed in Chapter 1 (CBC, 2010). The CBC program noted that 85 percent of the inmates in the prison were of Aboriginal descent, half of whom were involved in Aboriginal gangs. Moreover the statistical profile of Aboriginal youth in Saskatchewan is grim, with Aboriginal people making up the highest number of high school dropouts, domestic abuse victims, drug dependencies, and child poverty backgrounds. In some respects the Aboriginal gang members interviewed were like Ted Rogers in that they were willing to seize opportunities, take risks, bend rules, and apply themselves to their vocations. They too aspired to getting the money that would give them the freedom to make their own lives. However, as one of the inmates put it, "the only job I ever had was selling drugs" (CBC, 2010). The consequence of that was to fall into a lifestyle that led to joining a gang, being kicked out of school, developing issues with addiction, and eventually getting arrested and incarcerated. Unlike Ted Rogers, however, the inmate added, "I didn't grow up with the best life" (CBC, 2010).

How do we make sense of the divergent stories? Canada is supposed to be a country in which individuals can work hard to get ahead. It is an "open" society. There are no formal or explicit class, gender, racial, ethnic, geographical, or other boundaries that prevent people from rising to the top. People are free to make choices. But does this adequately explain the difference in life chances that divide the fortunes of the Aboriginal youth from those of the Rogers family? What determines a person's social standing? And how does social standing direct or limit a person's choices?

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) defined ones **habitus** as the deeply seated schemas, habits, feelings, dispositions, and forms of know-how that people

hold due to their specific social backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences (1990). Bourdieu referred to it as ones "feel for the game," to use a sports metaphor. Choices are perhaps always "free" in some formal sense, but they are also always situated within one's habitus. The Aboriginal gang members display a certain amount of street smarts that enable them to survive and successfully navigate their world. Street smarts define their habitus and exercise a profound influence over the range of options that are available for them to consider — the neighborhoods they know to avoid, the body languages that signal danger, the values of illicit goods, the motives of different street actors, the routines of police interactions, etc. The habitus affects both the options to conform to the group they identify with or deviate from it. Ted Rogers occupied a different habitus which established a fundamentally different set of options for him in his life path. How are the different lifeworlds or habitus distributed in society so that some reinforce patterns of deprivation while others provide the basis for access to wealth and power?

As Bourdieu pointed out, habitus is so deeply ingrained that we take its reality as natural rather than as a product of social circumstances. This has the unfortunate effect of justifying social inequalites based the belief that the Ted Rogers of the world were naturally gifted and predisposed for success when in fact it is success itself that is "predisposed" by underlying structures of power and privilege.

9.1. What Is Social Inequality?

Figure 9.3. In the upper echelons of the working world, people with the most power reach the top. These people make the decisions and earn the most money. The majority of Canadians will never see the view from the top. (Photo courtesy of Alex Proimos/Flickr)

Sociologists use the term **social inequality** to describe the unequal distribution of valued resources, rewards, and positions in a society. Key to the concept is the notion of **social differentiation**. Social characteristics — differences, identities, and roles — are used to differentiate people and divide them into different categories, which have implications for social inequality. Social differentiation by itself does not necessarily imply a division of individuals into a hierarchy of rank, privilege, and power. However, when a social category like class, occupation, gender, or race puts people in a position in which they can claim a greater share of resources or

services, then social differentiation becomes the basis of social inequality.

The term **social stratification** refers to an institutionalized system of social inequality. It refers to a situation in which the divisions and relationships of social inequality have solidified into a system that determines who gets what, when, and why. You may remember the word “stratification” from geology class. The distinct horizontal layers found in rock, called “strata,” are a good way to visualize social structure. Society’s layers are made of people, and society’s resources are distributed unevenly throughout the layers. The people who have more resources represent the top layer of the social structure of stratification. Other groups of people, with progressively fewer and fewer resources, represent the lower layers of our society. Social stratification assigns people to socioeconomic strata based on factors like wealth, income, race, education, and power. The question for sociologists is how systems of stratification come to be formed. What is the basis of systematic social inequality in society?

Figure 9.4. Strata in rock illustrate social stratification. People are sorted, or layered, into social categories. Many factors determine a person's social standing, such as income, education, occupation, age, race, gender, and even physical abilities. (Photo courtesy of Just a Prairie Boy/ Flickr)

In Canada, the dominant ideological presumption about social inequality is that everyone has an equal chance at success. This is the belief in **equality of opportunity**,

which can be contrasted with the concept of **equality of condition**. Equality of condition is the situation in which everyone in a society has a similar level of wealth, status, and power. Although degrees of equality of condition vary markedly in modern societies, it is clear that even the most egalitarian societies today have considerable degrees of *inequality* of condition. Equality of opportunity, on the other hand, is the idea that everyone has an equal possibility of becoming successful. It exists when people have the same chance to pursue economic or social rewards. This is often seen as a function of equal access to education, **meritocracy** (where individual merit determines social standing), and formal or informal measures to eliminate social discrimination. Evidence from the study of social mobility, the ability to change one's social position (see below), suggests that we often underestimate the extent to which economic inequality, racism and sexism severely limit equality of opportunity in Canada and beyond.

For many, Ted Rogers' story illustrates the belief in equality of opportunity. His personal narrative is one in which hard work and talent — not inherent privilege, birthright, prejudicial treatment, or societal values — determined his social rank. Most people connect inequalities of wealth, status, and power to the individual characteristics of those who succeed or fail. The story of the Indigenous gang members, although it is also a story of personal choices, casts that belief into doubt. It is clear that the type of choices available to the Indigenous gang members are of a different range and quality than those available to the Rogers family. The available choices are a product of habitus and significantly shape one's life chances. *Ultimately, for there to be true equality of opportunity one must ensure that inequalities of condition*

are not so great that they hamper a person's life chances. While there is significant debate about the means to which to encourage equality of opportunity, most sociologists would agree that current levels of income and wealth inequality and the intersection of these with racism and sexism, significantly limit the life chances of many Canadians.

While there are always inequalities between individuals, sociologists are interested in larger social patterns. Social inequality is not about individual inequalities, but about systematic inequalities based on group membership, class, gender, ethnicity, and other variables that structure access to rewards and status. In other words, sociologists are interested in how the social groups one belongs to shapes ones chances in life. There are of course differences in individuals' abilities and talents that will affect their life chances. The larger question, however, is how inequality becomes systematically structured in economic, social, and political life. In terms of individual ability: Who gets the opportunities to develop their abilities and talents, and who does not? Where does "ability" or "talent" come from? As we live in a society that emphasizes the individual — i.e., individual effort, individual morality, individual choice, individual responsibility, individual talent, etc. — it is often difficult to see the way in which life chances are socially structured.

Figure 9.5. The people who live in these houses most likely share similar levels of income and education. Neighbourhoods often house people of the same social standing. Wealthy families do not typically live next door to poorer families, though this varies depending on the particular city and country. (Photo courtesy of Orin Zebest/Flickr)

Factors that define stratification vary in different societies. In most modern societies, stratification is often indicated by differences in **wealth**, the net value of money and assets a person has, and **income**, a person's wages, salary, or investment dividends. It can also be defined by differences in **power** (how many people a person must take orders from versus how many people a person can give orders to) and **status** (the degree of honour or prestige one has in the eyes of others). These four factors create a complex amalgam that defines individuals' social standing within a hierarchy.

Usually the four factors coincide, as in the case of corporate CEOs, like Ted Rogers, at the top of the hierarchy—wealthy, powerful, and prestigious — and the

Aboriginal offenders at the bottom — poor, powerless, and abject. Sociologists use the term **status consistency** to describe the consistency of an individual's rank across these factors. However, we can also think of someone like the Canadian prime minister who ranks high in power, but with a salary of approximately $320,000 earns much less than comparable executives in the private sector (albeit eight times the average Canadian salary). The prime minister's status or prestige also rises and falls with the vagaries of politics. The Nam-Boyd scale of status ranks politicians at 66/100, the same status as cable TV technicians (Boyd, 2008). There is status inconsistency in the prime minister's position. Similarly, teachers often have high levels of education, which give them high status (92/100 according to the Nam-Boyd scale), but they receive relatively low pay. Many believe that teaching is a noble profession, so teachers should do their jobs for love of their profession and the good of their students, not for money. Yet no successful executive or entrepreneur would embrace that attitude in the business world, where profits are valued as a driving force. Cultural attitudes and beliefs like these support and perpetuate social inequalities.

Systems of Stratification

Sociologists distinguish between two types of systems of stratification. Closed systems accommodate little change in social position. They do not allow people to shift levels and do not permit social relations between levels. Open systems, which are based on achievement, allow movement and interaction between layers and classes. Different systems reflect, emphasize, and foster certain cultural values, and shape individual beliefs. This

difference in stratification systems can be examined by the comparison between class systems and caste systems.

The Caste System

Figure 9.6. India used to have a rigid caste system. The people in the lowest caste suffered from extreme poverty and were shunned by society. Some aspects of India's defunct caste system remain socially relevant. The Indian woman in this photo is of a specific Hindu caste. (Photo courtesy of Elessar/Flickr)

Caste systems are closed stratification systems in which people can do little or nothing to change their social standing. A **caste system** is one in which people are born into their social standing and remain in it their whole lives. It is based on fixed or rigid **status** distinctions, rather than economic classes *per se*. As we noted above, status is defined by the level of honour or prestige one receives by virtue of membership in a group. Sociologists make a distinction between **ascribed status** — a status one receives by virtue of being born into a category or group (e.g., hereditary position, gender, race, etc.)

—and **achieved status** — a status one receives through individual effort or merits (e.g., occupation, educational level, moral character, etc.). Caste systems are based on a hierarchy of ascribed statuses, based on being born into fixed caste groups.

In a caste system, therefore, people are assigned roles regardless of their talents, interests, or potential. Marriage is **endogamous**, meaning that marriage between castes is forbidden. An **exogamous marriage** is a union of people from different social categories. There are virtually no opportunities to improve one's social position. Instead the relationship between castes is bound by institutionalized rules, and highly ritualistic procedures come into play when people from different castes come into contact.

The feudal systems of Europe and Japan can in some ways be seen as caste systems in that the statuses of positions in the social stratifications systems were fixed, and there was little or no opportunity for movement through marriage or economic opportunities. In Europe, the estate system divided the population into clergy (first estate), nobility (second estate), and commoners (third estate), which included artisans, merchants, and peasants. In early European feudalism, it was still possible for a peasant or a warrior to achieve a high position in the clergy or nobility, but later the divisions became more rigid. In Japan, between 1603 and 1867, the *mibunsei* system divided society into five rigid strata in which social standing was inherited. At the top was the emperor, then court nobles (*kuge*), military commander-in-chief (*shogun*), and the land-owning lords (*daimyo*). Beneath them were four classes or castes: the military nobility (*samurai*), peasants, craftsmen, and merchants. The merchants were considered the lowest class because they did not produce anything with their own hands. There

was also an outcast or untouchable caste known as the *burakumin,* who were considered impure or defiled because of their association with death: executioners, undertakers, slaughterhouse workers, tanners, and butchers (Kerbo, 2006).

However, the caste system is probably best typified by the system of stratification that existed in India from 4,000 years ago until the 20th century. In the Hindu caste tradition, people were also expected to work in the occupation of their caste and to enter into marriage according to their caste. Originally there were four castes: *Brahmans* (priests), *Kshatriyas* (military), *Vaisyas* (merchants), and *Sudras* (artisans, farmers). In addition there were the *Dalits* or *Harijans* ("untouchables"). Hindu scripture said, "In order to preserve the universe, Brahma (the Supreme) caused the Brahmin to proceed from his mouth, the Kshatriya to proceed from his arm, the Vaishya to proceed from his thigh, and the Shudra to proceed from his foot" (Kashmeri, 1990). Accepting this social standing was considered a moral duty. Cultural values and economic restrictions reinforced the system. Caste systems promote beliefs in fate, destiny, and the will of a higher power, rather than promoting individual freedom as a value. A person who lived in a caste society was socialized to accept his or her social standing.

Although the caste system in India has been officially dismantled, its residual presence in Indian society is deeply embedded. In rural areas, aspects of the tradition are more likely to remain, while urban centres show less evidence of this past. In India's larger cities, people now have more opportunities to choose their own career paths and marriage partners. As a global centre of employment, corporations have introduced merit-based hiring and employment to the nation.

The Class System

A **class system** is based on both social factors and individual achievement. It is at least a *partially* open system. A **class** consists of a set of people who have the same relationship to the **means of production** or productive property, that is, to the things used to produce the goods and services needed for survival: tools, technologies, resources, land, workplaces, etc. In Karl Marx's analysis, class systems form around the institution of private property, dividing those who own or control productive property from those who do not, who survive on the basis of their labour.

Social class has both a strictly *material* quality relating to these definitions of individuals' positions within a given economic system, and a *social* quality relating to the formation of common class interests, political divisions in society, sites of conflict and compromise, life styles and consumption patterns, and what Max Weber called different "life chances" (1969). We will return to the differences between Marx's and Weber's definitions of class later in this chapter. Whether defined by material or social characteristics however, the main social outcome of the class structure is inequality in society.

In capitalism, the principle class division is between the capitalist class who live from the proceeds of owning or controlling productive property (capital assets like factories and machinery, or capital itself in the form of investments, stocks, and bonds) and the working class who live from selling their labour to the capitalists for a wage. Marx referred to these classes as the **bourgeoisie** and the **proletariat**, respectively. In addition, he described the classes of the **petite bourgeoisie** (the little bourgeosie) and the **lumpenproletariat** (the sub-proletariat). The petite

bourgeoisie are those like shopkeepers, farmers, and contractors who own some property and perhaps employ a few workers but still rely on their own labour to survive. The lumpenproletariat are the chronically unemployed or irregularly employed who are in and out of the workforce. They are what Marx referred to as the "reserve army of labour," a pool of potential labourers who are surplus to the needs of production at any particular time.

In a class system, social inequality is structural, meaning that it is "built in" to the organization of the economy. Because the means of production is privately owned this creates a class of owners (bourgeoisie) with significant opportunity and power and a class of workers (proletariat) dependent on these owners for their livelihood. In Marx's analysis, this was also the basis of class conflict, because objectively (i.e., beyond individuals' personal perceptions or beliefs) the class positions are contradictory. Owners have an interest in raising profits and accumulating capital. The key means to achieve this in a competitive marketplace is by reducing the cost of production by lowering the cost of labour (by reducing wages, moving production to lower wage areas, or replacing workers with labour-saving technologies). This contradicts the interests of the proletariat who seek to establish a sustainable standard of living by maintaining the level of their wages and the level of employment in society.

Making Connections: Social Policy and

Debate

The Commoner Who Could Be Queen

Figure 9.7. Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, who is in line to be King of England, married Catherine Middleton, a so-called commoner, meaning she does not have royal ancestry. (Photo courtesy of UK_repsome/Flickr)

On April 29, 2011, in London, England, Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, married Catherine ("Kate") Middleton, a commoner. It is rare, though not unheard of, for a member of the British royal family to marry a commoner. Kate Middleton had an upper-middle-class upbringing. Her father was a former flight dispatcher and her mother a former flight attendant. Kate and William met when they were both students at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland (Köhler, 2010).Britain's monarchy arose during the Middle Ages. Its social hierarchy placed royalty at the top and commoners on the bottom.

This was generally a closed system, with people born into positions of nobility. Wealth was passed from generation to generation through **primogeniture**, a law stating that all property would be inherited by the firstborn son. If the family had no son, the land went to the next closest male relation. Women could not inherit property and their social standing was primarily determined through marriage.

The arrival of the Industrial Revolution changed Britain's social structure. Commoners moved to cities, got jobs, and made better livings. Gradually, people found new opportunities to increase their wealth and power. Today, the government is a constitutional monarchy with the prime minister and other ministers elected to their positions, and with the royal family's role being largely ceremonial. The long-ago differences between nobility and commoners have blurred, and the modern class system in Britain is similar to that of the United States (McKee, 1996).

Today, the royal family still commands wealth, power, and a great deal of attention. When Queen Elizabeth II retires or passes away, Prince Charles will be first in line to ascend the throne. If he abdicates (chooses not to become king) or dies, the position will go to Prince William. If that happens, Kate Middleton would be called Queen Catherine and hold the position of queen consort. She would be one of the few queens in history to have earned a university degree (Marquand, 2011).

There is a great deal of social pressure on her not

> only to behave as a royal but to bear children. The royal family recently changed its succession laws to allow daughters, not just sons, to ascend the throne. Her firstborn son, Prince George, was born on July 22, 2013, so the new succession law is not likely to be tested in the near future. Kate's experience — from commoner to possible queen — demonstrates the fluidity of social position in modern society.

While individual capitalists and individual workers might not see it this way, objectively the class interests clash and define a persistent pattern of management-labour conflict and political cleavage structures in modern, capitalist societies.

However, unlike caste systems, class systems are open. People are at least formally free to gain a different level of education or employment than their parents. They can move up and down within the stratification system. They can also socialize with and marry members of other classes, allowing people to move from one class to another. In other words, individuals can move up and down the class hierarchy, even while the class categories and the class hierarchy itself remain relatively stable.

This means that in a class system, one's occupation is not fixed at birth. Though family and other societal models help guide a person toward a career, personal choice plays a role. For example, Ted Rogers Jr. chose a career in media similar to that of his father but managed to move from a position of relative wealth and privilege in the petite bourgeoisie to being the fifth wealthiest bourgeois in the country. On the other hand, his father Ted Sr. chose a career

in radio based on individual interests that differed from his own father's. Ted Sr.'s father, Albert Rogers, held a position as a director of Imperial Oil. Ted Sr. therefore moved from the class of the bourgeoisie to the class of the petite bourgeoisie.

9.2. Social Inequality and Mobility in Canada

Most sociologists define social class as a grouping based on similar social factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation. As we note later in the chapter, there is dispute within the discipline about the relative importance of different criteria for characterizing economic position. Whether the Marxist emphasis on property ownership is more important than the Weberian emphasis on gradations of occupational status is a matter for debate. Each definition captures some aspects of the experience of inequality in modern society but misses others. Either way, the concept of class does imply a shared standard of living based on social factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation. These factors also affect how much power and prestige a person has. In most cases, having more money means having more power or more opportunities.

Standard of Living

Figure 9.8. (Image courtesy of Wayne Stadler/ Flickr). "When you've set up a place to sleep for the night, someone comes along and threatens you or forces you to leave, it's no way to live. It's tiring, to be forced to move every day or every night when you're cold and wet and have no place to go." (Testimony of Drug War Survivors member Harvey Clause, as quoted in Hollett, 2015).

In the last century, Canada has seen a steady rise in **standard of living**, the level of wealth available to acquire the material necessities and comforts to maintain one's lifestyle. The standard of living is based on factors such as income, employment, class, poverty rates, and affordability of housing. Because standard of living is closely related to quality of life, it can represent factors such as the ability to afford a home, own a car, and take vacations. Access to a standard of living that enables people to participate on an equal basis in community life is not equally distributed, however. The irony of rising standards of living is that one does not have to live in **absolute poverty —** "a severe deprivation of basic human

needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information" (United Nations, 1995) — to be marginalized and socially excluded. **Relative poverty** refers to the minimum amount of income or resources needed to be able to participate in the "ordinary living patterns, customs, and activities" of a society (Townsend, 1979).

In Canada, a small portion of the population has the means to the highest standard of living. Statistics Canada data from 2005 showed that 10 percent of the population held 58 percent of our nation's wealth (Osberg, 2008). In 2007, the richest 1 percent took 13.8 percent of the total income earned by Canadians (Yalnizyan, 2010). In 2010, the median income earner in the top 1 percent earned 10 times more than the median income earner of the other 99 percent (Statistics Canada, 2013). Wealthy people receive the most schooling, have better health, and consume the most goods and services. Wealthy people also wield decision-making power. One aspect of their decision-making power comes from their positions as owners or top executives of corporations and banks. They are able to grant themselves salary raises and bonuses. By 2010, only two years into the economic crisis of 2008, the executive pay of CEOs at Canada's top 100 corporations jumped by 13 percent (McFarland, 2011), while negotiated wage increases in 2010 amounted to only 1.8 percent (HRSDC, 2010).

Many people think of Canada as a middle-class society. They think a few people are rich, a few are poor, and most are pretty well off, existing in the middle of the social strata. But as the data above indicate, the distribution of wealth is not even. Millions of women and men struggle to pay rent, buy food, and find work that pays a living wage. Moreover, the share of the total income claimed by those

in the middle-income ranges has been shrinking since the early 1980s, while the share taken by the wealthiest has been growing (Osberg, 2008).

Making Connections: Sociological Research

Measuring Levels of Poverty

Statistics Canada produces two relative measures of poverty: the low income measure (LIM) and the low income cut-off (LICO) measure. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada has developed an absolute measure: the market basket measure (MBM).

Low income measure: The LIM is defined as half the median family income. A person whose income is below that level is said to be in low income. The LIM is adjusted for family size.

Low income cut-off: The LICO is the income level below which a family would devote at least 20 percentage points more of their income to food, clothing, and shelter than an average family would. People are said to be in the low-income group if their income falls below this threshold. The threshold varies by family size and community size, as well as if income is calculated before or after taxes. For example, a single individual in Toronto would be said to be living in low income if his or her 2009 after-tax income was below $18,421.

Market basket measure: The MBM is a measure of the disposable income a family would

need to be able to purchase a basket of goods that includes food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and other basic needs. The dollar value of the MBM varies by family size and composition, as well as community size and location. MBM data are available since 2000 only.

The three measures produce different results. In 2009, according to each measure, the following numbers of Canadians were living in low income:

- LICO—3.2 million (9.6 per cent of the population)
- MBM—3.5 million (10.6 per cent)
- LIM—4.4 million (13.3 per cent)

Table 9.1 shows how the three measures also produce different results over time. Using the LICO measure results in a decreasing share of people in low income from 1996 to 2007, followed by a slight upturn in 2008 and 2009. The LIM measure results in a share of people in low income that has increased since 1990. The MBM, which has data starting only in 2000, shows results similar to the LICO but with a sharper upturn in 2008 and 2009.

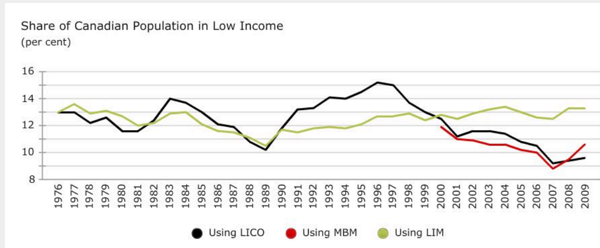

Table 9.1. "Measuring Levels of Poverty" excerpted from The Conference Board of Canada "Canadian Income Inequality: Is Canada becoming more unequal?" (2011, http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/hot-topics/caninequality.aspx). (Used under the Conference Board of Canada's Terms of Use: http://www.conferenceboard.ca/terms_of_use.aspx)

Trends in Social Inequality

The news from sociological research into inequality is that the gap in income and wealth between the rich and the poor has been increasing in Canada (Osberg, 2008). In 1982, the median income earner in the top 1% of incomes earned seven times more than the median income earner in the other 99%. In 2010, the median income earner in the top 1% earned ten times more. Moreover, while the median income for the top 1% increased from $191,600 to $283,000 in constant dollars (i.e., adjusted for inflation), the median income for the bottom 99% only increased from $28,000 to $28,400. In the early 1980s, the top 1% of income earners accounted for 7% of the total income generated in Canada, whereas in 2010 they accounted for 10.6%, down slightly from 12.1% in 2006 (Statistics

Canada, 2013). In effect, the incomes for middle-income earners remained flat over the last 30 years, while the incomes for the top 1% increased significantly both in absolute terms and as a proportion of all incomes. (Note: Median income is not the same as average income. It refers to the amount that the person who is exactly in the middle of an income range earned: 50% of the people in this income range earned more than the median, and 50% earned less).

Table 9.2. Share of Aggregate Incomes Received by Each Quintile of Familie and Unattached Individuals. (Table courtesy of Osberg, 2008/CCPA)

[Skip Table]

Income Group	**1951**	**1961**	**1971**	**1981**	**1991**	**1996**	**2001**	**2005**
Bottom 20% (poorest)	4.4%	4.2%	3.6%	4.6%	4.5%	4.2%	4.1%	4.1%
Second 20%	11.2%	11.9%	10.6%	11%	10%	9.6%	9.7%	9.6%
Middle 20%	18.3%	18.3%	17.6%	17.7%	16.4%	16%	15.6%	15.6
Fourth 20%	23.3%	24.5%	24.9%	25.1%	24.7%	24.6%	23.7%	23.9
Top 20% (richest)	42.8%	41.1%	43.3%	41.6%	44.4%	45.6%	46.9%	46.9

Sources Statistics Canada (1998) Income Distribution by Size in Canada Catalogue No. 13-207, CANSIM Table 202-0701, V1546465, J.R. Podoluk (1968) *Incomes of Canadians*, Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

This discrepancy does not simply mean that the very rich are increasing their share of the wealth at the expense of the very poor — the middle classes are also losing their share of the wealth. One way to analyze this trend is to examine the changing distribution of income in Canada over time. In Table 9.2 (above), changes in inequality are measured by looking at how the total annual income is distributed between each fifth (or "quintile") of Canadian families from the lowest earning to highest earning for different years (Osberg, 2008). If perfect *equality of income* existed, each quintile would have earned exactly 20% of the total income. Instead, Table 9.2 shows that between 1951 and 1981 the top 20% of family units received around 42% of total income, but after 1981 this figure steadily increased to 47%. On the other hand, the share of income of the middle 60% of families declined by 4.7%, going from 53.8% to 49.1%. The lowest 20% also lost 0.5% of their already tiny share, going from 4.6% to 4.1%. Although the majority of people in Canada have not seen any growth in real income in three decades (Osberg, 2008), the average income of the top 1% grew by about 180% (Yalnizyan, 2010). Over this period, the share of the total income received by the top 1% has doubled, the top 0.1% has tripled, and the top 0.01% has quintupled (Yalnizyan, 2010).

Why is this news? For several decades, Lars Osberg notes that the joke was that the study of income inequality was like watching grass grow because nothing ever happened (2008). Between 1946 and 1981, changes in income inequality were small despite the fact the Canadian economy went through a massive transformation: It transformed from an agricultural base to an industrial base; the population urbanized and doubled in size; the overall production of wealth measured by gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 4.5%; and per capita output increased

by 227% (Osberg, 2008). As Osberg puts it, the key question was why did economic inequality not change during this period of massive transformation? From 1981 until the present, during another period of rapid and extensive economic change in which the overall production of wealth continued to expand, economic inequality has increased dramatically. What happened?

The main explanatory factor is that between 1946 and 1981 real wages increased in pace with the growth of the economy, but since 1981 only the top 20% of families have seen any meaningful increase in real income while the very wealthy have seen huge increases. The taxable income of the top 1% of families increased by 80% between 1982 and 2004 (Obsberg, 2008). Neoliberal policies of reduced state expenditures and tax cuts have been major factors in defining the difference between these two eras. The neoliberal theory that the benefits of tax cuts to the rich would "trickle down" to the middle class and the poor has proven false. The biggest losers with regard to neoliberal policy, of course, are the very poor. As Osberg notes, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that the homeless — those forced to beg in the streets and those dependent on food banks — began to appear in Canada in significant numbers (2008).

Some have argued that to the degree that *equality of opportunity* exists, *inequality of condition* or inequality of "outcome" is perhaps not fair, but it is justifiable. Others have argued that because capitalism is built on the basis of structural inequality, equality of condition is impossible. The idea that equality of opportunity — a **meritocracy** — actually exists and that it leads to a meaningful access to social mobility — the movement of people from one social position to another — is debatable, as we will see below. Also, it is important to note that if total equality of

condition — a world where everyone's social position and financial rewards would be exactly the same — is unlikely, reducing the amount of social inequality is possible. In fact degrees of social inequality vary significantly between jurisdictions. Within industrialized Wester societies, those with lower rates of economic inequality score better on most measures of population well-being including population health, happiness and crime.

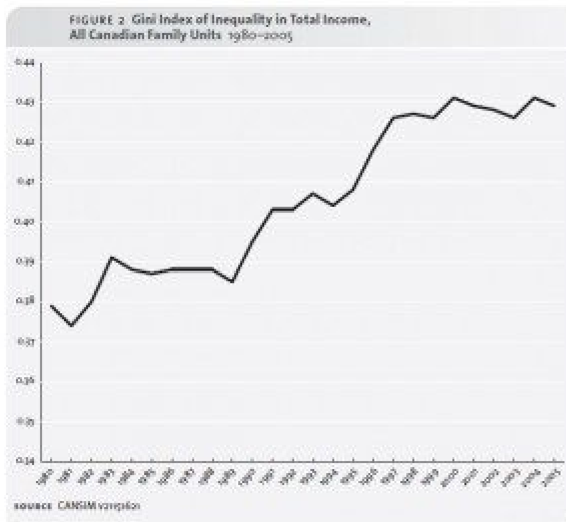

Table 9.3. Gini Index of inequality: 1980-2005 (Figure courtesy of Osberg, 2008/CCPA)

The **Gini Index** is a measure of income inequality in which zero is absolute equality and one is absolute inequality. Table 9.3 shows that Canada's degree of inequality increased by 5% between 1980 and 2005 from a Gini Index of 0.38 to 0.43 (Osberg, 2008). From a comparative perspective, Canada's Gini Index is much higher than many European countries but is lower than the extremes of inequality in the United States and Mexico (who are

Canada's NAFTA partners). See Table 9.4 (below). This comparison indicates that a much greater equality of condition can exist even under the same pressures of globalization if different social and economic policy models are chosen. Even though the countries with the lowest levels of inequality — Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Austria — have progressive tax systems and strong welfare states, they are able to maintain high levels of employment and economic growth while remaining "competitive" in the global economy (Osberg, 2010). If addressing poverty and inequality rather than promoting greater transfers of wealth to the rich is a reasonable goal, a variety of viable policy alternatives are available from which Canadians can choose.

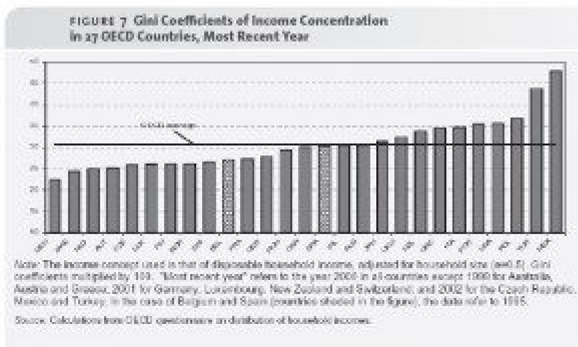

Table 9.4. Gini Coefficients of Income Concentration in 27 OECD Countries, 2000 (or Most Recent Year) (Figure courtesy of Osberg, 2008/CCPA)

Social Classes in Canada

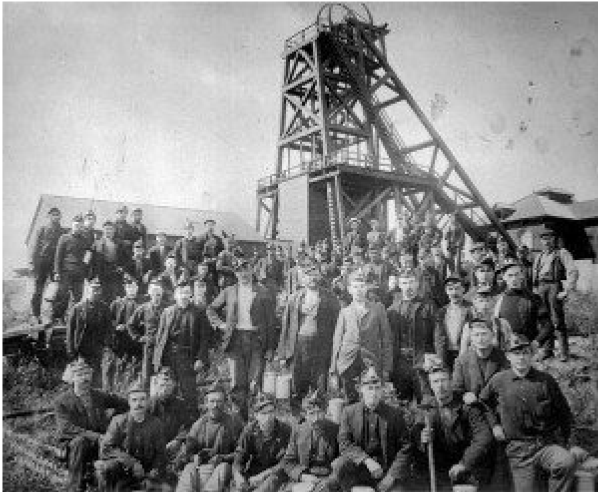

Figure 9.9: The traditional working class — Miners in Nanaimo, B.C. (late 19th century). The Nanaimo coal mines were the site of a brutal two-year strike from 1912–1914 against low wages and dangerous working conditions. Source: Miners of Number One Mine, Nanaimo, at the pithead, B-03624 (Image courtesy of the Royal B.C. Museum)

Figure 9.10: The owning c Dunsmuir shown beside th Hatley Castle residence ne Royal Roads University). J family's coal fortune and n operations on Vancouver I a powerful spokesman for anti-union efforts in B.C. a Premier from 1900–1902.

Does a person's appearance indicate class? Can you tell a person's education level based on clothing? Do you know a person's income by the car one drives? There was a time in Canada when people's class was more visibly apparent. In some countries, like the United Kingdom, class differences can still be gauged by differences in schooling, lifestyle, and even accent. In Canada, however, it is harder to determine class from outward appearances.

For sociologists, too, categorizing class is a fluid science. The chief division in the discipline is between Marxist and Weberian approaches to social class

(Abercrombie & Urry, 1983). Marx's analysis, as we saw earlier in this chapter, emphasized a materialist approach to the underlying structures of the capitalist economy. Marx's definition of social class rested essentially on one variable: a group's relation to the means of production (ownership or non-ownership of productive property or capital). In Marxist analysis there are, therefore, two dominant classes in capitalism — the working class and the owning class — and any divisions within the classes based on occupation, status, education, etc. are less important than the tendency toward the increasing separation and polarization of these classes.

Weber defined social class slightly differently, as the "life chances" or opportunities to acquire rewards one shares in common with others by virtue of one's possession of property, goods, or opportunities for income (1969). Owning property/capital or not owning property/capital is still the basic variable that defines a person's class situation or life chances. However, class is defined with respect to *markets* rather than the process of *production*. It is the value of one's products or skills on the labour market that determines whether one has greater or lesser life chances. This leads to a hierarchical class schema with many gradations. A surgeon who works in a hospital is a member of the working class in Marx's model, just like cable TV technicians, for example, because he or she works for a wage or salary. Nevertheless the skill the surgeon sells is valued much more highly in the labour market than that of cable TV technicians because of the relative rarity of the skill, the number of years of education required to learn the skill, and the responsibilities involved in practising the skill.

Analyses of class inspired by Weber tend to emphasize gradations of status with regard to a number of variables

like wealth, income, education, and occupation. Class stratification is not just determined by a group's economic position but by the prestige of the group's occupation, education level, consumption, and lifestyle. It is a matter of **status** — the level of honour or prestige one holds in the community by virtue of ones social position — as much as a matter of class. Based on the Weberian approach, some sociologists talk about upper, middle, and lower classes (with many subcategories within them) in a way that mixes status categories with class categories. These gradations are often referred to as a group's **socio-economic status** (**SES**), their social position relative to others based on income, education, and occupation. For example, although plumbers might earn more than high school teachers and have greater life chances in a particular economy, the status division between blue-collar work (people who "work with their hands") and white-collar work (people who "work with their minds") means that plumbers, for example, are characterized as lower class but teachers as middle class. There is an arbitrariness to the division of classes into upper, middle, and lower.

However, this manner of classification based on status distinctions does capture something about the subjective experience of class and the shared lifestyle and consumption patterns of class that Marx's categories often do not. An NHL hockey player receiving a salary of $6 million a year is a member of the working class, strictly speaking. He might even go on strike or get locked out according to the dynamic of capital/labour conflict described by Marx. Nevertheless it is difficult to see what the life chances of the hockey player have in common with a landscaper or truck driver, despite the fact they might share a common working-class background.

Social class is, therefore, a complex category to analyze.

Social class has both a strictly *material* quality relating to a group's structural position within the economic system, and a *social* quality relating to common perceptions of class, political divisions in society, and class-based lifestyles and consumption patterns. Taking into account both the Marxist and Weberian models, social class has at least three objective components: a group's position in the occupational structure, a group's position in the authority structure (i.e., who has authority over whom), and a group's position in the property structure (i.e., ownership or non-ownership of capital). It also has an important subjective component that relates to recognitions of status, distinctions of lifestyle, and ultimately how people perceive their place in the class hierarchy.

One way of distinguishing the classes that takes this complexity into account is by focusing on the authority structure. Classes can be divided according to how much relative power and control members of a class have over their lives. On this basis, we might distinguish between the owning class (or bourgeoisie), the middle class, and the traditional working class. The owning class not only have power and control over their own lives, their economic position gives them power and control over others' lives as well. To the degree that we can talk about a "middle class" composed of small business owners and educated, professional, or administrative labour, it is because they do not generally control other strata of society, but they do exert control over their own work to some degree. In contrast, the traditional working class has little control over their work or lives. Below, we will explore the major divisions of Canadian social class and their key subcategories.

Making Connections: Classic Sociologists

Marx and Weber on Social Class: How Do They Differ?

Figure 9.11. Max Weber: Class as common "life chances" based on possession of goods and opportunities for income (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

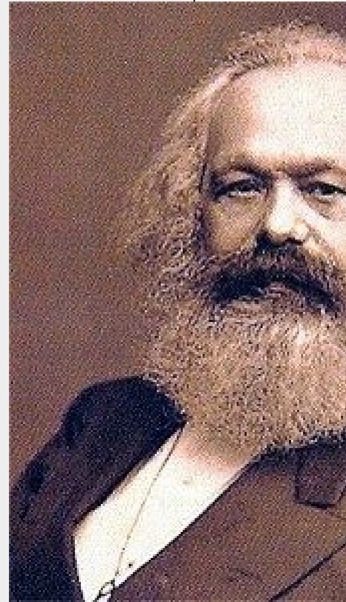

Figure 9.12. Karl Marx: Class as relatio of production (Image courtesy of Wikime

Often, Marx and Weber are perceived to be at odds in their approaches to class and social

inequality, but it is perhaps better to see them as articulating different styles of analysis. Weber's analysis presents a more complex model of the social hierarchy of capitalist society than Marx. Weber's model goes beyond *structural* class position to include the variables of **status** (degree of social prestige or honour) and **power** (degree of political influence). Thus, Weber provides a multi-dimensional model of social hierarchy. It is important to note that although individuals might be from the same objective class, their position in the social hierarchy might differ according to their status and political influence. For example, women and men might be equal in terms of their class position, but because of the inequality in the status of the genders within each class, women as a group remain lower in the social hierarchy.

With respect to class, Weber also relies on a different definition than Marx. Weber defines class as the "life chances" one shares in common with others by virtue of one's possession of goods or opportunities for income (1969). Class is defined with respect to markets rather than the process of production. As in Marx's analysis, the economic interests that stem from owning property/capital or not owning property/capital are still the basic variables that define one's class situation or life chances. However, as the value of different types of property (e.g., industrial, real estate, financial, etc.) or different types of opportunity for income (i.e., different types of marketable skills) varies according to changes in the commodity or labour markets, Weber can provide a more nuanced

description of an individual's class position than Marx. A skilled tradesman like a pipe welder might enjoy a higher class position and greater life chances in Northern Alberta where such skills are in demand, than a high school teacher in Vancouver or Victoria where the number of qualified teachers exceeds the number of positions available. If we add the element of status into the picture, the situation becomes even more complex as the educational requirements and social responsibilities of the high school teacher usually confer more social prestige than the requirements and responsibilities of the pipe welder. Nevertheless, Weber's analysis is *descriptive* rather than *analytical*. It can provide a useful description of differences between the levels or "strata" in a social hierarchy or stratification system, but does not provide an analysis of the formation of hierarchy itself.

On the other hand, Marx's analysis of class is essentially one-dimensional. It has one variable: the relationship to the means of production. If one is a professional hockey player or a clerk in a supermarket, one works for a wage and is therefore a member of the working class. In this regard, his analysis challenges common sense as the difference between the different "fragments" of the working class — those who survive by selling their labour for a wage or salary — seem paramount, at least from the point of view of the subjective experience of class. It would seem that hockey players, doctors, lawyers, professors, and business executives have very little in common with grocery clerks, factory or agricultural workers, tradespersons, or low level

administrative staff despite the fact that they all depend on being paid by someone. However, the key point of Marx's analysis is not to ignore the existence of status distinctions within classes, but to examine class structure *dialectically* so to provide a more comprehensive and historical picture of class dynamics.

You will recall the four components of dialectical analysis from Chapter 1: Everything is related; everything changes; change proceeds from the quantitative to the qualitative; and change is the product of the unity and struggle of opposites. These dialectical qualities are also central to Marx's account of the hierarchical structure of classes in capitalist society. The main point of the dialectical analysis of class is that the working class and the owning class have to be understood in relationship to one another. They emerged together out of the old class structure of feudalism, and each exists only because the other exists. The wages that define the wage labourer are paid by the capitalist; the profit and capital accumulated by the capitalist are products of the workers' labour.

In Marx's dialectical model, change occurs because the "unity" of this system is characterized by the struggle of opposites (i.e., the classes are "structurally in conflict" because of the contradiction in their class interests). The composition of classes changes over time; the statuses of different occupations vary; the proportions between workers' income and capitalists' profit change; and the types of

production and the means of production change (through the introduction of labour saving technologies, globalization, new commodities, etc.). In addition, change proceeds from the quantitative to the qualitative in the sense that changes in purely quantitative variables like salary, working conditions, unemployment levels, rates of profitability, etc. lead to changes in qualitative variables like the subjective experience of class, the divisions of "left" and "right" in political struggles, and the formation of class consciousness.

Thus, the strength of Marx's analysis is its ability to go beyond a description of where different groups fit within the class structure at a given moment in time to an analysis of why those groups and their relative positions change with respect to one another. The dialectical approach reveals the underlying logic of class structure as a dynamic system and the potential commonality of interests and subjective experiences that define class-consciousness. As a result, in an era in which the precariousness of many high status jobs has become clearer, the divisions of economic interests between the different segments of the working class becomes less so.

The Owning Class

Figure 9.13. Members of the upper class can afford to live, work, and play in exclusive places designed for luxury and comfort. (Photo courtesy of PrimeImageMedia.com/Flickr)

The owning class is considered Canada's top, and only the powerful elite get to see the view from there. In Canada, the richest 86 people (or families) account for 0.002 percent of the population, but in 2012 they had accumulated the equivalent wealth of the lowest 34 percent of the country's population (McDonald, 2014). The combined net worth of these 86 families added up to $178 billion in 2012, which equalled the net worth of the lowest 11.4 million Canadians. In terms of income, in 2007 the average income of the richest 0.01 percent of Canadians was $3.833 million (Yalnizyan, 2010).

Money provides not just access to material goods, but also access to power. Canada's owning class wields a lot of power. As corporate leaders, their decisions affect the job status of millions of people. As media owners, they shape

the collective identity of the nation. They run the major network television stations, radio broadcasts, newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, and sports franchises. As philanthropists, they establish foundations to support social causes they believe in. They also fund think tanks like the C. D. Howe Institute and the Fraser Institute that promote the values and interests of business elites. As campaign contributors, they influence politicians and fund campaigns, usually to protect their own economic interests.

Canadian society has historically distinguished between “old money” (inherited wealth passed from one generation to the next) and “new money” (wealth you have earned and built yourself). While both types may have equal net worth, they have traditionally held different social standing. People of old money, firmly situated in the upper class for generations, have held high prestige. Their families have socialized them to know the customs, norms, and expectations that come with wealth. Often, the very wealthy do not work for wages. Some study business or become lawyers in order to manage the family fortune.

New money members of the owning class are not oriented to the customs and mores of the elite. They have not gone to the most exclusive schools. They have not established old-money social ties. People with new money might flaunt their wealth, buying sports cars and mansions, but they might still exhibit behaviours attributed to the middle and lower classes. For example, Toronto politicians Rob and Doug Ford are estimated to hold family assets worth $50 million, yet they present themselves as just “average guys” who stand with their blue-collar constituents against “rich elitist people” (McArther, 2013; Warner, 2014). Rob Ford’s infamous crack cocaine smoking, public binge drinking, and use of foul language

would not make him at home within the circles of old money in Canada.

The Middle Class

Figure 9.14. These members of a club likely consider themselves middle class. (Photo courtesy of United Way Canada-Centraide Canada/Flickr)

Many people call themselves middle class, but there are differing ideas about what that means. People with annual incomes of $150,000 call themselves middle class, as do people who annually earn $30,000. That helps explain why some sociologists divide the middle class into upper and lower subcategories. These divisions are based on gradations of status defined by levels of education, types of work, cultural capital, and the lifestyles afforded by income.

Upper-middle-class people tend to hold bachelor's and postgraduate degrees in subjects such as business, management, law, or medicine that lead to occupations

in the professions. **Professions** are occupations that claim high levels of specialized technical and intellectual expertise and are governed and regulated by autonomous professional organizations (like the Canadian Medical Association or legal bar associations). Lower-middle-class members hold bachelor's degrees or associate's degrees from two-year community or technical colleges that lead to various types of white collar, service, administrative, or paraprofessional occupations.

Comfort is a key concept to the middle class. Middle-class people work hard and live fairly comfortable lives. Upper-middle-class people tend to pursue careers that earn comfortable incomes. They provide their families with large homes and nice cars. They may go skiing or boating on vacation. Their children receive quality educations (Gilbert, 2010).

In the lower middle class, people hold jobs supervised by members of the upper middle class. They fill technical, lower-level management or administrative support positions. Compared to traditional working-class work, lower-middle-class jobs carry more prestige and come with slightly higher paycheques. With these incomes, people can afford a decent, mainstream lifestyle, but they struggle to maintain it. They generally do not have enough income to build significant savings. In addition, their grip on class status is more precarious than in the upper tiers of the class system. When budgets are tight, lower-middle-class people are often the ones to lose their jobs.

The Traditional Working Class

Figure 9.15. This man is a custodian at a restaurant. His job, which is crucial to the business, is considered lower class. (Photo courtesy of Frederick Md Publicity/Flickr)

The traditional working class is sometimes also referred to as being part of the lower class. Just like the middle and upper classes, the lower class can be divided into subsets: the working class, the working poor, and the underclass. Compared to the middle class, traditional working-class people have less of an educational background and usually earn smaller incomes. While there are many working-class trades that require skill and pay middle-class wages, the majority often work jobs that require little prior skill or experience, doing routine tasks under close supervision.

Traditional working-class people, the highest subcategory of the lower class, are usually equated with blue-collar types of jobs: “wage-workers who are engaged in the production of commodities, the extraction of natural

resources, the production of food, the operation of the transportation network required for production and distribution, the construction industry, and the maintenance of energy and communication networks" (Veltmeyer, 1986, p. 83). The work is considered blue collar because it is hands-on and often physically demanding. The term "blue collar" comes from the traditional blue coveralls worn by manual labourers.

Beneath those in the working class are the working poor. Like some sections of the working class, they have unskilled, low-paying employment. However, their jobs rarely offer benefits such as retirement planning, and their positions are often seasonal or temporary. They work as migrant farm workers, house cleaners, and day labourers. Some are high school dropouts. Some are illiterate, unable to read job ads. Many do not vote because they do not believe that any politician will help change their situation (Beeghley, 2008).

How can people work full time and still be poor? Even working full time, more than a million of the working poor earn incomes too meagre to support a family. In 2012, 1.8 million working people (including 540,000 working full time year round) earned less than Statistic Canada's low income cut-off level, which defines poverty in Canada (Johnstone & Cooper, 2013). Minimum wage varies from province to province, from $9.95/h in Alberta to $11/h in Nunavut and Ontario (Retail Council of Canada, 2014). However, it is estimated that a **living wage** — based on a 35-hour work week — is $19.14/h in Vancouver, $16.60/h in Toronto, and $14.95/h in Hamilton (differences due to the difference in cost of living in these locations). A living wage is the amount needed to meet a family's basic needs and enable them to participate in community life (Johnstone & Cooper, 2013). Even for a single person,

minimum wage is low. A married couple with children will have a hard time covering expenses.

The underclass or lumpenproletariat is Canada's lowest tier. Members of the underclass live mainly in inner cities. Many are unemployed or underemployed. Those who do hold jobs typically perform menial tasks for little pay. Some of the underclass are homeless. For many, welfare systems provide a much-needed support through food assistance, medical care, housing, and the like.

Social Mobility

Social mobility refers to the ability to change positions within a social stratification system. When people improve or diminish their economic status in a way that affects social class, they experience social mobility. This is a key concept in determining whether inequalities of condition limit people's life chances or whether we can meaningfully speak of the existence of equality of opportunity in a society. A high degree of social mobility, upwards or downwards, would suggest that the stratification system of a society is in fact open (i.e., that there is equality of opportunity).

Upward mobility refers to an increase — or upward shift — in social class. In Canada, people applaud the rags-to-riches achievements of celebrities like Guy Laliberté who went from street busking in Quebec to being the CEO of Cirque du Soleil, with a net worth of $2.5 billion. Actor and comedian Jim Carey lived with his family in camper van at one point growing up in Scarborough, Ontario. Ron Joyce was a beat policemen in Hamilton before he co-founded Tim Hortons. CEO of Magna International Frank Stronach immigrated to Canada from Austria in 1955 with only $50 to his name. There are many stories of people

from modest beginnings rising to fame and fortune. But the truth is that relative to the overall population, the number of people who launch from poverty to wealth is very small. Still, upward mobility is not only about becoming rich and famous. In Canada, people who earn a university degree, get a job promotion, or marry someone with a good income may move up socially.

Downward mobility indicates a lowering of one's social class. Some people move downward because of business setbacks, unemployment, or illness. Dropping out of school, losing a job, or becoming divorced may result in a loss of income or status and, therefore, downward social mobility.

Intergenerational mobility explains a difference in social class between different generations of a family. For example, an upper-class executive may have parents who belonged to the middle class. In turn, those parents may have been raised in the lower class. Patterns of intergenerational mobility can reflect long-term societal changes.

Intragenerational mobility describes a difference in social class between different members of the same generation. For example, the wealth and prestige experienced by one person may be quite different from that of his or her siblings.

Structural mobility happens when societal changes enable a whole group of people to move up or down the social class ladder. Structural mobility is attributable to changes in society as a whole, not individual changes. In the first half of the 20th century industrialization expanded the Canadian economy, which raised the standard of living and led to upward structural mobility. In today's work economy, the recession and the outsourcing of jobs overseas have contributed to high unemployment rates.

Many people have experienced economic setbacks, creating a wave of downward structural mobility.

Many Canadians believe that people move up in class because of individual efforts and move down by their own doing. In the ideal of equality of opportunity, one's access to rewards would exactly equal one's personal efforts and merits toward achieving those rewards. One's class position or other social characteristics (gender, race, ethnicity, etc.) would not skew the relationship between merit and rewards. Others believe that equality of opportunity is a myth designed to keep people motivated to work hard, while getting them to accept social inequality as the legitimate outcome of personal achievement. The ideology of equality of opportunity is just a mirage that masks real and permanent structural inequality in society. The rich stay rich, and the poor stay poor. Data that measures social mobility suggest that the truth is a bit of both.

Typically social mobility is measured by comparing either the occupational status or the earnings between parents and children. If children's earnings or status remain the same as their parents then there is no social mobility. If children's earnings or status moves up or down with respect to their parents, then there is social mobility. Corak and colleagues compared "intergenerational earnings elasticity" between fathers and sons in Canada and the United States (2010). (Some data are available on daughters as well, but it is less common and therefore difficult to use to make cross-national comparisons.) The data show that there is a much lower degree of social mobility in the United States than in Canada. In the United States almost one half of the fathers' earning advantage was passed on to their sons, while in Canada less than one-fifth of the father's earnings advantage was passed on.

In an international comparison, the United Kingdom had even lower social mobility than the United States while Finland, Norway, and Denmark had greater social mobility than Canada.

Questions of mobility and equality of opportunity most often centre on the ability of those born into disadvantage to 'move up' into the middle class and to this end the World Economic Forum in an international comparison, found that in Canada it would take four generations for a child born into a low-income family to reach the medium income. While this compares favourably to the U.S. where it would take five generations, we do much worse than Denmark where it would take only two generations and in Finland and Sweden, three. What is the secret to maximizing social mobility and equality of opportunity in capitalist societies? According to the WEF, "The Nordic countries provide high quality and equitable education systems, strong social safety nets and inclusive institutions alongside job opportunities and good working conditions." https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/01/these-are-the-10-countries-with-the-best-social-mobility/

Class Traits

Figure 9.16. Does taste or fashion sense indicate class? Is there any way to tell if this young man comes from an upper-, middle-, or lower-class background? (Photo courtesy of Kelly Bailey/ Flickr)

Class traits, also called class markers, are the typical behaviours, customs, and norms that define each class. They define a crucial subjective component of class identities. Class traits indicate the level of exposure a person has to a wide range of cultural resources. Class traits also indicate the amount of resources a person has to spend on items like hobbies, vacations, and leisure activities.

People may associate the upper class with enjoyment of costly, refined, or highly cultivated tastes — expensive clothing, luxury cars, high-end fundraisers, and opulent vacations. People may also believe that the middle and lower classes are more likely to enjoy camping, fishing,

or hunting, shopping at large retailers, and participating in community activities. It is important to note that while these descriptions may be class traits, they may also simply be stereotypes. Moreover, just as class distinctions have blurred in recent decades, so too have class traits. A very wealthy person may enjoy bowling as much as opera. A factory worker could be a skilled French cook. Pop star Justin Bieber might dress in hoodies, ball caps, and ill fitting clothes, and a low-income hipster might own designer shoes.

These days, individual taste does not necessarily follow class lines. Still, you are not likely to see someone driving a Mercedes living in an inner-city neighbourhood. And most likely, a resident of a wealthy gated community will not be riding a bicycle to work. Class traits often develop based on cultural behaviours that stem from the resources available within each class.

Making Connections: Sociological Research

Turn-of-the-Century “Social Problem Novels”: Sociological Gold Mines

Figure 9.17. Charles Dickens (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons).

Class distinctions were sharper in the 19th century and earlier, in part because people easily accepted them. The ideology of social order made class structure seem natural, right, and just.In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, American and

British novelists played a role in changing public perception. They published novels in which characters struggled to survive against a merciless class system. These dissenting authors used gender and morality to question the class system and expose its inequalities. They protested the suffering of urbanization and industrialization, drawing attention to these issues.

These "social problem novels," sometimes called Victorian realism, forced middle-class readers into an uncomfortable position: The readers had to question and challenge the natural order of social class.

For speaking out so strongly about the social issues of class, authors were both praised and criticized. Most authors did not want to dissolve the class system. They wanted to bring about an awareness that would improve conditions for the lower classes, while maintaining their own higher-class positions (DeVine, 2005).

Soon, middle-class readers were not their only audience. In 1870, Forster's Elementary Education Act required all children aged five through 12 in England and Wales to attend school. The act increased literacy levels among the urban poor, causing a rise in sales of cheap newspapers and magazines. Additionally, the increasing number of people who rode public transit systems created a demand for "railway literature," as it was called (Williams, 1984). These reading materials are credited with the move toward democratization in England. By 1900 the British middle class

established a rigid definition for itself, and England's working class also began to self-identify and demand a better way of life.

Many of the novels of that era are seen as sociological goldmines. They are studied as existing sources because they detail the customs and mores of the upper, middle, and lower classes of that period in history.

Examples of "social problem" novels include Charles Dickens's (1812-1870) *The Adventures of Oliver Twist* (1838), which shocked readers with its brutal portrayal of the realities of poverty, vice, and crime. Thomas Hardy's (1840-1928) *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) was considered revolutionary by critics for its depiction of working-class women (DeVine, 2005), and American novelist Theodore Dreiser's (1871-1945) *Sister Carrie* (1900) portrayed an accurate and detailed description of early Chicago.

9.3. Global Stratification and Inequality

Figure 9.18. (a) A family lives in this grass hut in Ethiopia. (b) Another family lives in a single-wide trailer in the trailer park in the United States. Both families are considered poor or lower class. With such differences in global stratification, what constitutes poverty? (Photo (a) courtesy of Canned Muffins/Flickr; photo (b) courtesy of Herb Neufeld/Flickr)

Global stratification compares the wealth, economic stability, status, and power of countries across the world. Global stratification highlights worldwide patterns of social inequality.

In the early years of civilization, hunter-gatherer and agrarian societies lived off the Earth, rarely interacting with other societies. When explorers began travelling, societies began trading goods as well as ideas and customs.

In the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution created unprecedented wealth in Western Europe and North America. Due to mechanical inventions and new means of production, people began working in factories — not only men, but women and children as well. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, industrial technology had gradually raised the standard of living for many people in the United States and Europe.

The Industrial Revolution also saw the rise of vast inequalities between countries that were industrialized and

those that were not. As some nations embraced technology and saw increased wealth and goods, others maintained their ways; as the gap widened, the nonindustrialized nations fell further behind. Some social researchers, such as Walt Rostow (1916-2003), suggest that the disparity also resulted from power differences. Applying a critical sociological perspective, he asserts that industrializing nations took advantage of the resources of traditional nations. As industrialized nations became rich, other nations became poor (Rostow, 1960).

Sociologists studying global stratification analyze economic comparisons between nations. Income, purchasing power, and wealth are used to calculate global stratification. Global stratification also compares the quality of life that a country's population can have.

Poverty levels have been shown to vary greatly. The poor in wealthy countries like Canada or Europe are much better off than the poor in less-industrialized countries such as Mali or India. In 2002 the United Nations implemented the Millennium Project, an attempt to cut poverty worldwide by the year 2015. To reach the project's goal, planners in 2006 estimated that industrialized nations must set aside 0.7 percent of their gross national income — the total value of the nation's goods and services, plus or minus income received from and sent to other nations — to aid in developing countries (Landler & Sanger, 2009; Millennium Project, 2006). The project was successful in reaching its target of cutting extreme poverty by half — the number of people living on $1.25/day or less — but fell slightly short of halving the number of people suffering from hunger. Undernourishment in developing regions fell from 23.3% to 12.9% (United Nations, 2015).

Neoliberalism and Globalization

Figure 9.19. Luxury vacation resorts can contribute to a poorer country's economy. This one, in Jamaica, attracts middle and upper-middle class people from wealthier nations. The resort is a source of income and provides jobs for local people. Just outside its borders, however, are poverty-stricken neighbourhoods. (Photo courtesy of gailf548/Flickr)

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the growing inequality in Canada can be seen as a product in a shift in government policy from a welfare state model of redistribution of resources to a neoliberal model of free market distribution of resources. This transition does not take place in a vacuum, however. Just as global capitalism is an economic system characterized by constant change, so too is the relationship between global capitalism and national state policy. Throughout the 19th and first half of the 20th century, the role of the state in the wealthy Northern countries was typically limited to providing the

legal mechanisms and enforcement to protect private property. Capitalism itself was for the most part regulated by competition until stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression of the 1930s. From then on, an awareness grew that the capacity for producing commodities had far exceeded the ability of people to buy them (Harvey, 1989). The economic model of Fordism, adopted in the wealthy Northern countries, offered a solution to the crisis by creating a system of intensive mass production (maximum use of machinery and minute divisions of labour), cheap products, high wages, and mass consumption. This system required a disciplined work force and labour peace, however, which is one reason why states began to take a different role in the economy.

The post-World War II labour-management compromise or "accord" involved the recognition and institutionalization of labour unions, the mediation of the state in capital/labour disputes, the use of taxes and Keynesian economic policy to address economic recessions, and the gradual roll out of social safety net provisions. This set of policies collectively became known as the welfare state. In a high wage/high consumption economy, the ability of individuals to continue to consume even when misfortune struck was paramount, so unemployment insurance, pensions, health care, and disability provisions were important components of the new accord. The accord also reaffirmed the rights of private property or capital to introduce new technology, to reorganize production as they saw fit, and to invest wherever they pleased. Therefore, it was not a system of *economic* democracy or socialism. Nevertheless, the claims of full employment, continued prosperity, and the creation of a "just society" appeared plausible within the confines of the capitalist economic system.

Figure 9.20. Pierre Trudeau (shown here in a photo from 1975) was elected leader of the Liberal Party at the 1968 convention — "Canada must be a just society" (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

When Fordism and the welfare state system began to break down in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the relationship between the state and the economy began to change again. In step with the development of the post-Fordist economy of lean production, precarious employment, and niche market consumption, the state began to withdraw from its guarantee of providing universal social services and social security. **Neoliberalism** is the term used to define the new rationality of government, which abandons the interventionist model of the welfare state to emphasize the use of "free market" mechanisms to regulate society.

Thus, neoliberalism is a set of policies in which the state

reduces its role in providing public services, regulating industry, redistributing wealth, and protecting "the commons" — i.e., the collective property that exists for everyone to share (the environment, public and community facilities, airwaves, etc.). These policies are promoted by advocates as ways of addressing the "inefficiency of big government," the "burden on the taxpayer," the "need to cut red tape," and the "culture of entitlement and welfare dependency." In the place of "big" government, the virtues of the competitive marketplace are extolled. The market is said to promote more efficiency, lower costs, pragmatic decision making, non-favouritism, and a disciplined work ethic, etc.

Of course the facts often tell a different story. For example, government-funded health care in Canada costs far less per person than private health care in the United States (OECD, 2015). A country like Norway, which has a much higher rate of taxation than Canada, also has much lower unemployment, lower income inequality, lower inflation, better public services, a higher standard of living, and yet nevertheless has a globally competitive corporate sector with substantial state ownership and control (especially in the areas of oil and gas production, which is 80% owned by the Norwegian state) (Campbell, 2013). The policies of deregulation that caused the financial crisis of 2008, led even Alan Greenspan (b. 1926) the neoliberal economist and former Chairman of the United States Federal Reserve, to acknowledge that the model of free market "rationality" was flawed (CBC News, 2013). Since the financial crisis was a product of Greenspan's tenure at the Federal Reserve, and a result of the neoliberal policy of tax cuts and market deregulation that he advocated, his acknowledgment of the failure of free market rationality is significant.

As we noted earlier in this chapter, while the policies of government within the capitalist state have been changing, they are not occurring in a vacuum; rather, they are unfolding in the context of the developments of global capitalism. From its origins, capitalism has been global in scope. Marx and Engels described globalization in 1848:

> The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. (Marx & Engels, 1848/1977, p. 224)

The process of globalization intensified after World War II, and especially in the late 20th century with the introduction of new technologies that enabled vast volumes of capital and goods to circulate globally. The globalization of investment and production means that capital is increasingly able to shift production around the world to where labour costs are cheapest and profit greatest. In fact, as Ulrich Beck (1944-2015) put it, the effect of globalization has been to “conjure away distance” on a

variety of different levels (2000, p. 20). He has argued that political actors no longer:

> live and act in the self-enclosed spaces of national states and their respective national societies. Globalization means that borders become markedly less relevant to everyday behaviour in the various dimensions of economics, information, ecology, technology, cross-cultural conflict and civil society. (2000, p. 20)

The terrain on which corporate, political, environmental, and other types of decisions are made is no longer confined to the boundaries of the state, which diminishes the ability of national governments to independently control economic and foreign policy. Thus, globalization represents a weakening of the autonomy and power of states. Neoliberalism is not only an internal domestic response to the economic crises and fall in the rates of profit, which began in the late 1960s, but also is a response to the ever more competitive global market for capital. Neoliberal policy is presented as a way to attract increasingly fickle global capital by making entire countries more "competitive." The result, as David Harvey (b. 1935) forcefully argues, has been to massively shift the balance of power to the economic elites of the global capitalist class (2005, pp. 16–19). As a result wealth has also been redistributed upwards.

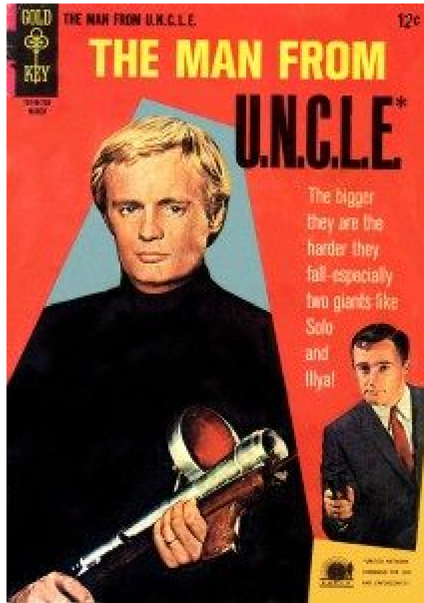

Figure 9.21. The Man from U.N.C.L.E. (United Network Command for Law and Enforcement) was a 1960s TV show based on the idea of a secret world organization dedicated to policing the entire globe (Image courtesy of James Vaughan/ Flickr)

The changing configuration of global capitalism and politics has been described by some as the reemergence of **empire** (Hardt & Negri, 2000). Rather than a sovereign state system of unique and independent nation-states, in many ways the global order is better described today as a single unit within which state sovereignty has been transferred to a higher entity (Negri, 2004, p. 59). Numerous trade agreements have harmonized economies and removed borders that restrict the flow of capital and goods, and in recent decades frequent global “police

actions" and trade embargoes have been enacted by various "coalitions of the willing" to enforce peace or intervene in domestic policy (in, for example, Iraq, Yugoslavia, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iran, Libya, and Syria, etc.). Similarly, the Kyoto Protocol on climate change or the Ottawa Treaty on landmines are examples of global initiatives that blur the boundaries of nation states. Empire in this sense refers to a new supra-national, global form of sovereignty whose "territory" is the entire globe. Antonio Negri (b. 1933) makes the point that this is not the same as saying that the world is dominated and controlled by the United States; rather, power is exercised through a "network" of dominant nation-states, supranational institutions (e.g., the UN, IMF, WTO, G8, NATO, etc.) and major capitalist corporations (Hardt & Negri, 2000; Negri, 2004). Empire, rather than being a form of imperialism like that which dominated in the era of colonialism, is a new political form that has emerged in response to the dynamics of global capitalism.

9.4. Theoretical Perspectives on Social Inequality

Basketball is one of the highest-paying professional sports. There is stratification even among teams. For example, the Minnesota Timberwolves hand out the lowest annual payroll, while the Los Angeles Lakers reportedly pay the highest. Kobe Bryant, a Lakers shooting guard who retired in 2016, was one of the highest paid athletes in the NBA, earning around $25 million a year (Basketballreference.com, 2011). Even within specific fields, layers are stratified and members are ranked.

In sociology, even an issue such as NBA salaries can be seen from various points of view. Functionalists will examine the purpose of such high salaries, while critical

sociologists will study the exorbitant salaries as an unfair distribution of money. Social stratification takes on new meanings when it is examined from different sociological perspectives — functionalism, critical sociology, and interpretive sociology.

Functionalism

In sociology, the functionalist perspective examines how society's parts operate. According to functionalism, different aspects of society exist because they serve a needed purpose. What is the function of social stratification?

In 1945, sociologists Kingsley Davis (1908-1997) and Wilbert Moore (1914-1987) published the **Davis-Moore thesis**, which argued that the greater the functional importance of a social role, the greater must be the reward. The theory posits that social stratification represents the inherently unequal value of different work. Certain tasks in society are more valuable than others. Qualified people who fill those positions must be rewarded more than others.

According to Davis and Moore, a firefighter's job is more important than, for instance, a grocery store cashier's job. The cashier position does not require the same skill and training level as firefighting. Without the incentive of higher pay and better benefits, why would someone be willing to rush into burning buildings? If pay levels were the same, the firefighter might as well work as a grocery store cashier. Davis and Moore believed that rewarding more important work with higher levels of income, prestige, and power encourages people to work harder and longer.

Davis and Moore stated that, in most cases, the degree

of skill required for a job determines that job's importance. They also stated that the more skill required for a job, the fewer qualified people there would be to do that job. Certain jobs, such as cleaning hallways or answering phones, do not require much skill. The employees don't need a college degree. Other work, like designing a highway system or delivering a baby, requires immense skill.

In 1953, Melvin Tumin (1919-1994) countered the Davis-Moore thesis in *Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis*. Tumin questioned what determined a job's degree of importance. The Davis-Moore thesis does not explain, he argued, why a media personality with little education, skill, or talent becomes famous and rich on a reality show or a campaign trail. The thesis also does not explain inequalities in the education system, or inequalities due to race or gender. Tumin believed social stratification prevented qualified people from attempting to fill roles (1953). For example, an underprivileged youth has less chance of becoming a scientist, no matter how smart he or she is, because of the relative lack of opportunity available.

The Davis-Moore thesis, though open for debate, was an early attempt to explain why stratification exists. The thesis states that social stratification is necessary to promote excellence, productivity, and efficiency, thus giving people something to strive for. Davis and Moore believed that the system serves society as a whole because it allows everyone to benefit to a certain extent.

Critical Sociology

Figure 9.22. "Towards the Dawn," a 1930s promotional poster for the Saskatchewan Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) [Long Description] *(Image courtesy of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation/ Wikimedia Commons)*

Critical sociologists are deeply critical of social inequality, asserting that it benefits only some people not all of society. For instance, to a critical sociologist it seems problematic that after a long period of increasing equality of incomes from World War II to the 1970s, the wealthiest 1 percent of income earners have been increasing their share of the total income of Canadians from 7.7 percent in 1977 to 13.8 percent in 2007 (Yalnizyan, 2010). In 1982, the median income earner in the top 1 percent of incomes earned seven times more than the median income earner in the other 99 percent. In 2010, the median income earner in the top 1 percent earned ten times more. Moreover, while the median income for the top 1 percent increased from $191,600 to $283,000 in constant dollars (i.e., adjusted for inflation), the median income for the bottom 99 percent

only increased from $28,000 to $28,400 (Statistics Canada, 2013). Canada's richest 1 percent took almost a third (32 percent) of all growth in incomes 2007 (Yalnizyan, 2010).

Critical sociologists view this "great U-turn" in income equality over the 20th and 21st centuries as a product of both the ability of corporate elites to grant themselves huge salary and bonus increases and the shift toward neoliberal public policy and tax cuts. Rather than creating conditions in which wealth trickles down, tax cuts and neoliberal policies tremendously benefit the rich at the expense of the poor. This is an example of the way that stratification perpetuates inequality. Contrary to the analysis of functionalists, huge corporate bonuses continued to be awarded even when dysfunctional corporate and financial mismanagement of the economy led to the global financial crisis of 2008. Nor is it the case that corporate elites work harder to merit more rewards. Over the period of increasing inequality in income, the only group not working more weeks and hours in the paid workforce is the richest 10 percent of families (Yalnizyan, 2007).

Critical sociologists try to bring awareness to inequalities, such as how a rich society can have so many poor members. Many critical sociologists draw on the work of Karl Marx. During the 19th-century era of industrialization, Marx analyzed the way the owning class or capitalists raked in profits and got rich, while working-class proletarians earned skimpy wages and struggled to survive. With such opposing interests, the two groups were divided by differences of wealth and power. Marx saw workers experience deep exploitation, alienation, and misery resulting from class power (Marx, 1848). He also predicted that the growing collective impoverishment of the working class would lead them, through the leadership

of unions, to recognize their common class interests. A common class "consciousness" uniting different types of labour would lead to the revolutionary conditions whereby the working class could throw off their "fetters" and overthrow the capitalists. With the abolition of private property (i.e., productive property) and collective ownership of the means of production, Marx imagined that class conflict could be ended forever. A "communist" society that abolished the private ownership of the means of production would be a true democracy. Marx did not live see the state socialist systems in the Soviet Union and elsewhere that called themselves communist but ended up replacing capitalist-based inequality with bureaucratic-based inequality.

Today, while working conditions have improved, critical sociologists believe that the strained working relationship between employers and employees still exists. Capitalists own the means of production, and a neoliberal political system is in place to make business owners rich and keep workers poor. Moreover, the privileged position of the middle classes has been steadily eroded by growing inequalities of wealth and income. Some sociologists argue that the middle class is becoming **proletarianized**, meaning that in terms of income, property, control over working conditions, and overall life chances, the middle class is becoming more and more indistinguishable from the wage-earning working class (Abercrombie & Urry, 1983). Nevertheless, according to critical sociologists, increasing social inequality is neither inevitable nor necessary.

Interpretive Sociology

Within interpretive sociology, symbolic interactionism is

a theory that uses everyday interactions of individuals to explain society as a whole. Symbolic interactionism examines stratification from a micro-level perspective. This analysis strives to explain how people's social standing affects their everyday interactions.

In most communities, people interact primarily with others who share the same social standing. It is precisely because of social stratification that people tend to live, work, and associate with others like themselves, people who share their same income level, educational background, or racial background, and even tastes in food, music, and clothing. The built-in system of social stratification groups people together.

Symbolic interactionists also note that people's appearance reflects their perceived social standing. Housing, clothing, and transportation indicate social status, as do hairstyles, taste in accessories, and personal style. Pierre Bourdieu's (1930-2002) concept of **cultural capital** suggests that cultural "assets" such as education and taste are accumulated and passed down between generations in the same manner as financial capital or wealth (1984). This marks individuals from an early age by such things as knowing how to wear a suit or having an educated manner of speaking. In fact the children of parents with a postsecondary degree are 60 percent likely to attend university themselves, while the children of parents with less than a high school education have only a 32 percent chance of attending university (Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007).

Cultural capital is capital also in the sense of an investment, as it is expensive and difficult to attain while providing access to better occupations. Bourdieu argued that the privilege accorded to those who hold cultural capital is a means of reproducing the power of the ruling

classes. People with the "wrong" cultural attributes have difficulty attaining the same privileged status. Cultural capital becomes a key measure of distinction between social strata.

Figure 9.23. Imelda Marcos, the wife of the Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos, was reputed to be one of the ten wealthiest woman in the world in 1975. When her husband was deposed in 1986, the couple fled leaving behind 2,000 to 3,000 shoes from world renowned designers Ferragamo, Givenchy, Chanel, and Christian Dior. (Image courtesy of Vince Lamb/Flickr)

In the *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) described the activity of **conspicuous consumption** as the tendency of people to buy things as a display of status rather than out of need. Conspicuous consumption refers to buying certain products to make a social statement about status. Carrying pricey but eco-friendly water bottles could indicate a person's social standing. Some people buy expensive trendy sneakers even though they will never wear them to jog or play sports. A

$17,000 car provides transportation as easily as a $100,000 vehicle, but the luxury car makes a social statement that the less-expensive car can't live up to. All of these symbols of stratification are worthy of examination by interpretive sociologists because their social significance is determined by the shared meanings they hold.

Key Terms

absolute poverty: A severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information.

achieved status: A status received through individual effort or merits (eg. occupation, educational level, moral character, etc.).

ascribed status: A status received by virtue of being born into a category or group (eg. hereditary position, gender, race, etc.).

bourgeoisie: In capitalism, the owning class who live from the proceeds of owning or controlling productive property (capital assets like factories and machinery, or capital itself in the form of investments, stocks, and bonds).

caste system: A system in which people are born into a social standing that they will retain their entire lives.

class: A group who shares a common social status based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation.

class system: Social standing based on social factors and individual accomplishments.

class traits: The typical behaviours, customs, and norms that define each class, also called class markers.

conspicuous consumption: Buying and using products to make a statement about social standing.

cultural capital: Cultural assets in the form of knowledge, education, and taste that can be transferred intergenerationally.

Davis-Moore thesis: A thesis that argues some social stratification is a social necessity.

downward mobility: A lowering of one's social class.

empire: A new supra-national, global form of sovereignty whose territory is the entire globe.

endogamous marriages: Unions of people within the same social category.

equality of condition: A situation in which everyone in a society has a similar level of wealth, status, and power.

equality of opportunity: A situation in which everyone in a society has an equal chance to pursue economic or social rewards.

exogamous marriages: Unions of people from different social categories.

Gini Index: A measure of income inequality in which zero is absolute equality and one is absolute inequality.

global stratification: A comparison of the wealth, economic stability, status, and power of countries as a whole.

income: The money a person earns from work or investments.

intergenerational mobility: A difference in social class between different generations of a family.

intragenerational mobility: A difference in social class between different members of the same generation.

living wage: The income needed to meet a family's basic needs and enable them to participate in community life.

lumpenproletariat: In capitalism, the underclass of chronically unemployed or irregularly employed who are in and out of the workforce.

means of production: Productive property, including the things used to produce the goods and services needed for survival: tools, technologies, resources, land, workplaces, etc.

meritocracy: An ideal system in which personal effort—or merit—determines social standing.

neoliberalism: A set of policies in which the state reduces its role in providing public services, regulating industry, redistributing wealth, and protecting the commons while advocating the use of free market mechanisms to regulate society.

petite bourgeoisie: In capitalism, the class of small owners like shopkeepers, farmers, and contractors who own some property and perhaps employ a few workers but rely on their own labour to survive.

power: How many people a person must take orders from versus how many people a person can give orders to.

primogeniture: A law stating that all property passes to the firstborn son.

proletariat: Those who seek to establish a sustainable standard of living by maintaining the level of their wages and the level of employment in society.

proletarianization (the act of being proletarianized): The process in which the work conditions of the middle class increasingly resemble those of the traditional, blue-collar working class.

relative poverty: Living without the minimum amount of income or resources needed to be able to participate in

the ordinary living patterns, customs, and activities of a society.

social differentiation: The division of people into categories based on socially significant characteristics, identities, and roles.

social inequality: The unequal distribution of valued resources, rewards, and positions in a society.

social mobility: The ability to change positions within a social stratification system.

social stratification: A socioeconomic system that divides society's members into categories ranking from high to low, based on things like wealth, power, and prestige.

socio-economic status (SES): A group's social position in a hierarchy based on income, education, and occupation.

standard of living: The level of wealth available to acquire material goods and comforts to maintain a particular socioeconomic lifestyle.

status: The degree of honour or prestige one has in the eyes of others.

status consistency: The consistency, or lack thereof, of an individual's rank across social categories like income, education, and occupation.

structural mobility: When societal changes enable a whole group of people to move up or down the class ladder.

upward mobility: An increase — or upward shift — in social class.

wealth: The value of money and assets a person has from, for example, inheritance.

Section Summary

9.1. What Is Social Inequality?
Stratification systems are either closed, meaning they allow little change in social position, or open, meaning they allow movement and interaction between the layers. A caste system is one in which social standing is based on ascribed status or birth. Class systems are open, with achievement playing a role in social position. People fall into classes based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation.

9.2. Social Inequality and Mobility in Canada
There are three main classes in Canada: the owning class, middle class, and traditional working class. Social mobility describes a shift from one social class to another. Class traits, also called class markers, are the typical behaviours, customs, and norms that define each class.

9.3. Global Stratification and Inequality
Global stratification compares the wealth, economic stability, status, and power of countries as a whole. By comparing income and productivity between nations, researchers can better identify global inequalities.

9.4. Theoretical Perspectives on Social Inequality
Social stratification can be examined from different sociological perspectives — functionalism, critical sociology, and symbolic interactionism. The functionalist perspective states that inequality serves an important function in aligning individual merit and motivation with social position. Critical sociologists observe that stratification promotes inequality, such as between rich business owners and exploited workers. Symbolic interactionists examine stratification from a micro-level perspective. They observe how social standing affects people's everyday interactions, particularly the tendency to

interact with people of like status, and how the concept of "social class" is constructed and maintained through cultural distinctions of education and taste (or cultural capital) and conspicuous consumption.

Section Quiz

9.1. What Is Social Inequality?

1. What factor makes caste systems closed?

    1. They are run by secretive governments.
    2. People cannot change their social standings.
    3. Most have been outlawed.
    4. They exist only in rural areas.

2. What factor makes class systems open?

    1. They allow for movement between the classes.
    2. People are more open-minded.
    3. People are encouraged to socialize within their class.
    4. They do not have clearly defined layers.

3. Which of these systems allows for the most social mobility?

    1. Caste
    2. Monarchy
    3. Endogamy
    4. Class

4. Which person best illustrates opportunities for upward social mobility in Canada?

1. First-shift factory worker
2. First-generation college student
3. Firstborn son who inherits the family business
4. First-time interviewee who is hired for a job

5. Which statement illustrates low status consistency?

1. A suburban family lives in a modest ranch home and enjoys a nice vacation each summer.
2. A single mother receives welfare and struggles to find adequate employment.
3. A college dropout launches an online company that earns millions in its first year.
4. A celebrity actress owns homes in three countries.

6. Based on meritocracy, a physician's assistant would ________________________________.

1. Receive the same pay as all the other physician's assistants
2. Be encouraged to earn a higher degree to seek a better position
3. Most likely marry a professional at the same level
4. Earn a pay raise for doing excellent work

7. In Canada, most people define themselves as _________________.

1. Middle class
2. Upper class
3. Lower class
4. No specific class

8. Structural mobility occurs when ______________________________.

1. An individual moves up the class ladder.
2. An individual moves down the class ladder.
3. A large group moves up or down the class ladder due to societal changes.
4. A member of a family belongs to a different class than his or her siblings.

9. The intergenerational behaviours, customs, education, taste, and norms associated with a class are known as ________________.

1. class traits
2. power
3. prestige
4. underclass

10. Which of the following scenarios is an example of intergenerational mobility?

1. A janitor belongs to the same social class as his grandmother.
2. An executive belongs to a different class than her parents.
3. An editor shares the same social class as his

cousin.

4. A lawyer belongs to a different class than her sister.

11. Occupational prestige means that jobs are ________________.

1. all equal in status
2. not equally valued
3. assigned to a person for life
4. not part of a person's self-identity

9.3. Global Stratification and Inequality

12. Social stratification is a system that ________________________________.

1. Ranks society members into categories
2. Destroys competition between society members
3. Allows society members to choose their social standing
4. Reflects personal choices of society members

13. Which graphic concept best illustrates the concept of social stratification?

1. Pie chart
2. Flag poles
3. Planetary movement
4. Pyramid

9.4. Theoretical Perspectives on Social Inequality

14. The basic premise of the Davis-Moore thesis is that the

unequal distribution of rewards in social stratification ______________________________.

1. Is an outdated mode of societal organization
2. Is an artificial reflection of society
3. Serves a purpose in society
4. Cannot be justified

15. Unlike Davis and Moore, Melvin Tumin believed that because of social stratification some qualified people were _______ higher-level job positions.

1. Denied the opportunity to obtain
2. Encouraged to train for
3. Often fired from
4. Forced into

16. Which statement represents stratification from the perspective of symbolic interactionism?

1. Men often earn more than women, even if working the same job.
2. After work, Pat, a janitor, feels more comfortable eating in a truck stop than a French restaurant.
3. Doctors earn more money because their job is more highly valued.
4. Teachers continue to struggle to keep benefits such as good retirement plans.

17. When Karl Marx said workers experience alienation, he meant that workers ______________________________.

1. Must labour alone, without companionship

2. Do not feel connected to their work
3. Move from one geographical location to another
4. Have to put forth self-effort to get ahead

18. Conflict theorists view capitalists as those who ______________________.

1. Are ambitious
2. Fund social services
3. Spend money wisely
4. Get rich while workers stay poor

[Quiz answers at end of chapter]

Short Answer

9.1. What Is Social Inequality?

1. Track the social stratification of your family tree. Did the social standing of your parents differ from the social standing of your grandparents and great-grandparents? What social traits were handed down by your forebears? Are there any exogamous marriages in your history? Does your family exhibit status consistencies or inconsistencies?
2. What defines communities that have a low-status consistency? What are the ramifications, both positive and negative, of cultures with low-status consistency? Think of specific

examples to support your ideas.

3. Review the concept of stratification. Now choose a group of people you have observed and been a part of — for example, cousins, high school friends, classmates, sport teammates, or coworkers. How does the structure of the social group you chose adhere to the concept of stratification?

9.2. Social Inequality and Mobility in Canada

1. Which social class do you and your family belong to? Are you in a different social class than your grandparents and great-grandparents? Does your class differ from your social standing and, if so, how? What aspects of your societal situation establish you in a social class?
2. What class traits define your peer group? For example, what speech patterns or clothing trends do you and your friends share? What cultural elements, such as taste in music or hobbies, define your peer group? How do you see this set of class traits as different from other classes either above or below yours?
3. Provide examples of class inequality and of status inequality in your community. Are there examples in which class inequality differs from status inequality? What is the significance of these differences?

9.3. Global Stratification and Inequality

1. Why is it important to understand and be aware of global stratification? Make a list of specific issues that are related to global

stratification. For inspiration, turn on a news channel or read the newspaper. Next, choose a topic from your list and look at it more closely. Who is affected by this issue? How is the issue specifically related to global stratification?

2. Compare a family that lives in a grass hut in Ethiopia to a Canadian family living in a mobile home in Canada. Assuming both exist at or below the poverty levels established by their country, how are the families' lifestyles and economic situations similar and how are they different?

9.4. Theoretical Perspectives on Social Inequality

1. Analyze the Davis-Moore thesis. Do you agree with Davis and Moore? Does social stratification play an important function in society? What examples can you think of that support the thesis? What examples can you think of that refute the thesis?
2. Do you see any evidence of the growing gap between the rich and poor in Canada? What evidence do you see of the relative decline in wealth and income of the middle class? Does growing inequality affect you personally? What do you think the broader implications are?

Further Research

9.1. What Is Social Inequality?

The New York Times investigated social stratification in their series of articles called "Class Matters." The online

accompaniment to the series includes an interactive graphic called “How Class Works,” which tallies four factors — occupation, education, income, and wealth — and places an individual within a certain class and percentile. What class describes you? Test your class rank on the interactive site: http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/national/20050515_CLASS_GRAPHIC/index_03.html

9.2. Social Inequality and Mobility in Canada

Mark Ackbar made a documentary about social class and the rise of the corporation called *The Corporation*. The filmmakers interviewed corporate insiders and critics. The accompanying website is full of information, resource guides, and study guides to the film.: http://thecorporation.com/.

9.3. Global Stratification and Inequality

Nations Online refers to itself as “among other things, a more or less objective guide to the world, a statement for the peaceful, nonviolent coexistence of nations.” The website provides a variety of cultural, financial, historical, and ethnic information on countries and peoples throughout the world: http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/first.shtml

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Solutions to Section Quiz

1 B, | 2 A, | 3 D, | 4 B, | 5 C, | 6 D, | 7 A, | 8 C, | 9 A, | 10 B, | 11 B, | 12 A, | 13 D, | 14 C, | 15 A, | 16 B, | 17 B, | 18 D, [Return to Quiz]

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Long Description

Figure 9.22 Long Description: A family walks up a road towards the rising sun. The sun is labeled “CCF” with the suns rays saying, “Prosperity, justice, democracy, unity, equality, freedom, security.” .

Chapter 7. Gender, Sex, and Sexuality

Figure 12.1. Some children may learn at an early age that their gender does not correspond with their sex. (Photo courtesy of trazomfreak/flickr)

Learning Objectives

12.1. The Difference between Sex, Gender and Sexuality

- Define and differentiate between sex, gender, and sexuality.
- Analyze the relationship between society and

biology in formations of gender identity.

- Understand and discuss the role of homophobia and heterosexism in society.
- Distinguish between transgendered, transsexual, intersexual, and homosexual identities.
- Analyze the dominant gender schema and how it influences social perceptions of sex and gender.

12.2. Gender

- Explain the influence of socialization on gender roles in Canada.
- Understand the effect of gender inequality in major North American institutions.
- Describe the functionalist, critical and symbolic interactionist perspectives on gender.

12.3. Sex and Sexuality

- Understand different attitudes associated with sex and sexuality.
- Define sexual inequality in various societies.
- Describe the functionalist, critical, symbolic interactionist, and queer theory perspectives on sex and sexuality.

Introduction to Gender, Sex, and Sexuality

In 2009, the 18-year old South African athlete, Caster Semenya, won the women's 800-meter world

championship in Track and Field. Her time of 1:55:45, a surprising improvement from her 2008 time of 2:08:00, caused officials from the International Association of Athletics Foundation (IAAF) to question whether her win was legitimate. If this questioning were based on suspicion of steroid use, the case would be no different from that of Roger Clemens or Mark McGuire, or even Track and Field Olympic gold medal winner Marion Jones. But the questioning and eventual testing were based on allegations that Caster Semenya, no matter what gender identity she possessed, was biologically a male. You may be thinking that distinguishing biological maleness from biological femaleness is surely a simple matter — just conduct some DNA or hormonal testing, throw in a physical examination, and you'll have the answer. But it is not that simple. Both biologically male and biologically female people produce a certain amount of testosterone, and different laboratories have different testing methods, which makes it difficult to set a specific threshold for the amount of male hormones produced by a female that renders her sex male. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) criteria for determining eligibility for sex-specific events are not intended to determine biological sex. "Instead these regulations are designed to identify circumstances in which a particular athlete will not be eligible (by reason of hormonal characteristics) to participate in the 2012 Olympic Games" in the female category (International Olympic Committee, 2012).

To provide further context, during the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, eight female athletes with XY chromosomes underwent testing and were ultimately confirmed as eligible to compete as women
(Maugh, 2009). To date, no males have undergone this sort of testing. Does this not imply that when women perform

better than expected, they are “too masculine,” but when men perform well they are
simply superior athletes? Can you imagine Usain Bolt, the world’s fastest man, being examined by doctors to prove he was biologically male based solely on his appearance and athletic ability?
Can you explain how sex, sexuality, and gender are different from each other?

In this chapter, we will discuss the differences between sex and gender, along with issues like gender identity and sexuality. What does it mean to “have” a sex in our society? What does it mean to “have” a sexuality? We will also explore various theoretical perspectives on the subjects of gender and sexuality.

12.1. The Difference between Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

Figure 12.2. While the biological differences between males and females are fairly straightforward, the social and cultural aspects of being a man or woman can be complicated. (Photo courtesy of FaceMePLS/flickr)

When filling out a document such as a job application or school registration form you are often asked to provide your name, address, phone number, birth date, and sex or gender. But have you ever been asked to provide your sex *and* your gender? As with most people, it may not have occurred to you that sex and gender are not the same. However, sociologists and most other social scientists view sex and gender as conceptually distinct. **Sex** refers to physical or physiological differences between males and females, including both primary sex characteristics (the reproductive system) and secondary characteristics such as height and muscularity. **Gender** is a term that refers to social or cultural distinctions and roles associated with

being male or female. **Gender identity** is the extent to which one identifies as being either masculine or feminine (Diamond, 2002). As gender is such a primary dimension of identity, socialization, institutional participation, and life chances, sociologists refer to it as a *core status*.

The distinction between sex and gender is key to being able to examine gender and sexuality as social variables rather than biological variables. Contrary to the common way of thinking about it, gender is not determined by biology in any simple way. For example, the anthropologist Margaret Mead�more cross cultural research in New Guinea, in the 1930s, was groundbreaking in its demonstration that cultures differ markedly in the ways that they perceive the gender "temperments" of men and women; i.e., their masculinity and femininity (Mead, 1963). Unlike the qualities that defined masculinity and femininity in North America at the time, she saw both genders among the Arapesh as sensitive, gentle, cooperative, and passive, whereas among the Mundugumor both genders were assertive, violent, jealous, and aggressive. Among the Tchambuli, she described male and female temperaments as the opposite of those observed in North America. The women appeared assertive, domineering, emotionally inexpressive, and managerial, while the men appeared emotionally dependent, fragile, and less responsible.

The experience of transgendered people also demonstrates that a person's sex, as determined by his or her biology, does not always correspond with his or her gender. Therefore, the terms *sex* and *gender* are not interchangeable. A baby boy who is born with male genitalia will be identified as male. As he grows, however, he may identify with the feminine aspects of his culture. Since the term *sex* refers to biological or physical distinctions, characteristics of sex will not vary

significantly between different human societies. For example, it is physiologically normal for persons of the female sex, regardless of culture, to eventually menstruate and develop breasts that can lactate. The signs and characteristics of gender, on the other hand, may vary greatly between different societies as Margaret Mead's research noted. For example, in American culture, it is considered feminine (or a trait of the female gender) to wear a dress or skirt. However, in many Middle Eastern, Asian, and African cultures, dresses or skirts (often referred to as sarongs, robes, or gowns) can be considered masculine. The kilt worn by a Scottish male does not make him appear feminine in his culture.

Figure 12.3. George Catlin (1796-1872), Dance to the Berdache. Caitlin's sketch depicts a ceremonial dance among the Sac and Fox Indians to celebrate the two-spirit person. (Photo couresy of Wikimedia Commons).

The dichotomous view of gender (the notion that one is either male or female) is specific to certain cultures and is not universal. In some cultures, gender is viewed as fluid.

In the past, some anthropologists used the term *berdache* or two spirit person to refer to individuals who occasionally or permanently dressed and lived as the opposite gender. The practice has been noted among certain Aboriginal groups (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang, 1997). Samoan culture accepts what they refer to as a "third gender." *Fa'afafine*, which translates as "the way of the woman," is a term used to describe individuals who are born biologically male but embody both masculine and feminine traits. Fa'afafines are considered an important part of Samoan culture. Individuals from other cultures may mislabel them as homosexuals because fa'afafines have a varied sexual life that may include men or women (Poasa, 1992).

Making Connections: Social Policy and Debate

The Legalese of Sex and Gender

The terms *sex* and *gender* have not always been differentiated in the English language. It was not until the 1950s that American and British psychologists and other professionals working with intersex and transsexual patients formally began distinguishing between sex and gender. Since then, psychological and physiological professionals have increasingly used the term gender (Moi, 2005). By the end of the 2oth century, expanding the proper usage of the term *gender* to everyday language became more challenging — particularly where legal language is concerned. In an effort to clarify

usage of the terms *sex* and *gender*, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia wrote in a 1994 briefing, "The word gender has acquired the new and useful connotation of cultural or attitudinal characteristics (as opposed to physical characteristics) distinctive to the sexes. That is to say, gender is to sex as feminine is to female and masculine is to male" (*J.E.B. v. Alabama*, 144 S. Ct. 1436 [1994]). Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg had a different take, however. Viewing the words as synonymous, she freely swapped them in her briefings so as to avoid having the word "sex" pop up too often. It is thought that her secretary supported this practice by suggestions to Ginsberg that "those nine men" (the other Supreme Court justices), "hear that word and their first association is not the way you want them to be thinking" (Case, 1995).

In Canada, there has not been the same formal deliberations on the legal meanings of sex and gender. The distinction between sex as a physiological attribute and gender as social attribute has been used without controversy. However, things can get a little tricky when biological "sex" is regarded as simply a natural fact, especially in the case of transsexuals (Cowan, 2005). For example, in British Columbia, people who have surgery to change their anatomical sex can apply through the provisions of the Vital Statistics Act to have their birth certificate changed to reflect their post-operative sex. If a person was born male, does this mean that after surgery that person is fully regarded as a female in the eyes of the law? In the 2002 case

of *Nixon v. Vancouver Rape Relief Society,* a male to female transsexual, Kimberly Nixon brought an application to the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal that she had been discriminated against by the Vancouver Rape Relief Society (VRR) when her application to volunteer as a helper was rejected. The controversy was not over whether Kimberly was a woman, but whether she was woman *enough* for the position. VRR argued that as Kimberly had not grown up as a woman, she did not have the requisite lived experience as a woman in patriarchal society to counsel women rape victims. The B.C. Human Rights Tribunal ruled against VRR, finding that they had discriminated against Kimberly as a transsexual. The ruling was overturned by the Supreme Court of British Columbia, which argued that the Act ‘‘did not address all the potential legal consequences of sex reassignment surgery’’ (Cowan, 2005, p. 87). The court acknowledged that the meaning of both sex and gender vary in different contexts. The case is currently under appeal.

These legal issues reveal that even human experience that is assumed to be biological and personal (such as our self-perception and behaviour) is actually a socially defined variable by culture. The question of “what makes a woman” in the case of *Nixon v. Vancouver Rape Relief Society* is a matter of legal decision making as much as it is a matter of biology or lived experience.

Sexuality

Sexuality refers to a person’s capacity for sexual feelings

and their emotional and sexual attraction to a particular sex (male or female). Sexuality or sexual orientation is typically divided into four categories: *heterosexuality*, the attraction to individuals of the opposite sex; *homosexuality*, the attraction to individuals of one's own sex; *bisexuality*, the attraction to individuals of either sex; and *asexuality*, no attraction to either sex. Heterosexuals and homosexuals may also be referred to informally as "straight" and "gay," respectively. North America is a heteronormative society, meaning it supports heterosexuality as the norm, (referred to as **heteronormativity**). Consider that homosexuals are often asked, "When did you know you were gay?" but heterosexuals are rarely asked, "When did you know that you were straight?" (Ryle, 2011).

According to current scientific understanding, individuals are usually aware of their sexual orientation between middle childhood and early adolescence (American Psychological Association, 2008). They do not have to participate in sexual activity to be aware of these emotional, romantic, and physical attractions; people can be celibate and still recognize their sexual orientation. Homosexual women (also referred to as lesbians), homosexual men (also referred to as gays), and bisexuals of both genders may have very different experiences of discovering and accepting their sexual orientation. At the point of puberty, some may be able to claim their sexual orientations while others may be unready or unwilling to make their homosexuality or bisexuality known since it goes against North American society's historical norms (APA, 2008).

Alfred Kinsey was among the first to conceptualize sexuality as a continuum rather than a strict dichotomy of gay or straight. To classify this continuum of heterosexuality and homosexuality, Kinsey created a six-

point rating scale that ranges from exclusively heterosexual to exclusively homosexual (see Figure 12.4). In his 1948 work *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Kinsey writes, "Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats … The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects" (Kinsey et al, 1948).

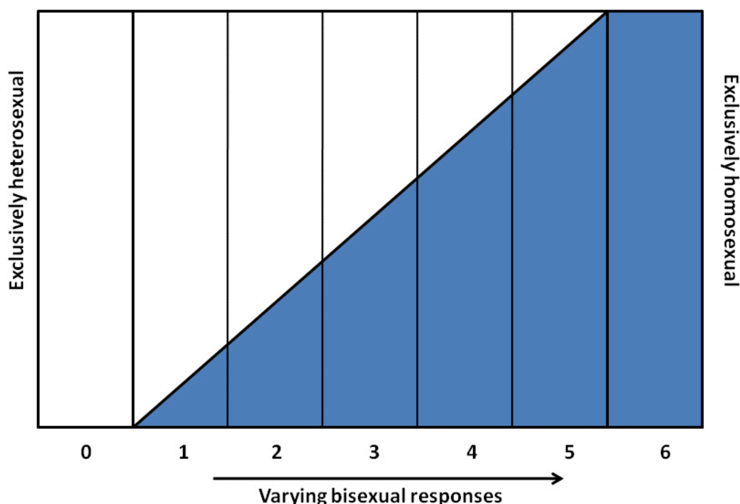

Figure 12.4. The Kinsey scale indicates that sexuality can be measured by more than just heterosexuality and homosexuality.

Later scholarship by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick expanded on Kinsey's notions. She coined the term "homosocial" to oppose "homosexual," describing nonsexual same-sex relations. Sedgwick recognized that in North American culture, males are subject to a clear divide between the two sides of this continuum, whereas females enjoy more fluidity. This can be illustrated by the way women in Canada can express homosocial feelings (nonsexual regard for people of the same sex) through hugging, hand-holding,

and physical closeness. In contrast, Canadian males refrain from these expressions since they violate the heteronormative expectation. While women experience a flexible norming of variations of behaviour that spans the heterosocial-homosocial spectrum, male behaviour is subject to strong social sanction if it veers into homosocial territory because of societal homophobia (Sedgwick, 1985).

There is no scientific consensus regarding the exact reasons why an individual holds a heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual orientation. There has been research conducted to study the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, but there has been no evidence that links sexual orientation to one factor (APA, 2008). Research, however, does present evidence showing that homosexuals and bisexuals are treated differently than heterosexuals in schools, the workplace, and the military. The 2009 Canadian Climate Survey reported that 59% of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered) high school students had been subject to verbal harassment at school compared to 7% of non-LGBT students; 25% had been subject to physical harassment compared to 8% of non-LGBT students; 31% had been subject to cyber-bullying (via internet or text messaging) compared to 8% of non-LGBT students; 73% felt unsafe at school compared to 20% of non-LGBT students; and 51% felt unaccepted at school compared to 19% of non-LGBT students (Taylor and Peter, 2011).

Much of this discrimination is based on stereotypes, misinformation, and **homophobia** — an extreme or irrational aversion to homosexuals. Major policies to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation have not come into effect until the last few years. In 2005, the

federal government legalized same-sex marriage. The Civil Marriage Act now describes marriage in Canada in gender neutral terms: “Marriage, for civil purposes, is the lawful union of two persons to the exclusion of all others” (Civil Marriage Act, S.C. 2005, c. 33). The Canadian Human Rights Act was amended in 1996 to explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, including the unequal treatment of gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals. Organizations such as Egale Canada (Equality for Gays And Lesbians Everywhere) advocate for LGBT rights, establish gay pride organizations in Canadian communities, and promote gay-straight alliance support groups in schools. Advocacy agencies frequently use the acronym LGBTQ, which stands for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered,” and “queer” or “questioning.”

Gender Roles

As we grow, we learn how to behave from those around us. In this socialization process, children are introduced to certain roles that are typically linked to their biological sex. The term **gender role** refers to society’s concept of how men and women are expected to act and how they should behave. These roles are based on norms, or standards, created by society. In Canadian culture, masculine roles are usually associated with strength, aggression, and dominance, while feminine roles are usually associated with passivity, nurturing, and subordination. Role learning starts with socialization at birth. Even today, our society is quick to outfit male infants in blue and girls in pink, even applying these colour-coded gender labels while a baby is in the womb.

One way children learn gender roles is through play. Parents typically supply boys with trucks, toy guns, and

superhero paraphernalia, which are active toys that promote motor skills, aggression, and solitary play. Girls are often given dolls and dress-up apparel that foster nurturing, social proximity, and role play. Studies have shown that children will most likely choose to play with "gender appropriate" toys (or same-gender toys) even when cross-gender toys are available because parents give children positive feedback (in the form of praise, involvement, and physical closeness) for gender-normative behaviour (Caldera, Huston, and O'Brien, 1998). See Chapter 5 (Socialization) for further elaboration on the socialization of gender roles.

Figure 12.5. Fathers tend to be more involved when their sons engage in gender appropriate activities such as sports. (Photo courtesy of stephanski/flickr)

The drive to adhere to masculine and feminine gender roles continues later in life. Men tend to outnumber women in professions such as law enforcement, the military, and politics. Women tend to outnumber men in care-related occupations such as child care, health care, and social work. These occupational roles are examples of typical

Canadian male and female behaviour, derived from our culture's traditions. Adherence to these occupational gender roles demonstrates fulfillment of social expectations, but not necessarily personal preference (Diamond, 2002).

Gender Identity

Canadian society allows for some level of flexibility when it comes to acting out gender roles. To a certain extent, men can assume some feminine roles and characteristics and women can assume some masculine roles and characteristics without interfering with their gender identity. **Gender identity** is an individual's self-conception of being male or female based on his or her association with masculine or feminine gender roles.

As opposed to **cisgendered** individuals, who identify their gender with the gender and sex they were assigned at birth, individuals who identify with the gender that is the opposite of their biological sex are **transgendered**. Transgendered males, for example, although assigned the sex 'female' at birth, have such a strong emotional and psychological connection to the forms of masculinity in society that they identify their gender as male. The parallel connection to femininity exists for transgendered females. It is difficult to determine the prevalence of transgenderism in society. Statistics Canada states that they have neither the definitive number of people whose sexual orientation is lesbian, gay, or bisexual, nor the number of people who are transgendered (Statistics Canada, 2011). However, it is estimated that 2 to 5% of the U.S. population is transgendered (Transgender Law and Policy Institute, 2007).

Transgendered individuals who wish to alter their bodies

through medical interventions such as surgery and hormonal therapy — so that their physical being is better aligned with their gender identity — are called **transsexuals**. They may also be known as male-to-female (MTF) or female-to-male (FTM) transsexuals. Not all transgendered individuals choose to alter their bodies: many will maintain their original anatomy but may present themselves to society as the opposite gender. This is typically done by adopting the dress, hairstyle, mannerisms, or other characteristic typically assigned to the opposite gender. It is important to note that people who cross-dress, or wear clothing that is traditionally assigned to the opposite gender, are not necessarily transgendered. Cross-dressing is typically a form of self-expression, entertainment, or personal style, not necessarily an expression of gender identity (APA, 2008).

There is no single, conclusive explanation for why people are transgendered. Transgendered expressions and experiences are so diverse that it is difficult to identify their origin. Some hypotheses suggest biological factors such as genetics, or prenatal hormone levels, as well as social and cultural factors, such as childhood and adulthood experiences. Most experts believe that all of these factors contribute to a person's gender identity (APA, 2008).

It is known that transgendered and transsexual individuals experience discrimination based on their gender identity. People who identify as transgendered are twice as likely to experience assault or discrimination as non-transgendered individuals; they are also one and a half times more likely to experience intimidation (National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2010). Organizations such as the Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health (CPATH), Trans Pulse, and the National Center for Trans Equality work to support

and prevent, respond to, and end all types of violence against transgendered, transsexual, and homosexual individuals. These organizations hope that by educating the public about gender identity and empowering transgendered and transsexual individuals, this violence will end.

The Dominant Gender Schema

Figure 12.6. Chaz Bono is the transgendered son of Cher and Sonny Bono. Being transgendered is not about clothing or hairstyles; it is about self-perception. (Photo courtesy of Greg Hernandez/ flickr)

As sociological research points out, the naturalness with which one assumes a gender identity of being either masculine or feminine, or a sexual identity of being sexually attracted to either men or women, has a significant social component. Gender and sexual identities are deep

identities in the sense that one does not seem to choose them. They seem to "come over" one, sometimes at a very early age, and thereafter appear for most people to be fixed. Nevertheless they are sustained by social norms and conventions. This social aspect of gender or sexual identity is revealed especially through the research tradition in sociology that focuses on those who break the rules of society. By studying those who break the rules, the rules themselves and what they entail become visible. In the study of gender and sexuality, the experience of intersexuals, transgendered individuals, transsexuals, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, fetishists, and sexual "perverts," etc. are invaluable for understanding what it means to have a gender or a sexuality. These individuals make up a minority of the population, but their lives and struggles reveal the existence of the social norms and processes of which others are often unaware.

Part of having a sexuality or a gender has to do with the "naturalness" with which an individual assumes one of the most fundamental identities that define their place in the world. However, having a gender or sexual identity only appears natural to the degree that one fits within the **dominant gender schema** (Devor, 2000). The dominant gender schema is an ideology that, like all ideologies, serves to perpetuate inequalities in power and status. This schema states that: a) sex is a biological characteristic that produces only two options, male or female, and b) gender is a social or psychological characteristic that manifests or expresses biological sex. Again, only two options exist, masculine or feminine: "All persons are either one gender or the other. No person can be neither. No person can be both. No person can change gender without major medical intervention" (Devor, 2000).

For many people this is natural. It goes without saying.

However, if one does not fit within the dominant gender schema, then the naturalness of one's gender identity is thrown into question. This occurs, first of all, by the actions of external authorities and experts who define those who do not fit as either mistakes of nature or as products of failed socialization and individual psychopathology. Gender identity is also thrown into question by the actions of peers and family who respond with concern or censure when a girl is not feminine enough or a boy is not masculine enough. Moreover, the ones who do not fit also have questions. They may begin to wonder why the norms of society do not reflect their sense of self, and thus begin to feel at odds with the world.

As the capacity to differentiate between the genders is the basis of patriarchal relations of power that have existed for 6,000 years, the dominant gender schema is one of the fundamental organizing principles that maintains the dominant societal order. Nevertheless, it is only a *schema*: a cultural distinction that is imposed upon the diversity of world. With respect to the biology of gender and sexuality, Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) argues that a body's sex is too complex to fit within the obligatory dual sex system, and ultimately, the decision to label someone male or female is a social decision.

Fausto-Sterling's research on hermaphrodite or **intersex** children — the 1.7% of children who are born with a mixture of male and female sexual organs — indicates that there are at least *five* different sexes:

1. male;
2. female;
3. herms: true hermaphrodites with both male and female gonads (i.e., testes *and* ovaries);

4. merms: male pseudo-hermaphrodites with testes and a mixture of sexual organs; and
5. ferms: female pseudo-hermaphrodites with ovaries and a mixture of sexual organs.

Nevertheless, because assigning a sex identity is a fundamental *cultural* priority, doctors will typically decide “nature’s intention” with respect to intersex babies within 24 hours of an intersex child being born. Sometimes this decision involves surgery, which has scarred individuals for life (Fausto-Sterling, 2000).

Similarly, with respect to the variability of gender and sexuality, the experiences of gender and sexual outsiders — homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals, women who do not look or act “feminine” and men who do not look or act “masculine,” etc. — reveal the subtle dramaturgical order of social processes and negotiations through which all gender identity is sustained and recognized by others (refer to the dramaturgical analysis of Erving Goffmann from Chapter 22). Because we do not usually have the capacity to “look under the hood” to clinically determine the sex of someone we encounter, we read their gender from their “gender display”– their “conventionalized portrayals” of the “culturally established correlates of sex” (Goffman, 1977). Gender is a performance which is enhanced by props like clothing and hairstyle, or mannerisms like tone of voice, physical bearing, and facial expression.

For a movie star like Marilyn Munroe, the gender display is exaggerated almost to the point of self-satire, whereas for *gender blending* women — women who do not dress or look stereotypically like women — the gender display can be (unintentionally) ambiguous to the point where they are often mistaken for men (Devor, 2000).

The signs of gender need to be communicated in an unambiguous manner for an individual to “pass” as a member of their assigned gender. This is often a problem for transgendered and transsexual individuals and the cause of considerable stress and anxiety.

Making Connections: Sociology in the Real World

Intersexed Individuals and the Case of John/Joan

Part of the rationale of using surgery to “correct” the sexual ambiguity of intersex children is the idea that not having a clear biological sex assignment will produce psychological pathology later in life. Secondly, the rationale is based on the idea that gender or sexual identity is fundamentally malleable (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). The practice is based on the logic of the nurture side of the long-standing debate about whether *nature* or *nurture* determines psycho-sexual development.

The nurture side argues that gender is neutral at birth and is subsequently moulded by sex assignation and child rearing (i.e., “environment”) into a stable gender identity as the child matures. This is the principle behind using surgery to modify indefinite sexual organs. It is understood that having an unambiguous penis or vagina is a clear *symbolic* marker of gender identity in ones relationship to self and others. Whereas gender formation during childhood is malleable, gender ambiguity later in

life is pathological and therefore surgery at an early age is required to avoid psychosexual problems in teenage and adult life.

The nature side, on the other hand, argues that gender is not neutral at birth. Gender is predetermined by the *in utero* hormonal processes that lead to the sexual development of the foetus. Even in intersex children, there is a distinct psychosexual predisposition to one gender or the other. Early in foetal development hormones act directly to organize the brain along gender lines, and the release of hormones at puberty produce sex-specific characteristics and behaviours.

The life of David Reimer, known in the literature of the 1960s and 1970s as the John/Joan case, was used for many years as a demonstration of the validity of nurture arguments over nature arguments. In some respects it seemed like a perfect case to test the two propositions. David Reimer was born in Winnipeg, in 1965, as a male identical twin. However, as a result of a circumcision accident at age 7 months he lost his penis. Experts counseled that David should be surgically altered and raised as a girl. At age two David, known as "John" in the literature, had his testes removed and he became "Joan." Her mother was cited in the literature as saying that Joan loved wearing dresses, hated getting dirty, and enjoyed having her hair set. As Joan's biologically identical male twin continued to mature in a manner typical to boys, it seemed to demonstrate the dominant influence of gendered patterns of child-rearing on the formation of gender

identity. Joan was being raised as a girl, her male sex organs had been surgically altered, and her transition from boy to girl seemed unproblematic. From the point of view of the nurture side of the debate, the case demonstrated that gender identity was primarily learned (Fausto-Sterling, 2000).

However, in 1980, a BBC documentary doing a follow up on the famous case discovered that by the time Joan was thirteen she was not well adjusted to her sex assignment (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). She peed standing up, walked like a boy, wanted to be a mechanic and thought boys had better lives than girls. Eventually it came out that she had eventually had her breasts removed, had a surgically reconstructed penis implanted, and had married a woman and was fathering his wife's child. Contradicting the original findings, John/Joan's mother reported that Joan had consistently resisted attempts to socialize her as a girl. Sadly, following a period of severe depression, David Reimer killed himself at the age of 38. The failure of the sex reassessment lent credence to the nature side of the debate. It seemed to demonstrate that humans are not psycho-sexually neutral at birth, but are biologically predisposed to behave in a male or female manner.

The literature is not conclusive. There have been other reports of individuals in similar circumstances rejecting their sex assignments but in the case of another Canadian child whose sex reassessment occurred at seven months, much earlier than David Reimer's, gender identity was successfully changed

(Bradley et. al., 1998). Nevertheless, while this subject identified as a female, she was a tomboy during childhood, worked in a blue-collar masculine trade, did have love affairs with men but at the time of the report was living as a lesbian. The authors argue that her gender identity was successfully changed through surgery and socialization, even if her gender role and sexual orientation were not.

Fausto-Sterling's (2000) conclusion is that gender and sex are fundamentally complex and that it is not a simple question of either nurture or nature being the determinant factor. This complexity has practical implications for how to respond to the birth of intersex children. In particular, she outlines practical
medical ethics for sexually ambiguous children:

1. Let there be no unnecessary infant surgery: do no harm;
2. Let physicians assign a *provisional* sex based on known probabilities of gender identity formation; and
3. Provide full information and long-term counseling to the parents and child.

Fausto-Sterling argues that it is important to recognize the variability of sex and gender beyond the two-sex system.

12.2. Gender

Figure 12.7. Traditional images of North American gender roles reinforce the idea that women should be subordinate to men. (Photo courtesy of Sport Suburban/Flickr)

Gender and Socialization

The organization of society is profoundly *gendered*, meaning that the "natural" distinction between male and female, and the attribution of different qualities to each, underlies institutional structures from the family, to the occupational structure, to the division between public and private, to access to power and beyond. **Patriarchy** is the

set of institutional structures (like property rights, access to positions of power, and relationship to sources of income) which are based on the belief that men and women are dichotomous and *unequal* categories. How does the "naturalness" of the distinction between male and female get established? How does it serve to organize everyday life?

The phrase "boys will be boys" is often used to justify behaviour such as pushing, shoving, or other forms of aggression from young boys. The phrase implies that such behaviour is unchangeable and something that is part of a boy's nature. Aggressive behaviour, when it does not inflict significant harm, is often accepted from boys and men because it is congruent with the cultural script for masculinity. The "script" written by society is in some ways similar to a script written by a playwright. Just as a playwright expects actors to adhere to a prescribed script, society expects women and men to behave according to the expectations of their respective gender role. Scripts are generally learned through a process known as *socialization*, which teaches people to behave according to social norms.

Socialization

Children learn at a young age that there are distinct expectations for boys and girls. Cross-cultural studies reveal that children are aware of gender roles by age two or three. At four or five, most children are firmly entrenched in culturally appropriate gender roles (Kane, 1996). Children acquire these roles through socialization, a process in which people learn to behave in a particular way as dictated by societal values, beliefs, and attitudes. For example, society often views riding a motorcycle as a

masculine activity and, therefore, considers it to be part of the male gender role. Attitudes such as this are typically based on stereotypes — oversimplified notions about members of a group. Gender stereotyping involves overgeneralizing about the attitudes, traits, or behaviour patterns of women or men. For example, women may be thought of as too timid or weak to ride a motorcycle.

Figure 12.8. Although our society may have a stereotype that associates motorcycles with men, female bikers demonstrate that a woman's place extends far beyond the kitchen in modern Canada. (Photo courtesy of Robert Couse-Baker/Flickr)

Gender stereotypes form the basis of sexism. **Sexism** refers to prejudiced beliefs that value one sex over another. Sexism varies in its level of severity. In parts of the world where women are strongly undervalued, young girls may not be given the same access to nutrition, health care, and education as boys. Further, they will grow up believing that they deserve to be treated differently from boys (Thorne, 1993; UNICEF, 2007). While illegal in Canada when

practised as discrimination, unequal treatment of women continues to pervade social life. It should be noted that discrimination based on sex occurs at both the micro- and macro-levels. Many sociologists focus on discrimination that is built into the social structure; this type of discrimination is known as *institutional discrimination* (Pincus, 2008).

Gender socialization occurs through four major agents of socialization: family, education, peer groups, and mass media. Each agent reinforces gender roles by creating and maintaining normative expectations for gender-specific behaviour. Exposure also occurs through secondary agents such as religion and the workplace. Repeated exposure to these agents over time leads men and women into a false sense that they are acting naturally rather than following a socially constructed role.

Family is the first agent of socialization. There is considerable evidence that parents socialize sons and daughters differently. Generally speaking, girls are given more latitude to step outside of their prescribed gender role (Coltrane and Adams, 2004; Kimmel, 2000; Raffaelli and Ontai, 2004). However, differential socialization typically results in greater privileges afforded to boys. For instance, sons are allowed more autonomy and independence at an earlier age than daughters. They may be given fewer restrictions on appropriate clothing, dating habits, or curfew. Sons are also often free from performing domestic duties such as cleaning or cooking, and other household tasks that are considered feminine. Daughters are limited by their expectation to be passive, nurturing, and generally obedient, and to assume many of the domestic responsibilities.

Even when parents set gender equality as a goal, there may be underlying indications of inequality. For example,

when dividing up household chores, boys may be asked to take out the garbage or perform other tasks that require strength or toughness, while girls may be asked to fold laundry or perform duties that require neatness and care. It has been found that fathers are firmer in their expectations for gender conformity than are mothers, and their expectations are stronger for sons than they are for daughters (Kimmel, 2000). This is true in many types of activities, including preference of toys, play styles, discipline, chores, and personal achievements. As a result, boys tend to be particularly attuned to their father's disapproval when engaging in an activity that might be considered feminine, like dancing or singing (Coltrane and Adams, 2008). It should be noted that parental socialization and normative expectations vary along lines of social class, race, and ethnicity. Research in the United States has shown that African American families, for instance, are more likely than Caucasians to model an egalitarian role structure for their children (Staples and Boulin Johnson, 2004).

The reinforcement of gender roles and stereotypes continues once a child reaches school age. Until very recently, schools were rather explicit in their efforts to stratify boys and girls. The first step toward stratification was segregation. Girls were encouraged to take home economics or humanities courses and boys to take shop, math, and science courses.

Studies suggest that gender socialization still occurs in schools today, perhaps in less obvious forms (Lips, 2004). Teachers may not even realize that they are acting in ways that reproduce gender-differentiated behaviour patterns. Yet, any time they ask students to arrange their seats or line up according to gender, teachers are asserting that boys and girls should be treated differently (Thorne, 1993).

Even in levels as low as kindergarten, schools subtly convey messages to girls indicating that they are less intelligent or less important than boys. For example, in a study involving teacher responses to male and female students, data indicated that teachers praised male students far more than their female counterparts. Additionally, teachers interrupted girls more and gave boys more opportunities to expand on their ideas (Sadker and Sadker, 1994). Further, in social as well as academic situations, teachers have traditionally positioned boys and girls oppositionally — reinforcing a sense of competition rather than collaboration (Thorne, 1993). Boys are also permitted a greater degree of freedom regarding rule-breaking or minor acts of deviance, whereas girls are expected to follow rules carefully and to adopt an obedient posture (Ready, 2001). Schools reinforce the polarization of gender roles and the age-old "battle of the sexes" by positioning girls and boys in competitive arrangements.

Mimicking the actions of significant others is the first step in the development of a separate sense of self (Mead, 1934). Like adults, children become agents who actively facilitate and apply normative gender expectations to those around them. When children do not conform to the appropriate gender role, they may face negative sanctions such as being criticized or marginalized by their peers. Though many of these sanctions are informal, they can be quite severe. For example, a girl who wishes to take karate class instead of dance lessons may be called a "tomboy" and face difficulty gaining acceptance from both male and female peer groups (Ready, 2001). Boys, especially, are subject to intense ridicule for gender nonconformity (Coltrane and Adams, 2008; Kimmel, 2000).

Mass media serves as another significant agent of gender socialization. In television and movies, women tend to

have less significant roles and are often portrayed as wives or mothers. When women are given a lead role, they are often one of two extremes: a wholesome, saint-like figure or a malevolent, hypersexual figure (Etaugh and Bridges, 2003). This same inequality is pervasive in children's movies (Smith, 2008). Research indicates that of the 101 top-grossing G-rated movies released between 1990 and 2005, three out of four characters were male. Out of those 101 movies, only seven were near being gender balanced, with a character ratio of less than 1.5 males per 1 female (Smith, 2008).

Television commercials and other forms of advertising also reinforce inequality and gender-based stereotypes. Women are almost exclusively present in ads promoting cooking, cleaning, or child care-related products (Davis, 1993). Think about the last time you saw a man star in a dishwasher or laundry detergent commercial. In general, women are underrepresented in roles that involve leadership, intelligence, or a balanced psyche. Of particular concern is the depiction of women in ways that are dehumanizing, especially in music videos. Even in mainstream advertising, however, themes intermingling violence and sexuality are quite common (Kilbourne, 2000).

Social Stratification and Inequality

Figure 12.9. Emily Murphy (1868-1933) was the first female magistrate in Canada and the British Commonwealth. She was one of the "Famous Five" who challenged the law that women were not "persons" and therefore not eligible for appointment to the Canadian Senate. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

How do the distinctions between male and female, and the social attribution of different qualities to each, serve to organize our institutions (the family, occupational structure, and the public/private divide, etc.)? How do these distinctions organize differential access to rewards, privileges, and power? In society, how and why are women not treated as the equals of men?

Stratification refers to a system in which groups of

people experience unequal access to basic, yet highly valuable, social resources. According to George Murdock's classic work, *Outline of World Cultures* (1954), all societies classify work by gender. When a pattern appears in all societies, it is called a *cultural universal*. While the phenomenon of assigning work by gender is universal, its specifics are not. The same task is not assigned to either men or women worldwide. But the way each task's associated gender is valued is notable. In Murdock's examination of the division of labour among 324 societies around the world, he found that in nearly all cases the jobs assigned to men were given greater prestige (Murdock and White, 1969). Even if the job types were very similar and the differences slight, men's work was still considered more vital.

Canadian society is also characterized by gender stratification. Evidence of gender stratification is especially keen within the economic realm. In Canada, women's experience with wage labour includes unequal treatment in comparison to men in many respects:

- Women continue to do more of the unpaid labour in the household — meal preparation and cleanup, childcare, elderly care, household management, and shopping — even if they have a job outside the home. In 2010, women spent an average 50 hours a week looking after children compared to 24.4 hours a week for men, 13.8 hours a week doing household work compared to 8.3 hours for men, and, of those caring for elderly family members, 49% of women spent more than 10 hours a week caring for a senior compared to 25% for men (Statistics Canada, 2011). This double duty keeps working

women in a subordinate role in the family structure and prevents them from achieving the salaries of men in the paid workforce (Hochschild and Machung, 1989).

- Women’s participation in the labour force has been increasing from 42% of women in 1976 to 58% of women in 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2011). Women now make up 48% of the total labour force (compared to 37% in 1976). They continue to dominate in “pink collar” occupations and part-time work, which are low paying, low status, often unskilled jobs that offer little possibility for advancement. In 2009, 67% of women still worked in traditionally “feminine” occupations like teaching, nursing, clerical, administrative or sales, and service jobs. 70% of part-time and 60% of minimum wage workers were women (Ferrao, 2010).
- Despite women making up nearly half (48%) of payroll employment, men vastly outnumber them in authoritative, powerful, and, therefore, high-earning jobs (Statistics Canada, 2011). Women’s income for full-year, full-time workers has remained at 72% of the income of men since 1992. This in part reflects the fact that women are more likely than men to work in part time or temporary employment. The comparison of average hourly wage is better: Women earned 83% of men’s average hourly wage in 2008, up from 76% in 1988 (Statistics Canada, 2011). However, as one report noted, if the gender gap in wages continues to close at the same glacial rate, women will not earn the same as men until

the year 2240 (McInturff, 2013).

The reason for the gender gap in wages is fourfold. Firstly, there is **gender discrimination** in hiring and salary. Women and men are often not rewarded equally for the same work despite the fact discrimination on the basis of sex is unconstitutional in Canada. Secondly, as we noted above, men and women tend to be concentrated in different types of work which are not equally paid. Often because of choices made in high school and postsecondary education, women are limited to pink collar types of occupation. Thirdly, the unequal distribution of domestic duties, especially child and elder care, women are unable to work the same number of hours as men and experience disruptions in their career path. Fourthly, the work typically done by women is arbitrarily undervalued with respect to the work typically performed by men. It is certainly questionable that early childhood education occupations dominated by women involve less skill, less training, or less significance to society than many trades dominated by men, but there is a clear disparity in wages between these typically gender segregated types of occupation.

Beyond the economic sphere, there has been a long history of power relations based on gender in Canada. When looking to the past, it would appear that society has made great strides in terms of abolishing some of the most blatant forms of gender inequality (see timeline below) but the underlying effects of male dominance still permeate many aspects of society. The issue remains especially pertinent with regard to political representation. As elected representatives, the ratio of women to men in federal parliament and provincial legislatures is about 1 in 4, or 25% (McInturff, 2013).

- Before 1859 — Married women were not allowed to own or control property
- Before 1909 — Abducting a woman who was not an heiress was not a crime
- Before 1918 — Women were not permitted to vote (propertied women's right to vote was taken away in New France in 1849)
- Before 1929 — Women were not legally considered "persons"
- Before 1953 — Employers could legally pay a woman less than a man for the same work
- Before 1969 — Women did not have the right to a safe and legal abortion (Nellie McClung Foundation, N.d.)

Figure 12.10. In some cultures, women do all of the household chores with no help from men, as doing housework is a sign of weakness which is considered by society as a feminine trait. (Photo courtesy of Evil Erin/Flickr)

Making Connections: Sociological Research

Is the Patriarchy Dead?

It is becoming more common to hear post-feminist arguments that in liberal democracies like Canada, the war against patriarchy (i.e., male rule) has more or less been won. The days in which women were not permitted to work or hold a credit card in their own name are over. Today women are working outside the home more than ever, they are narrowing the wage gap with men (albeit slowly), and they are surpassing men in getting university degrees. They are now as free as men to have a credit card and get into debt. These arguments are more complicated than the post-feminist slogan "patriarchy is dead" suggests, but it is clear that the question of gender inequality is more ambiguous than it once was.

Table 12.1. Women's wages as a percentage of men's in Canada, from 1988

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Year	Total	25 to 29	30 to 34
1988	0.757	0.846	0.794
1993	0.794	0.905	0.886
1998	0.811	0.901	0.851
2003	0.825	0.920	0.868
2008	0.833	0.901	0.858
Change: 1988 to 2008	0.076	0.056	0.064

Source Statistics Canada, 2011.

As noted above, women's annual income (for full-time employees) remains at 72% of that earned by men. However, this figure is misleading because it does not take into account that men on average work 3.7 hours more a week than women (Statistics Canada, 2011, p. 167). Table 12.1 (above) compares men's and women's hourly wage and shows that between 1988 and 2008, the wage gap has narrowed for each of the age groups. On average, women went from earning 76% of men's hourly wage to 83%. Young women ages 25 to 29 now earn 90% of young men's hourly wage. As the Statistics Canada report says, "younger women are more likely to have high levels of education, work full-time, and

be employed in different types of jobs than their older female counterparts" (Statistics Canada, 2011), which accounts for the difference between the age groups.

However, is this a good news story? First, the difference between the 72% figure (gender difference in annual income) and the 83% figure (gender difference in hourly wage) reveals, for reasons which are unclear from the statistics, that women are not working in occupations that pay as well or offer as many hours of work per week as men's occupations. Second, the gender gap is closing in large part because men's wages have remained flat or decreased. In particular, young men who worked traditionally in high paying manufacturing jobs have seen declines in union coverage and real wages (Drolet, 2011, p. 8). Third, even though young women have higher levels of education than young men, and even though they choose to work in higher paying jobs in education and health than previous generations of women, they still earn 10% less per hour than young men. That is still a substantial difference in wages that is unaccounted for. Fourth, the real problem is that although men and women increasingly begin their careers on equal footing, by mid-career, when workers are beginning to maximize their earning potential, women fall behind and continue to do so into retirement. Why?

Theoretical Perspectives on Gender

Sociological theories serve to guide the research process

and offer a means for interpreting research data and explaining social phenomena. For example, a sociologist interested in gender stratification in education may study why middle-school girls are more likely than their male counterparts to fall behind grade-level expectations in math and science. Another scholar might investigate why women are underrepresented in political office, while another might examine how women members of Parliament are treated by their male counterparts in meetings.

Structural Functionalism

Structural functionalism provided one of the most important perspectives of sociological research in the 20th century and has been a major influence on research in the social sciences, including gender studies. Viewing the family as the most integral component of society, assumptions about gender roles within marriage assume a prominent place in this perspective.

Functionalists argue that gender roles were established well before the preindustrial era when men typically took care of responsibilities outside of the home, such as hunting, and women typically took care of the domestic responsibilities in or around the home. These roles were considered functional because women were often limited by the physical restraints of pregnancy and nursing, and unable to leave the home for long periods of time. Once established, these roles were passed on to subsequent generations since they served as an effective means of keeping the family system functioning properly.

When changes occurred in the social and economic climate of Canada during World War II, changes in the family structure also occurred. Many women had to

assume the role of breadwinner (or modern hunter and gatherer) alongside their domestic role in order to stabilize a rapidly changing society. When the men returned from war and wanted to reclaim their jobs, society fell into a state of imbalance, as many women did not want to forfeit their wage-earning positions (Hawke, 2007).

Talcott Parsons (1943) argued that the contradiction between occupational roles and kinship roles of men and women in North America created tension or strain on individuals as they tried to adapt to the conflicting norms or requirements. The division of traditional middle-class gender roles within the family — the husband as breadwinner and wife as homemaker — was functional for him because the roles were complementary. They enabled a clear division of labour between spouses, which ensured that the ongoing functional needs of the family were being met. Within the North American kinship system, wives' and husbands' roles were equally valued according to Parsons. However, within the occupational system, only the husband's role as breadwinner was valued. There was an "asymmetrical relation of the marriage pair to the occupational structure" (p. 191). Being barred from the occupational system meant that women had to find a functional equivalent to their husbands' occupational status to demonstrate their "fundamental equality" to their husbands. As a result, Parson theorized that these tensions would lead women to become expressive specialists in order to claim prestige (e.g., showing "good taste" in appearance, household furnishings, literature, and music), while men would remain instrumental or technical specialists and become culturally narrow. He also proposed that the instability of women's roles in this system would lead to excesses like neurosis, compulsive domesticity, garishness in taste, disproportionate attachment to

community or club activities, and the "glamour girl" pattern: "the use of specifically feminine devices as an instrument of compulsive search for power and exclusive attention" (p. 194).

Critical Sociology

According to critical sociology, society is structured by relations of power and domination among social groups (e.g., women versus men) that determine access to scarce resources. When sociologists examine gender from this perspective, we can view men as the dominant group and women as the subordinate group. According to critical sociology, social problems and contradictions are created when dominant groups exploit or oppress subordinate groups. Consider the women's suffrage movement or the debate over women's "right to choose" their reproductive futures. It is difficult for women to rise above men, as dominant group members create the rules for success and opportunity in society (Farrington and Chertok, 1993).

Friedrich Engels, a German sociologist, studied family structure and gender roles in the 1880s. Engels suggested that the same owner-worker relationship seen in the labour force is also seen in the household, with women assuming the role of the proletariat. Women are therefore doubly exploited in capitalist society, both when they work outside the home and when they work within the home. This is due to women's dependence on men for the attainment of wages, which is even worse for women who are entirely dependent upon their spouses for economic support. Contemporary critical sociologists suggest that when women become wage earners, they can gain power in the family structure and create more democratic arrangements in the home, although they may still carry the majority

of the domestic burden, as noted earlier (Risman and Johnson-Sumerford, 1998).

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is a type of critical sociology that examines inequalities in gender-related issues. It also uses the critical approach to examine the *maintenance* of gender roles and inequalities. Radical feminism, in particular, considers the role of the family in perpetuating male dominance. In patriarchal societies, men's contributions are seen as more valuable than those of women. Women are essentially the property of men. Through the feminist struggles for women's emancipation in post-feudal modern society, the property relationship has been formally eliminated. Nevertheless, women still tend to be relegated to the private sphere, where domestic roles define their primary status identity. Whereas men's roles and primary status is defined by their activities in the public or occupational sphere.

As a result, women often perceive a disconnect between their personal experiences and the way the world is represented by society as a whole. Dorothy Smith referred to this phenomenon as **bifurcated consciousness** (Smith, 1987). There is a division between the directly lived, bodily experience of women's worlds (e.g., their responsibilities for looking after children, aging parents, and household tasks) and the dominant, abstract, institutional world to which they must adapt (the work and administrative world of bureaucratic rules, documents, and cold, calculative reasoning). There are two modes of knowing, experiencing, and acting that are directly at odds with one another (Smith, 2008). Patriarchal perspectives and arrangements, widespread and taken for granted, are built

into the relations of ruling. As a result, not only do women find it difficult to find their experiences acknowledged in the wider patriarchal culture, their viewpoints also tend to be silenced or marginalized to the point of being discredited or considered invalid.

Sanday's study of the Indonesian Minangkabau (2004) revealed that in societies that some consider to be matriarchies (where women are the dominant group), women and men tend to work cooperatively rather than competitively, regardless of whether a job is considered feminine by North American standards. The men, however, do not experience the sense of bifurcated consciousness under this social structure that modern Canadian females encounter (Sanday, 2004).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism aims to understand human behaviour by analyzing the critical role of symbols in human interaction. This is certainly relevant to the discussion of masculinity and femininity. Imagine that you walk into a bank, hoping to get a small loan for school, a home, or a small business venture. If you meet with a male loan officer, you may state your case logically by listing all of the hard numbers that make you a qualified applicant as a means of appealing to the analytical characteristics associated with masculinity. If you meet with a female loan officer, you may make an emotional appeal by stating your good intentions as a means of appealing to the caring characteristics associated with femininity.

Because the meanings attached to symbols are socially created and not natural, and fluid, not static, we act and react to symbols based on the current assigned meaning. The word *gay*, for example, once meant "cheerful," but by

the 1960s it carried the primary meaning of "homosexual." In transition, it was even known to mean "careless" or "bright and showing" (Oxford American Dictionary, 2010). Furthermore, the word *gay* (as it refers to a homosexual) carried a somewhat negative and unfavourable meaning 50 years ago, but has since gained more neutral and even positive connotations.

These shifts in symbolic meaning apply to family structure as well. In 1976, when only 27.6% of married women with preschool-aged children were part of the paid workforce, a working mother was still considered an anomaly and there was a general view that women who worked were "selfish" and not good mothers. Today, a majority of women with preschool-aged children are part of the paid workforce (66.5%), and a working mother is viewed as more normal (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Sociologist Charles H. Cooley's concept of the "looking-glass self" (1902) can also be applied to interactionist gender studies. Cooley suggests that one's determination of self is based mainly on the view of society (for instance, if society perceives a man as masculine, then that man will perceive himself as masculine). When people perform tasks or possess characteristics based on the gender role assigned to them, they are said to be **doing gender** (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Whether we are expressing our masculinity or femininity, West and Zimmerman argue, we are *always* "doing gender." Thus, gender is something we *do* or perform, not something we *are*.

Making Connections: Sociological Research

Being Male, Being Female, and Being Healthy

In 1971, Broverman and Broverman conducted a groundbreaking study on the traits mental health workers ascribed to males and females. When asked to name the characteristics of a female, the list featured words such as unaggressive, gentle, emotional, tactful, less logical, not ambitious, dependent, passive, and neat. The list of male characteristics featured words such as aggressive, rough, unemotional, blunt, logical, direct, active, and sloppy (Seem and Clark, 2006). Later, when asked to describe the characteristics of a healthy person (not gender specific), the list was nearly identical to that of a male.

This study uncovered the general assumption that being female is associated with being somewhat unhealthy or not of sound mind. This concept seems extremely dated, but in 2006, Seem and Clark replicated the study and found similar results. Again, the characteristics associated with a healthy male were very similar to that of a healthy (genderless) adult. The list of characteristics associated with being female broadened somewhat but did not show significant change from the original study (Seem and Clark, 2006). This interpretation of feminine characteristics may help us one day to better understand gender disparities in certain illnesses, such as why one in eight women can be expected to develop clinical depression in

her lifetime (National Institute of Mental Health 1999). Perhaps these diagnoses are not just a reflection of women's health, but also a reflection of society's labeling of female characteristics, or the result of institutionalized sexism.

12.3. Sex and Sexuality

Figure 12.11. Sexual practices can differ greatly among groups. Recent trends reveal that married couples have sex more frequently than do singles, and that 27% of married couples in their 30s have sex at least twice a week (NSSHB, 2010). (Photo courtesy of epSos.de/Flickr)

Sexual Attitudes and Practices

In the area of sexuality, sociologists focus their attention on sexual attitudes and practices, not on physiology or anatomy. As noted above, **sexuality** is viewed as a person's capacity for sexual feelings and the orientation of those feelings. Studying sexual attitudes and practices is a particularly interesting field of sociology because sexual behaviour is a cultural universal. Throughout time and place, the vast majority of human beings have participated in sexual relationships (Broude, 2003). Each society, however, interprets sexuality and sexual activity in different ways. Many societies around the world have different attitudes about premarital sex, the age of sexual consent, homosexuality, masturbation, and other sexual behaviours that are not consistent with universally cultural norms (Widmer, Treas, and Newcomb, 1998). At the same time, sociologists have learned that certain norms (like the disapproval of incest) are shared among most societies. Likewise, societies generally have norms that reinforce their accepted social system of sexuality.

What is considered "normal" in terms of sexual behaviour is based on the mores and values of the society. Societies that value monogamy, for example, would likely oppose extramarital sex. Individuals are socialized to sexual attitudes by their family, education system, peers, media, and religion. Historically, religion has been the greatest influence on sexual behaviour in most societies, but in more recent years, peers and the media have emerged as two of the strongest influences — particularly with North American teens (Potard, Courtois, and Rusch, 2008). Let us take a closer look at sexual attitudes in Canada and around the world.

Cross-national research on sexual attitudes in industrialized nations reveals that normative standards differ across the world. For example, several studies have shown that Scandinavian students are more tolerant of premarital sex than are North American students (Grose, 2007). A study of 37 countries reported that non-Western societies — like China, Iran, and India — valued chastity highly in a potential mate, while Western European countries — such as France, the Netherlands, and Sweden — placed little value on prior sexual experiences (Buss, 1989).

Even among Western cultures, attitudes can differ. For example, according to a 33,590-person survey across 24 countries, 89% of Swedes responded that there is nothing wrong with premarital sex, while only 42% of Irish responded this way. From the same study, 93% of Filipinos responded that sex before age 16 is always wrong or almost always wrong, while only 75% of Russians responded this way (Widmer, Treas, and Newcomb, 1998). Sexual attitudes can also vary within a country. For instance, 45% of Spaniards responded that homosexuality is always wrong, while 42% responded that it is never wrong; only 13% responded somewhere in the middle (Widmer, Treas, and Newcomb, 1998).

Of industrialized nations, Sweden is thought to be the most liberal when it comes to attitudes about sex, including sexual practices and sexual openness. The country has very few regulations on sexual images in the media, and sex education, which starts around age six, is a compulsory part of Swedish school curricula. Sweden's permissive approach to sex has helped the country avoid some of the major social problems associated with sex. For example,

rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease are among the world's lowest (Grose, 2007). It would appear that Sweden is a model for the benefits of sexual freedom and frankness. However, implementing Swedish ideals and policies regarding sexuality in other, more politically conservative, nations would likely be met with resistance.

Sexuality in Canada

Canada is often considered to be conservative and "stodgy" compared to the United States, which prides itself on being the land of the "free." However, the United States is much more restrictive when it comes to its citizens' general attitudes about sex. In the 1998 international survey noted above, 12% of Canadians stated that premarital sex is always wrong, compared to 29% of Americans. The average among the 24 countries surveyed on this question was 17%. Compared to 71% of Americans, 55% of Canadians condemned sex before the age of 16 years, 68% compared to 80% (U.S.) condemned extramarital sex, and 39% compared to 70% (U.S.) condemned homosexuality (Widmer, Treas, and Newcomb, 1998). A 2013 international study showed that to the question "Should society accept homosexuality?" 80% of Canadians said "yes" compared to 14% who said "no." Whereas, in the United States 60% said "yes" and 33% said "no" (Pew Research Center, 2013).

North American culture is particularly restrictive in its attitudes about sex when it comes to women and sexuality. It is widely believed that men are more sexual than women. In fact, there is a popular notion that men think about sex every seven seconds. Research, however, suggests that men think about sex an average of 19 times per day, compared

to 10 times per day for women (Fisher, Moore, and Pittenger, 2011).

The belief that men have — or have the right to — more sexual urges than women creates a double standard. Ira Reiss, a pioneer researcher in the field of sexual studies, defined the **double standard** as prohibiting premarital sexual intercourse for women but allowing it for men (Reiss, 1960). This standard has evolved into allowing women to engage in premarital sex only within committed love relationships, but allowing men to engage in sexual relationships with as many partners as they wish without condition (Milhausen and Herold, 1999). Due to this double standard, a woman is likely to have fewer sexual partners in her lifetime than a man. According to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 2011 survey, the average 35-year-old woman has had three opposite-sex sexual partners while the average 35-year-old man has had twice as many (Centers for Disease Control, 2011). In a study of 1,479 Canadians over the age of 18, men had had an average of 11.25 sexual partners over their lifetime whereas women had an average of 4 (Fischtein, Herold, and Desmarais, 2007).

Making Connections: Big Picture

The History of Homosexuality: Making Up People?

Figure 12.12. Two men in Florence kissing. Bartolomeo Cesi, 1600. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

One of the principal insights of contemporary sociology is that a focus on the social construction of different social experiences and problems leads to alternative ways of understanding them and responding to them. The sociologist often confronts a legacy of entrenched beliefs concerning innate

biological disposition, or the individual psychopathology of persons who are considered abnormal. The sexual or gender "deviant" is a primary example. However, as Ian Hacking (2006) observes, even when these beliefs about *kinds of persons* are products of objective scientific classification, the institutional context of science and expert knowledge is not independent of societal norms, beliefs, and practices. The process of classifying *kinds of people* is a social process that Hacking calls "making up people" and Howard Becker (1963) calls "labeling."A homosexual was first defined as a *kind of person* in the 19th century: the sexual "invert." This definition was "scientific," but in no way independent of the cultural norms and prejudices of the times. The idea that homosexuals were characterized by an internal, deviant "inversion" of sexual instincts depended on the new scientific disciplines of biology and psychiatry (Foucault, 1980). The homosexual's deviance was defined first by the idea that heterosexuality was biologically natural (and therefore "normal") and second by the idea that, psychologically, sexual preference defined every aspect of the personality. Within the emerging field of psychiatry, it was possible to speak of an inverted personality because a lesbian woman who did not play the "proper" passive sexual role of her gender was masculine. A gay man who did not play his "proper" active sexual role was effeminate. After centuries during which an individual's sexual preference was largely a matter of public indifference, in the 19th century, the problem of sexuality suddenly emerged as a

biological, social, psychological, and moral concern.

The new definitions of homosexuality and sexual inversion led to a series of social anxieties that ranged from a threat to the propagation of the human species, to the perceived need to “correct” sexual deviation through psychiatric and medical treatments. The powerful normative constraints that emerged based largely on the 19th century scientific distinction between natural and unnatural forms of sexuality lead to the legacy of closeted sexuality and homophobic violence that remains to this day. Nevertheless, they depend on the concept of the homosexual as a specific kind of person.

As Hacking (2006) points out, the category of classification, or the label that defines different kinds of people, actually influences their behaviour and self-understanding. It is a “self-fulfilling prophecy” (see Chapter 22). They begin to experience the world and live in society in a different manner than they did previously. Ironically, the gay rights movement has built on the same biological and psychiatric definitions of the homosexual as a kind of person so to reverse the negative consequences of homophobic culture. Redefining the meaning of being a homosexual type of person advances the social acceptance of gays and lesbians. To some degree the gay rights movement has accepted the idea of the homosexual as a kind of person, and they have self-identified as such, but the outcome of this relabeling has not yet

completely reversed the negative connotations of being gay.

Sociological Perspectives on Sex and Sexuality

Sociologists representing all three major theoretical perspectives study the role that sexuality plays in social life today. Scholars recognize that sexuality continues to be an important factor in social hierarchies and relations of power and that the manner in which sexuality is constructed has a significant effect on perceptions, interactions, health, and outcomes.

Structural Functionalism

When it comes to sexuality, functionalists stress the importance of regulating sexual behaviour to ensure marital cohesion and family stability. Since functionalists identify the family unit as the most integral component in society, they maintain a strict focus on it at all times and argue in favour of social arrangements that promote and ensure family preservation.

Functionalists such as Talcott Parsons (1955) have long argued that the regulation of sexual activity is an important function of the family. Social norms surrounding family life have, traditionally, encouraged sexual activity within the family unit (marriage) and have discouraged activity outside of it (premarital and extramarital sex). From a functionalist point of view, the purpose of encouraging sexual activity in the confines of marriage is to intensify

the bond between spouses and to ensure that procreation occurs within a stable, legally recognized relationship. This structure gives offspring the best possible chance for appropriate socialization and the provision of basic resources.

From a functionalist standpoint, homosexuality poses a potential dysfunction in terms of both the procreative role of the family and the unifying myths that the traditional family provides. Strictly speaking, homosexual couples cannot have children together so, for them at least, procreation would cease. (It is of course not the case that homosexuals are unable to marry or procreate with members of the opposite sex as this has occurred throughout history). Similarly, the deep connection — between the traditional family form, religion, cultural practices and beliefs — provides a unifying force of social cohesion that gay marriage threatens. Thus, homosexuality disrupts the existing functional order. The functions of the traditional family structure need to be served or satisfied by different family structures for a working social equilibrium to be restored. This analysis suggests that sociologists need to examine new structural forms that provide the *functional equivalents* of traditional marriage structures: the increasing legal acceptance of same-sex marriage; the emergence of new narratives about what makes a marriage legitimate (e.g., the universality of the "love bond" rather than the rites of tradition); and the rise in gay and lesbian couples who choose to bear and raise children through a variety of available resources.

Critical Sociology

From a critical perspective, sexuality is another area in which power differentials are present and where dominant

groups actively work to promote their worldview as well as their economic interests. Homosexuality was criminalized in Canada in 1841. At the time of Confederation in 1867, sodomy was prohibited, and in 1890 the Canadian Criminal Code made "acts of gross indecency" between men illegal. Acts of "gross indecency" between women were not prohibited until 1953. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, homosexuals were even treated as national security risks; hundreds of gays and lesbians lost their civil service jobs or were purged from the military, and thousands were kept under surveillance (Kinsman, 2000).

It was not until 1969 that the Criminal Code was amended to relax the laws against homosexuality. As then Justice Minister Pierre Trudeau said in 1967 when the amendments were introduced, "Take this thing on homosexuality. I think the view we take here is that there's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation. I think that what's done in private between adults doesn't concern the Criminal Code. When it becomes public this is a different matter, or when it relates to minors this is a different matter" (CBC, 2012). It was not until 2005 that same-sex couples were given the right to marry. Critical sociology asks why homosexuality, and other types of sexuality, have been the subject of persecution by the dominant sexual majority.

From a critical sociology point of view, a key dimension of social inequality based on sexuality has to do with the concept of "sexuality" itself. Sexuality is caught up in the relationship between knowledge and power. As we noted above, the homosexual was first defined as a "kind of person" in the 19th century: the sexual "invert." This definition was "scientific," (at least in terms of the science of the time), but it was in no way independent of the cultural norms and prejudices of 19th century society. It

was also not independent of the modern expansion of what Michel Foucault calls "micro-powers" over an increasing range of facets of the life of individuals. The early biologists, medical scientists, and psychologists viewed "sexuality" as a hidden agency that defined the viability of an individual's personality, and posed a threat at various levels to the survival and health of the population. Abnormal sexuality was associated with mental disease, threats to institutional stability, and biological pathologies within the reproduction of the species. The idea that there was a division between healthy normal sexualities and dangerous deviant sexualities — a division that required the expertise of the medical and psychological establishment to diagnose and determine — became a kind of "Trojan horse" in which the problem of sexuality entered into people's lives. As a public concern, sexuality became a danger to be controlled, surveilled, corrected, and in the worst cases, institutionalized. As Foucault (1980) describes, the sexual lives of children, "perverts," married couples and the population as a whole became increasingly subject to interventions by doctors, psychiatrists, police, government administrators, moral crusaders, and families.

Part of the power issue involved in having a sexuality or a gender therefore has to do with the *normality* of one's sexual identity and who determines what is normal or not. The norms defined by social custom, moral tradition, and scientific knowledge determine the degree of ease in which we can live within our own bodies and assume gender and sexual identities. As we noted above, having a gender or sexual identity is only experienced as normal or natural to the degree that one fits within the **dominant gender schema** — the ideological framework that states that there are only two possible sexes, male and female, and two possible genders, masculine and feminine. Sexuality is a

component of the dominant gender schema in as far as — in heteronormative society — to be male is to be attracted to females and to be female is to be attracted to males. The dominant gender schema therefore provides the basis for the ways inequalities in power and status are distributed according to the degree that individuals conform to its narrow categories.

In contrast, Devor (2000) argues:

> we live in a world which is far more diverse than any number of simplistic dichotomies can describe. I have become convinced that not only can men and women live in bodies of any sex, but that we, as a society, go against reality when we insist that there are only two genders, only two sexes, and only slight variations on two basic sexualities. I have learned from speaking with transgendered and transsexed people that we diminish ourselves as a society by failing to avail ourselves of the special gifts and lessons we can receive from the transgendered, transsexed and intermediately sexed people among us.

Symbolic Interactionism

Interactionists focus on the meanings associated with sexuality and with sexual orientation. Since femininity is devalued in North American society, those who adopt such traits are subject to ridicule; this is especially true for boys or men. Just as masculinity is the symbolic norm, so too has heterosexuality come to signify normalcy.

The experiences of gender and sexual outsiders — homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals, women who do not look or act "feminine," men who do not look or act "masculine," etc. — reveal the subtle dramaturgical order of social processes and negotiations through which all gender identity is sustained and recognized by others. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, "passing" as a

"normal" heterosexual depends on one's sexual cues and props being received and interpreted by others as passable.

The coming-out process of homosexuals is described by Vivienne Cass as a series of social stages that the individual is obliged to negotiate with others (Devor, 1997): first, a period of identity confusion in which the person attempts to deny or resist the growing suspicion that he or she is homosexual; second, a period of identity comparison in which the person examines the series of available identity options to see which one explains his or her sense of self best; third, a period of identity tolerance in which the person recognizes "I probably am gay" and seeks out more information and contacts; fourth, a period of identity acceptance in which the person carefully manages sexual information or claims public acknowledgment of his or her sexual identity; fifth, a period of identity pride in which the person identifies strongly with his or her reference group and minimizes the value of others; and sixth, a period of identity synthesis in which the person's sexuality is naturalized, becoming "no big deal." Of course the transition between these stages is not predetermined, and it is possible to remain stuck in one stage or even to go backwards. For the homosexual, these transitions are fraught with difficulty.

To what degree does the same process apply to heterosexuals? Although the idea of coming out as a heterosexual, or as a masculine man or a feminine woman, might seem absurd, this absurdity is grounded in the norms of heteronormative society that are so deeply entrenched as to make them appear natural. The social processes of acquiring a gender and sexual identity, or of "having" a gender or a sexuality, are essentially the same; yet, the degree to which society *accepts* the resulting identities is what differs.

Interactionists are also interested in how discussions of homosexuals often focus almost exclusively on the sex lives of gays and lesbians; homosexuals, especially men, may be assumed to be hypersexual and, in some cases, deviant. Interactionism might also focus on the slurs used to describe homosexuals. Labels such as “queen” and “fag” are often used to demean homosexual men by feminizing them. This subsequently affects how homosexuals perceive themselves. Recall Cooley’s “looking-glass self,” which suggests that self develops as a result of one’s interpretation and evaluation of the responses of others (Cooley, 1902). Constant exposure to derogatory labels, jokes, and pervasive homophobia would lead to a negative self-image, or worse, self-hate. The CDC reports that homosexual youths who experience high levels of social rejection are six times more likely to have high levels of depression and eight times more likely to have attempted suicide (CDC, 2011).

Queer Theory

Queer theory is a perspective that problematizes the manner in which we have been taught to think about sexual orientation. By calling their discipline “queer,” these scholars are rejecting the effects of labelling; instead, they embrace the word “queer” and have reclaimed it for their own purposes. Queer theorists reject the dominant gender schema and the dichotomization of sexual orientations into two mutually exclusive outcomes, homosexual or heterosexual. Rather, the perspective highlights the need for a more flexible and fluid conceptualization of sexuality — one that allows for change, negotiation, and freedom. The current schema used to classify individuals as either “heterosexual” or “homosexual” pits one orientation

against the other. This mirrors other oppressive schemas in our culture, especially those surrounding gender and race (Black versus White, male versus female).

Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argued against North American society's monolithic definition of sexuality — against its reduction to a single factor: the sex of one's desired partner. Sedgwick identified dozens of other ways in which people's sexualities were different, such as:

- Even identical genital acts mean very different things to different people.
- Sexuality makes up a large share of the self-perceived identity of some people, a small share of others.
- Some people spend a lot of time thinking about sex, others little.
- Some people like to have a lot of sex, others little or none.
- Many people have their richest mental/emotional involvement with sexual acts that they do not do, or do not even want to do
- Some people like spontaneous sexual scenes, others like highly scripted ones, others like spontaneous-sounding ones that are nonetheless totally predictable.
- Some people, whether homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual, experience their sexuality as deeply embedded in a matrix of gender meanings and gender differentials. Others of each sexuality do not. (Sedgwick, 1990)

In the end, queer theory strives to question the ways society perceives and experiences sex, gender, and sexuality, opening the door to new scholarly understanding.

Throughout this chapter, we have examined the complexities of gender, sex, and sexuality. Differentiating between sex, gender, and sexual orientation is an important first step to a deeper understanding and critical analysis of these issues. Understanding the sociology of sex, gender, and sexuality will help to build awareness of the inequalities experienced by subordinate groups such as women, homosexuals, and transgendered individuals.

Key Terms

bifurcated consciousness: The experience of a division between the directly lived, bodily world of women's lives and the dominant, masculine, abstract, institutional world to which they must adapt.

cisgendered: A term that refers to individuals whose gender identity matches the gender and sex they were assigned at birth

doing gender: When people perform tasks based upon the gender assigned to them by society.

dominant gender schema: An ideological framework that states that there are only two possible sexes, male and female, and two possible genders, masculine and feminine.

double standard: A concept that prohibits premarital sexual intercourse for women, but allows it for men.

gender: A term that refers to social or cultural distinctions of behaviours that are considered male or female.

gender identity: An individual's sense of being either masculine or feminine.

gender role: Society's concept of how men and women should behave.

heteronormativity: The belief and practice that heterosexuality is the only normal sexual orientation.

homophobia: An extreme or irrational aversion to homosexuals.

intersex: Individuals with a mixture of male and female sexual organs or physical characteristics.

queer theory: A scholarly discipline that questions fixed (normative) definitions of gender and sexuality.

sex: A term that denotes the presence of physical or physiological differences between males and females.

sexism: The prejudiced belief that one sex should be valued over another.

sexuality: A person's capacity for sexual feelings and the orientation of their emotional and sexual attraction to a particular sex (male or female).

transgendered: A term that refers to individuals who identify with the behaviours and characteristics that are the opposite of their biological sex.

transsexuals: Transgendered individuals who alter their bodies through medical interventions such as surgery and hormonal therapy.

Section Summary

12.1. The Difference between Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

The terms “sex” and “gender” refer to two different identifiers. Sex denotes biological characteristics differentiating males and females, while gender denotes social and cultural characteristics of masculine and feminine behaviour. Sex and gender are not always synchronous. Individuals who strongly identify with the opposing gender are considered transgendered.

12.2. Gender

Children become aware of gender roles in their earliest years. They come to understand and perform these roles through socialization, which occurs through four major agents: family, education, peer groups, and mass media. Socialization into narrowly prescribed gender roles results in the stratification of males and females. Each sociological perspective offers a valuable view for understanding how and why gender inequality occurs in our society.

12.3. Sex and Sexuality

When studying sex and sexuality, sociologists focus their attention on sexual attitudes and practices, not on physiology or anatomy. Norms regarding gender and sexuality vary across cultures. In general, Canada tends to be less conservative than the United States in its sexual attitudes. As a result, homosexuals still continue to face opposition and discrimination in most major social institutions, but discrimination based on sexual orientation is legally prohibited in the Canadian constitution. Gays and lesbians are able to get married in Canada, and school boards across the country have instituted anti-bullying policies to prevent the targeting of LGBT students.

Section Quiz

12.1. The Difference between Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

1. The terms “masculine” and “feminine” refer to a person’s __________.

1. Sex
2. Gender
3. Both sex and gender
4. None of the above

2. ________ is/are an individual’s self-conception of being male or female based on his or her association with masculine or feminine gender roles.

1. Gender identity
2. Gender bias
3. Sexual orientation
4. Sexual attitudes

3. Research indicates that individuals are aware of their sexual orientation ______________________.

1. At infancy
2. In early adolescence
3. In early adulthood
4. In late adulthood

4. A person who is biologically female but identifies with the male gender and has undergone surgery to alter her body is considered ________________________.

1. Transgendered
2. Transsexual
3. A cross-dresser
4. Homosexual

5. Which of following is correct regarding the explanation for transgenderism?

1. It is strictly biological and associated with chemical imbalances in the brain.
2. It is a behaviour that is learned through socializing with other transgendered individuals.
3. It is genetic and usually skips one generation.
4. Currently, there is no definitive explanation for transgenderism.

12.2. Gender

6. Which of the following is the best example of a gender stereotype?

1. Women are typically shorter than men.
2. Men do not live as long as women.
3. Women tend to be overly emotional, while men tend to be level-headed.
4. Men hold more high-earning, leadership jobs than women.

7. Which of the following is the best example of the role peers play as an agent of socialization for school-aged children?

1. Children can act however they wish around

their peers because children are unaware of gender roles.

2. Peers serve as a support system for children who wish to act outside of their assigned gender roles.
3. Peers tend to reinforce gender roles by criticizing and marginalizing those who behave outside of their assigned roles.
4. None of the above.

8. To which theoretical perspective does the following statement most likely apply: Women continue to assume the responsibility in the household along with a paid occupation because it keeps the household running smoothly (i.e., in a state of balance)?

1. Conflict theory
2. Functionalism
3. Feminist theory
4. Symbolic interactionism

9. Only women are affected by gender stratification.

1. True
2. False

10. According to the symbolic interactionist perspective, we "do gender" ______________________.

1. During half of our activities
2. Only when it applies to our biological sex
3. Only if we are actively following gender roles

4. All of the time, in everything we do

12.3. Sex and Sexuality

11. What Western country is thought to be the most liberal in its attitudes toward sex?

1. United States
2. Sweden
3. Mexico
4. Ireland

12. Compared to most Western societies, U.S. sexual attitudes are considered ______________.

1. Conservative
2. Liberal
3. Permissive
4. Free

13. Sociologists associate sexuality with _________________________.

1. Heterosexuality
2. Homosexuality
3. Biological factors
4. A person's capacity for sexual feelings

14. Which theoretical perspective stresses the importance of regulating sexual behaviour to ensure marital cohesion and family stability?

1. Functionalism
2. Conflict theory

3. Symbolic interactionalism
4. Queer theory

[Quiz answers at end of chapter]

Short Answer

12.1. The Difference between Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

1. Why do sociologists find it important to differentiate between sex and gender? What importance does the differentiation have in modern society?
2. How is children's play influenced by gender roles? Think back to your childhood. How "gendered" were the toys and activities available to you? Do you remember gender expectations being conveyed through the approval or disapproval of your playtime choices?

12.2. Gender

1. In what way do parents treat sons and daughters differently? How do sons and daughters typically respond to this treatment?
2. What can be done to lessen the effects of gender stratification in the workplace? How does gender stratification harm both men and women?

12.3. Sex and Sexuality

1. Identify three examples of how Canadian society is heteronormative.
2. Consider the types of derogatory labelling that sociologists study and explain how these might apply to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Further Research

12.1. The Difference between Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

For more information on gender identity and advocacy for transgendered individuals see the Global Action for Trans Equality website: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/trans_equality.

12.2. Gender

For more gender-related statistics, see the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at http://www.cdc.gov/ and browse through to pictures like "gender and education" and "gender and health." (Include quotation marks when searching.)

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Solutions to Section Quiz

1 B, | 2 A, | 3 B, | 4 B, | 5 D, | 6 C, | 7 C, | 8 B, | 9 B, | 10 D, | 11 B, | 12 A, | 13 D, | 14 A, [Return to Quiz]

Image Attributions

Figure 12.3. *Dance to the Berdache* by George Catlin (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Catlin_-_Dance_to_the_berdache.jpg) is in the public domain (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Public_domain)

Figure 12.8. Pink by Robert Couse Baker (https://www.flickr.com/photos/29233640@N07/3951652557/in/gallery-42031937@N04-72157623838686839/) used under CC BY 2.0 license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

Figure 12.9. Emily Murphy. [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EmilyMurphy.jpg)

Figure 12.12. Two men in Florence kissing. Bartolomeo Cesi, [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Twoflorencemenkiss.jpg)

Chapter 8. Race and Ethnicity

Figure 11.1. The dastaar (turban) is a required article in the observance of the Sikh faith. Baltej Singh Dhillon (not shown here) was the first Sikh member of the RCMP to wear a turban on active duty. This sparked a major controversy in 1990, but today people barely bat an eye when they see a police officer wearing a turban. Race and ethnicity are part of the human experience. Do the signs of racial and ethnic diversity play a role in who we are and how we relate to one another? (Photo courtesy of Gurumustuk Singh/ Flickr)

Learning Objectives

[11.1. Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups]

- Understand the difference between race and ethnicity.
- Define a majority group (dominant group).
- Define a minority group (subordinate group).

[11.2. Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination]

- Explain the difference between stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and racism.
- Identify different types of discrimination.

[11.3. Theories of Race and Ethnicity]

- Describe how major sociological perspectives view race and ethnicity.
- Identify examples of culture of prejudice.

[11.4. Intergroup Relations and the Management of Diversity]

- Explain different intergroup relations in terms of their relative levels of tolerance.
- Give historical and/or contemporary examples of each type of intergroup relation.

[11.5. Race and Ethnicity in Canada]

- Compare and contrast the different experiences of various ethnic groups in Canada.
- Apply theories of intergroup relations and race and ethnicity to different subordinate

groups.

Introduction to Race and Ethnicity

Visible minorities are defined as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" (Statistics Canada, 2013, p. 14). This is a contentious term, as we will see in this chapter, but it does give us a way to speak about the growing ethnic and racial diversity of Canada. The 2011 census noted that visible minorities made up 19.1% of the Canadian population, or almost one out of every five Canadians. This was up from 16.2% in the 2006 census (Statistics Canada, 2013). The three largest visible minority groups were South Asians (25%), Chinese (21.1%), and blacks (15.1%).

Going back to the 1921 census, only 0.8% of population were made up of people of Asian origin, whereas 0.2% of the population were black. Aboriginal Canadians made up 1.3% of the population. The vast majority of the population were Caucasians ("whites") of British or French ancestry. These figures did not change appreciably until after the changes to the Immigration Act in 1967, which replaced an immigration policy based on racial criteria with a point system based on educational and occupational qualifications (Li, 1996). The 2011 census reported that 78% of the immigrants who arrived in Canada between 2006 and 2011 were visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2013).

Still, these figures do not really give a complete picture of racial and ethnic diversity in Canada. 96% of visible minorities live in cities, mainly Vancouver and Toronto,

making these cities extremely diverse and cosmopolitan. In Vancouver, almost half the population (45.2%) is made up of visible minorities. Within Greater Vancouver, 70.4% of the residents of Richmond, 59.5% of the residents of Burnaby, and 52.6 of the residents of Surrey are visible minorities. In the Toronto area, where visible minorities make up 47% of the population, 72.3% of the residents of the suburb of Markham are visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2013). In many parts of urban Canada, it is a misnomer to use the term visible minority, as the "minorities" are now in the majority.

Table 11.1. Visible minority population and top three visible minority groups, selected census metropolitan areas, Canada, 2011, p. 17. (Table courtesy of Statistics Canada's Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada report [PDF])

[Skip Table]

Cities	**Total Population**	**Visible Minority Population**	**Percentage**	**Top Three Visible Minority Groups**
Canada	32,852,325	6,264,755	19.1%	South Asian, Chinese, Black
Toronto	5,521,235	2,596,420	47.0%	South Asian, Chinese, Black
Montréal	3,752,475	762,325	20.3%	Black, Arab, Latin American
Vancouver	2,280,695	1,030,335	45.2%	Chinese, South Asian, Filipino
Ottawa – Gatineau	1,215,735	234,015	19.2%	Black, Arab, Chinese
Calgary	1,199,125	337,420	28.1%	South Asian, Chinese, Filipino

[Skip Table]

Cities	Total Population	Visible Minority Population	Percentage	Top Three Visible Minority Groups
Edmonton	1,139,585	254,990	22.4%	South Asian, Chinese, Filipino
Winnipeg	714,635	140,770	19.7%	Filipino, South Asian, Black
Hamilton	708,175	101,600	14.3%	South Asian, Black, Chinese

Source Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011.

Projecting forward based on current trends, Statistics Canada estimates that by 2031, between 29 and 32% of the Canadian population will be visible minorities. Visible minority groups will make up 63% of the population of Toronto and 59% of the population of Vancouver (Statistics Canada, 2010). The outcome of these trends is that Canada has become a much more racially and ethnically diverse country over the 20th and 21st centuries. It will continue to become more diverse in the future.

In large part this has to do with immigration policy. Canada is a **settler society**, a society historically based on colonization through foreign settlement and displacement of Aboriginal inhabitants, so immigration is the major

influence on population diversity. In the two decades following World War II, Canada followed an immigration policy that was explicitly race based. Prime Minister Mackenzie King's statement to the House of Commons in 1947 expressed this in what were, at the time, uncontroversial terms:

> There will, I am sure, be general agreement with the view that the people of Canada do not wish, as a result of mass immigration, to make a fundamental alteration in the character of our population. Large-scale immigration from the orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population. Any considerable oriental immigration would, moreover, be certain to give rise to social and economic problems of a character that might lead to serious difficulties in the field of international relations. The government, therefore, has no thought of making any change in immigration regulations which would have consequences of the kind. (as cited in Li, 1996, pp. 163-164)

Today this would be a completely unacceptable statement from a Canadian politician. Immigration today is based on a non-racial point system. Canada defines itself as a multicultural nation that promotes and recognizes the diversity of its population. This does not mean, however, that Canada's legacy of institutional and individual prejudice and racism has been erased. Nor does it mean that the problems of managing a diverse population have been resolved.

In 1997, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination criticized the Canadian government for using the term "visible minority," citing that distinctions based on race or colour are discriminatory (CBC, 2007). The term combines a diverse group of people into one category whether they have anything in common or not. What does it actually

mean to be a member of a visible minority in Canada? What does it mean to be a member of the “non-visible” majority? What do these terms mean in practice?

11.1. Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

While many students first entering a sociology classroom are accustomed to conflating the terms race, ethnicity, and minority group, these three terms have distinct meanings for sociologists. The idea of race refers to superficial physical differences that a particular society considers significant, while ethnicity is a term that describes shared culture. And minority group describes groups that are subordinate, or lacking power in society regardless of skin colour or country of origin. For example, in modern history, the elderly might be considered a minority group due to a diminished status resulting from popular prejudice and discrimination against them. The World Health Organization’s research on elderly maltreatment shows that 10% of nursing home staff admit to physically abusing an elderly person in the past year, and 40% admit to psychological abuse (2011). As a minority group, the elderly are also subject to economic, social, and workplace discrimination.

What Is Race?

Historically, the concept of race has changed across cultures and eras, eventually becoming less connected with ancestral and familial ties, and more concerned with superficial physical characteristics. In the past, theorists have posited categories of race based on various geographic regions, ethnicities, skin colours, and more. Their labels for racial groups have connoted regions

(Mongolia and the Caucus Mountains, for instance) or denoted skin tones (black, white, yellow, and red, for example).

However, this typology of race developed during early racial science has fallen into disuse, and **racialization** (the social construction of race) is a far more common way of understanding racial categories. According to this school of thought, race is not biologically identifiable. Rather, certain groups become racialized through a social process that marks them for unequal treatment based on perceived physiological differences. When considering skin colour, for example, the social construction of race perspective recognizes that the relative darkness or fairness of skin is an evolutionary adaptation to the available sunlight in different regions of the world. Contemporary conceptions of race, therefore, which tend to be based on socioeconomic assumptions, illuminate how far removed modern race understanding is from biological qualities. In modern society, some people who consider themselves "white" actually have more melanin (a pigment that determines skin colour) in their skin than other people who identify as "black." Consider the case of the actress Rashida Jones. She is the daughter of a black man (Quincy Jones) but she does not play a black woman in her television or film roles. In some countries, such as Brazil, class is more important than skin colour in determining racial categorization. People with high levels of melanin in their skin may consider themselves "white" if they enjoy a middle-class lifestyle. On the other hand, someone with low levels of melanin in their skin might be assigned the identity of "black" if they have little education or money.

The social construction of race is also reflected in the way that names for racial categories change with changing times. It's worth noting that race, in this sense, is also a

system of labelling that provides a source of identity — specific labels fall in and out of favour during different social eras. For example, the category ”negroid,” popular in the 19th century, evolved into the term “negro” by the 1960s, and then this term fell from use and was replaced with “black Canadian.” The term was intended to celebrate the multiple identities that a black person might hold, but the word choice is an ambiguous one: It lumps together a large variety of ethnic groups under an umbrella term. Unlike the case in the United States where the term “African American” is common, most black Canadians immigrated from the Caribbean and retain ethnic roots from that area. Culturally they remain distinct from immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa or the descendants of the slaves brought to mainland North America. Some prefer to use the term “Afro-Caribbean Canadians” for that reason.

What Is Ethnicity?

Ethnicity is a term that describes shared culture — the practices, values, and beliefs of a group. This might include shared language, religion, and traditions, among other commonalities. Like race, the term ethnicity is difficult to describe and its meaning has changed over time. And like race, individuals may be identified or self-identify with ethnicities in complex, even contradictory, ways. For example, ethnic groups such as Irish, Italian, Russian, Jewish, and Serbian might all be groups whose members are predominantly included in the racial category “white.” Conversely, the ethnic group British includes citizens from a multiplicity of racial backgrounds: black, white, Asian, and more, plus a variety of race combinations. These examples illustrate the complexity and overlap of these

identifying terms. Ethnicity, like race, continues to be an identification method that individuals and institutions use today — whether through the census, affirmative action initiatives, non-discrimination laws, or simply in personal day-to-day relations.

What Are Minority Groups?

Sociologist Louis Wirth (1897-1952) defined a **minority group** as "any group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination" (1945). The term minority connotes discrimination, and in its sociological use the term **subordinate** can be used interchangeably with the term minority, while the term **dominant** is often substituted for the group that's in the majority. These definitions correlate to the concept that the **dominant group** is that which holds the most power in a given society, while **subordinate groups** are those who lack power compared to the dominant group.

Note that being a numerical minority is not a characteristic of being a minority group; sometimes larger groups can be considered minority groups due to their lack of power. It is the lack of power that is the predominant characteristic of a minority, or subordinate group. For example, consider apartheid in South Africa, in which a numerical majority (the black inhabitants of the country) were exploited and oppressed by the white minority.

According to Charles Wagley (1913-1991) and Marvin Harris (1927-2001), a minority group is distinguished by five characteristics: (1) unequal treatment and less power over their lives, (2) distinguishing physical or cultural traits

like skin colour or language, (3) involuntary membership in the group, (4) awareness of subordination, and (5) high rate of in-group marriage (1958). Additional examples of minority groups might include the LGBTQ community, religious practitioners whose faith is not widely practised where they live, and people with disabilities.

Scapegoat theory, developed initially from John Dollard's (1900-1980) frustration-aggression theory, suggests that the dominant group will displace their unfocused aggression onto a subordinate group (1939). History has shown us many examples of the scapegoating of a subordinate group. An example from the last century is the way that Adolf Hitler was able to use the Jewish people as scapegoats for Germany's social and economic problems. In Canada, eastern European immigrants were branded Bolsheviks and interned during the economic slump following World War I. More recently, growing economic inequality and the uncertainty unleashed by technological change have encouraged scapegoating. In the United States, many states have enacted laws to disenfranchise immigrants and politicians have called for strict border controls. Meanwhile, workers threatened by job loss have blamed immigrant minorities for "stealing jobs." In each case a minority group gets blamed for what might better be understood as structural problems of a society.

Multiple Identities

Figure 11.2. Golfer Tiger Woods has Chinese, Thai, African American, Native American, and Dutch heritage. Individuals with multiple ethnic backgrounds are becoming more common. (Photo courtesy of familymwr/Flickr)

Prior to the 20th century, racial intermarriage (referred to as miscegenation) was extremely rare, and in many places, illegal. In the United States, 41 of the 50 states at one

time or another enacted legislation to prevent racial intermarriage. In Canada, there were no formal anti-miscegenation laws, though strong informal norms ensured that racial intermixing was extremely limited in scope. Thompson makes the case, however, that the various versions of the Indian Act, originally enacted in 1876, effectively worked on a racial level to restrict the marriage between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (2009). A key part of the Act enumerated the various ways in which Aboriginal people could lose their status and, thus, their claim to Aboriginal land title and state provisions. Until its amendment in 1985, the most egregious section of the Act (Section 12.1.b) determined that an Indian woman who married a non-Indian man would lose her Indian status and her children's Indian status, whereas an Indian man who married a non-Indian woman would retain his status, as would his children. In this way, the thorny question of having multiple racial identities could be avoided.

Figure 11.3. Louis Riel was the son of a prominent French-Ojibwa father and French mother. He was executed in 1885 on the charge of high treason for his role in the Northwest Rebellion. This picture was taken at the time of his trial in 1885. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

The Métis are Canada's original exception to this rule. Prior to the full establishment of British colonial rule in Canada, racial intermarriage was encouraged in some areas to support the fur trade. The Métis formed a unique mixed-race culture of French fur traders and mostly Cree, Anishinabe, and Saulteaux people centred in the Red River settlement of what is now Manitoba. The progeny of liaisons between the Hudson's Bay Company's British

traders and Aboriginal women were known as "half-breeds," a largely pejorative term both then and now. It is unfortunately a testament to the untenability of multiple identities in 19th century Canada that the attempt to establish and protect an independent Métis culture under the provisional government of Louis Riel (1844-1885) led to the violent suppression of the Métis in the Red River Rebellion of 1869 and the Northwest Rebellion of 1885. Despite the promises of the newly founded Canadian government, the Métis were swindled out of their land through a corrupt script system and displaced by a massive influx of Anglo-Saxon immigrants (Purich, 1988).

During the late modern era, the trend toward equal rights and legal protection against racism have steadily reduced the social stigma attached to racial exogamy (exogamy refers to marriage outside of one's core social unit). It is now common for the children of racially mixed parents to acknowledge and celebrate their various ethnic identities. Golfer Tiger Woods, for instance, has Chinese, Thai, African American, Native American, and Dutch heritage; he jokingly refers to his ethnicity as "Cablinasian," a term he coined to combine several of his ethnic backgrounds. In Canada the prevalence of multiple identities is captured in the 2011 *Statistics Canada National Household Survey*. While just over 19 million Canadians described themselves as having a single ethnic origin, (including almost 6 million who claimed a "Canadian" ethnic origin), almost 14 million Canadians described themselves as having a multiple ethnic origin (Statistics Canada, 2011). According to 2006 census data, 3.9% of all Canadian couples were "mixed unions," that is, couples made up of either a visible minority member and a non-visible minority member or two members from different visible minorities. This was up from 3.1% in 2001 and 2.6% in 1991 (Milan et al., 2010).

11.2. Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination

Stereotypes

The terms stereotype, prejudice, discrimination, and racism are often used interchangeably in everyday conversation. But when discussing these terms from a sociological perspective, it is important to define them: **Stereotypes** are oversimplified ideas about groups of people; **prejudice** refers to thoughts and feelings about those groups; while **discrimination** refers to actions toward them. **Racism** is a type of prejudice that involves set beliefs about a specific racial group.

As stated above, stereotypes are oversimplified ideas about groups of people. Stereotypes can be based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation — almost any characteristic. They may be positive (usually about one's own group, such as when women suggest they are less likely to complain about physical pain) but are often negative (usually toward other groups, such as when members of a dominant racial group suggest that a subordinate racial group is stupid or lazy). In either case, the stereotype is a generalization that doesn't take individual differences into account.

Where do stereotypes come from? In fact new stereotypes are rarely created; rather, they are recycled from subordinate groups that have assimilated into society and are reused to describe newly subordinate groups. For example, many stereotypes that are currently used to characterize black people were used earlier in Canadian history to characterize Irish and eastern European immigrants.

Prejudice and Racism

Prejudice refers to beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes that someone holds about a group. A prejudice is not based on experience; instead, it is a prejudgment originating outside of actual experience. Racism is a type of prejudice that is used to justify the belief that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others. White supremacist groups are examples of racist organizations; their members' belief in white supremacy has encouraged hate crimes and hate speech for over a century.

Discrimination

While prejudice refers to biased *thinking*, discrimination consists of *actions* against a group of people. Discrimination can be based on age, religion, health, and other indicators. Race-based discrimination and anti-discrimination laws strive to address this set of social problems.

Discrimination based on race or ethnicity can take many forms, from unfair housing practices to biased hiring systems. Overt discrimination has long been part of Canadian history. Discrimination against Jews was typical until the 1950s. McGill University imposed quotas on the admission of Jewish students in 1920, a practice which continued in its medical faculty until the 1960s. As we saw in the Nova Scotia case of Viola Desmond in Chapter 7, Canada had also its own version of American Jim Crow laws, which designated "whites only" areas in cinemas, public transportation, workplaces, etc. Both Ontario and Nova Scotia had racially segregated schools. It is interesting to note that while Viola Desmond was prosecuted for sitting in a whites only section of the cinema

in Glasgow, Nova Scotia, she was in fact of mixed-race descent as her mother was white (Backhouse, 1994). These practices are unacceptable in Canada today.

However, discrimination cannot be erased from our culture just by enacting laws to abolish it. Even if a magic pill managed to eradicate racism from each individual's psyche, society itself would maintain it. Sociologist Émile Durkheim called racism "a social fact," meaning that it does not require the action of individuals to continue (1895). The reasons for this are complex and relate to the educational, criminal, economic, and political systems that exist.

For example, when a newspaper prints the race of individuals accused of a crime, it may enhance stereotypes of a certain minority. It is difficult to think of Somali Canadians, for example, without recalling the news reports of gang-related deaths in Toronto's social housing projects or the northern Alberta drug trade (Wingrove & Mackrael, 2012). Another example of racist practices is **racial steering**, in which real estate agents direct prospective homeowners toward or away from certain neighbourhoods based on their race. Racist attitudes and beliefs are often more insidious and hard to pin down than specific racist practices.

Prejudice and discrimination can overlap and intersect in many ways. To illustrate, here are four examples of how prejudice and discrimination can occur. *Unprejudiced nondiscriminators* are open-minded, tolerant, and accepting individuals. *Unprejudiced discriminators* might be those who, unthinkingly, practise sexism in their workplace by not considering females for certain positions that have traditionally been held by men. *Prejudiced nondiscriminators* are those who hold racist beliefs but don't act on them, such as a racist store owner who serves

minority customers. *Prejudiced discriminators* include those who actively make disparaging remarks about others or who perpetuate hate crimes.

Discrimination can also involve the promotion of a group's status, such as occurs with white privilege. While most white people are willing to admit that non-white people live with a set of disadvantages due to the colour of their skin, very few white people are willing to acknowledge the benefits they receive simply by being white. **White privilege** refers to the fact that dominant groups often accept their experience as the normative (and hence, superior) experience. Failure to recognize this "normality" as race-based is an example of a dominant group's often unconscious racism. Feminist sociologist Peggy McIntosh used the term "white privilege" to describe the mostly unseen and unconsidered advantages of being white in a society where white people are dominant. For instance, white people when dealing with police do not worry that the colour of their skin will make it more likely they will be arrested or worse, white people can be assured that when seeking medical help their race will not negatively affect the care they receive, when experiencing difficulty with a manager one doesn't worry that race is a factor, and white people do not have to worry about teaching their children about racism and how to navigate racist environments. Perhaps most tellingly, white people have the privilege to ignore race and racism if they so choose.

Institutional Racism

Discrimination also manifests in different ways. The illustrations above are examples of individual discrimination, but other types exist. Institutional

discrimination or **institutional racism** is when a societal system has developed with an embedded disenfranchisement of a group, such as Canadian immigration policies that imposed "head taxes" on Chinese immigrants in 1886 and 1904. Institutional racism refers to the way in which racial distinctions are used to organize the policy and practice of state, judicial, economic, and educational institutions. As a result these distinctions systematically reproduce inequalities along racial lines. They define what people can and cannot do based on racial characteristics. It is not necessarily the intention of these institutions to reproduce inequality, nor of the individuals who work in the institutions. Rather, inequality is the outcome of patterns of differential treatment based on racial or ethnic categorizations of people.

Clear examples of institutional racism in Canada can be seen in the Indian Act and immigration policy, as we have already noted. The effects of institutional racism can also be observed in the structures that reproduce income inequality for visible minorities and Aboriginal Canadians. The median income of Aboriginal people in Canada was 30% less than non-Aboriginal people in 2006 (Wilson & Macdonald, 2010). Rates of child poverty (using Statistics Canada's after-tax low-income measure) for all Aboriginal people in 2006 were at 40%, while rates for non-Indigenous, non-racialized, non-immigrant children were 12% (Macdonald & Wilson, 2013).

Institutional racism is also deeply problematic for visible minorities in Canada. This can be seen, for example, in the racialized characteristics of the economy. As described below, although labour participation rates are similar for racialized and non-racialized individuals, unemployment for racialized men, (and even more so or racialized

women), is much hight than for their non-racialized counterparts. Moreover, income levels for racialized Canadians are much lower than for non-racialized Canadians (Block and Galabuzi, 2011). These substantial, statistically significant differences between racialized and non-racialized Canadians indicate that economic institutions in Canada are systematically structured on the basis of racialized differences in the workforce rather than on the basis of individual qualities of workers or individual acts of prejudice of employers.

Figure 11.4. St. Joseph's Mission residential school near Williams Lake, B.C., circa 1890. (Photo courtesy of LibraryArchives/Flickr)

The residential school system was set up in the 19th century to educate and assimilate Aboriginal children into European culture. From 1883 until 1996, over 150,000 Aboriginal, Inuit, and Métis children were forcibly separated from their parents and their cultural traditions

and sent to missionary-run residential schools. In the schools, they received substandard education and many were subject to neglect, disease, and abuse. Many children did not see their parents again, and thousands of children died at the schools. When they did return home they found it difficult to fit in. They had not learned the skills needed for life on reserves and had also been taught to be ashamed of their cultural heritage. Because the education at the residential schools was inferior they also had difficulty fitting into non-Aboriginal society.

The residential school system was part of a system of institutional racism because it was established on the basis of a distinction between the educational needs of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. In introducing the policy to the House of Commons in 1883, Public Works Minister Hector Langevin argued, "In order to educate the children properly we must separate them from their families. Some people may say that this is hard but if we want to civilize them we must do that" (as cited in Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2012, p. 5). The sad legacy of this "civilizing" mission has been several generations of severely disrupted Aboriginal families and communities; the loss of Aboriginal languages and cultural heritage; and the neglect, abuse, and traumatization of thousands of Aboriginal children. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded, the residential school system constituted a systematic assault on Aboriginal families, children, and cultures in Canada. Some have likened the policy and its aftermath to a cultural genocide (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012).

While the last of the residential schools closed in 1996, the problem of Aboriginal education remains grave, with 40% of all Aboriginal people aged 20 to 24 having no high

school diploma (61% of on-reserve Aboriginal people), compared to 13% of non-Aboriginals (Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, 2010). The impact of generations of children being removed from their homes to be educated in an underfunded and frequently abusive residential school system has been "joblessness, poverty, family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, family breakdown, sexual abuse, prostitution, homelessness, high rates of imprisonment, and early death" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2012). Even with the public apology to residential school survivors and the inauguration of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2008, the federal government, and the interests it represents, continue to refuse basic Aboriginal claims to title, self-determination, and control over their lands and resources.

Income Inequality among Racialized Canadians

Figure 11.5. Rastafarian in Toronto, Kensington Market, 2012. (Image courtesy of Eric Parker/Flickr)

We also see the effects of institutional racism in the structures that reproduce income inequality for visible minorities or racialized Canadians. The median income of Aboriginal people in Canada was 30% less than non-Aboriginal people in 2006 (Wilson & Macdonald, 2010). In 2006, the rates of child poverty (using the after tax Low-Income Measure) for all Aboriginal people were at 40% (and 50% for Status Indians, 62% for Status Indians in Manitoba, and 64% for Status Indians in Saskatchewan), whereas the rates for non-Indigenous, non-racialized, non-immigrant children were 12% (Macdonald & Wilson, 2013).

Institutional racism is also deeply problematic for other

visible minorities. In 2006, racialized individuals made up 16% of the Canadian population, up from less than 5% in the1980s. By 2031, this figure is expected to be 32% (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). In 2006, of these 5,068,100 individuals:

- 25% were South Asian
- 24% were Chinese
- 15.5% were Black or African Canadian
- 8.3% were Arab & West Asian
- 8.1% were Filipino
- 6% were Latin American

While labour *participation* rates in the economy are more or less equal for racialized and non-racialized individuals, racialized men are 24% more likely to be unemployed than non-racialized men. Racialized women are 48% more likely to be unemployed than non-racialized women (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). Moreover, racialized Canadians earned only 81.4% of the income that non-racialized Canadians earn because they tend to find work in insecure, temporary, and low paying jobs like call centres, security services, and janitorial services (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). Those identifying as Chinese earned 88.6% of the income of non-racialized Canadians; South Asians 83.3%; and Koreans, Latin Americans, and West Asians approximately 70% (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). According to Block and Galabuzi, these inequalities in income are not simply the effect of the time it takes immigrants to integrate into the society and economy. Table 11.2 (below) shows how the income inequality between racialized and non-racialized

individuals remains substantial even into the third generation of immigrants.

Table 11.2. Average Employment Income for Racialized and Non-Racialized Canadians by Generation in 2005 (Table courtesy of Block & Galabuzi, 2011/CCPA)

[Skip Table]

Generation	*Racialized*		*Non-racialized*		*Differential (%)*	
	Men	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**
1st Generation	$45,388	$32,165	$66,078	$39,264	68.7%	81.9%
2nd Generation	$57,237	$42,804	$75,729	$46,391	75.6%	92.3%
3rd or more Generation	$66,137	$44,460	$70,962	$44,810	93.2%	99.2%

Source: Statistics Canada – 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-563-XCB2006060

11.3 Theories of Race and Ethnicity

Theoretical Perspectives

Issues of race and ethnicity can be observed through three major sociological perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. As you read through these theories, ask yourself which one makes the most sense, and why. Is more than one theory needed to explain racism, prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination?

Functionalism

In the view of functionalism, racial and ethnic inequalities must have served an important function in order to exist as long as they have. This concept, of course, is problematic. How can racism and discrimination contribute positively to society? Sociologists who adhere to the functionalist view argue that racism and discrimination *do* contribute positively, but only to the dominant group. Historically, it has indeed served dominant groups well to discriminate against subordinate groups. Slavery, of course, was beneficial to slaveholders. Holding racist views can benefit those who want to deny rights and privileges to people they view as inferior to them, but over time, racism harms society. Outcomes of race-based disenfranchisement — such as poverty levels, crime rates, and discrepancies in employment and education opportunities — illustrate the long-term (and clearly negative) results of slavery and racism in Canadian society.

Apart from the issues of race, ethnicity, and social inequality, the close ties of ethnic and racial membership can be seen to serve some positive functions even if they lead to the formation of ethnic and racial enclaves or ghettos. The close ties promote group cohesion, which can have economic benefits especially for immigrants who can use community contacts to pursue employment. They can also have political benefits in the form of political mobilization for recognition, services, or resources by different communities. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Aboriginal residential school survivors or the policy of multiculturalism are examples. Finally, the close ties of racial or ethnic groups also provide cultural familiarity and emotional support for individuals who

might otherwise feel alienated by or discriminated against by the dominant society.

Critical Sociology

Critical sociological theories are often applied to inequalities of gender, social class, education, race, and ethnicity. A critical sociology perspective of Canadian history would examine the numerous past and current struggles between the Anglo-Saxon ruling class and racial and ethnic minorities, noting specific conflicts that have arisen when the dominant group perceived a threat from the minority group. Modern Canada itself can in fact be described as a product of **internal colonialism**. While Canada was originally a colony itself, the product of external colonialism, first by the French and then the English, it also adopted colonial techniques internally as it became an independent nation state. Internal colonialism refers to the process of uneven regional development by which a dominant group establishes its control over existing populations within a country. Typically it works by maintaining segregation among the colonized, which enables different geographical distributions of people, different wage levels, and different occupational concentrations to form based on race or ethnicity. This concept has been used to explain both the inequity faced by the Quebecois (French speaking Quebecers), the treatment of French speaking Acadians, and the ongoing struggles of Indigenous peoples in Canada (Hicks 2004).

For critical sociology, addressing the issues that arise when race and ethnicity become the basis of social inequality is a central focus of any emancipatory project. They are often complex problems, however. Feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (b. 1948) developed

intersection theory, which suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes (1990). When we examine race and how it can bring us both advantages and disadvantages, it is important to acknowledge that the way we experience race is shaped, for example, by our gender and class. Multiple layers of disadvantage intersect to create the way we experience race. For example, if we want to understand prejudice, we must understand that the prejudice focused on a white woman because of her gender is very different from the layered prejudice focused on a poor Asian woman, who is affected by stereotypes related to being poor, being a woman, and being part of a visible minority.

Symbolic Interactionism

For symbolic interactionists, race and ethnicity provide strong symbols as sources of identity. In fact, some interactionists propose that the symbols of race, not race itself, are what lead to racism. Famed interactionist Herbert Blumer (1900-1987) suggested that racial prejudice is formed through interactions between members of the dominant group: without these interactions, individuals in the dominant group would not hold racist views. These interactions contribute to an abstract picture of the subordinate group that allows the dominant group to support its view of the subordinate group, thus maintaining the status quo. An example of this might be an individual whose beliefs about a particular group are based on images conveyed in popular media. These beliefs are unquestioned because the individual has never personally met a member of that group.

A **culture of prejudice** refers to the idea that prejudice is embedded in our culture. We grow up surrounded by

images of stereotypes and casual expressions of racism and prejudice. Consider the casually racist imagery on grocery store shelves or the stereotypes that fill popular movies and advertisements. It is easy to see how someone living in Canada, who may know no Mexican Americans personally, might gain a stereotyped impression from such sources as the Speedy Gonzales cartoon character, Taco Time fast-food restaurants, or Hollywood movies. Because we are all exposed to these images and thoughts, it is impossible to know to what extent they have influenced our thought processes.

11.4. Intergroup Relations and the Management of Diversity

Throughout Western history intergroup relations (relationships between different groups of people) have been subject to different strategies for the management of diversity. The problem of management arises when differences between different peoples are regarded as so insurmountable that it is believed they cannot easily coincide or cohabit with one another. A **strategy for the management of diversity** refers to the systematic methods used to resolve conflicts, or potential conflicts, between groups that arise based on perceived differences. How can the unity of the self-group or political community be attained in the face of the divisive presence of non-selves or *others*? As Richard Day (b. 1964) describes it, the template for the problem of diversity was laid down at least as early as the works of the ancient Greeks Herodotus, Plato, and Aristotle: “the division of human individuals into groupable ‘types,’ the arrangement of these types into a hierarchy, the naming of some types as presenting a ‘problem,’ and the attempt to provide ‘solutions’ to the

problem so constructed" (2000, p. 7). The solutions proposed to intergroup relations have ranged along a spectrum between tolerance and intolerance. The most tolerant form of intergroup relations is multiculturalism, in which cultural distinctions are made between groups, but the groups are regarded to have equal standing in society. At the other end of the continuum are assimilation, expulsion, and even genocide — stark examples of intolerant intergroup relations.

Genocide

Genocide, the deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group, is the most toxic intergroup relationship. Historically, we can see that genocide has included both the intent to exterminate a group and the function of exterminating of a group, intentional or not.

Possibly the most well-known case of genocide is Hitler's attempt to exterminate the Jewish people in the first part of the 20th century. Also known as the Holocaust, the explicit goal of Hitler's "Final Solution" was the eradication of European Jewry, as well as the decimation of other minority groups such as Catholics, people with disabilities, and homosexuals. With forced emigration, concentration camps, and mass executions in gas chambers, Hitler's Nazi regime was responsible for the deaths of 12 million people, 6 million of whom were Jewish. Hitler's intent was clear, and the high Jewish death toll certainly indicates that Hitler and his regime committed genocide. But how do we understand genocide that is not so overt and deliberate?

Figure 11.6. Portrait of Demasduit in 1819, a Beothuk woman captured and renamed "Mary March" by her captors. Demasduit died of tuberculosis in 1820. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

During the European colonization of North America, some historians estimate that Aboriginal populations dwindled from approximately 12 million people in the year 1500 to barely 237,000 by the year 1900 (Lewy, 2004). European settlers coerced Aboriginal people off their own lands, often causing thousands of deaths in forced removals, such as occurred in the Cherokee or Potawatomi Trail of Tears in the United States. Settlers also enslaved Aboriginal people

and forced them to give up their religious and cultural practices. But the major cause of Aboriginal death was neither slavery nor war nor forced removal: it was the introduction of European diseases and Aboriginal people's lack of immunity to them. Smallpox, diphtheria, and measles flourished among North American Aboriginal peoples, who had no exposure to the diseases and no ability to fight them. Quite simply, these diseases decimated them. How planned this genocide was remains a topic of contention. Some argue that the spread of disease was an unintended effect of conquest, while others believe it was intentional with rumours of smallpox-infected blankets being distributed as "gifts" to Aboriginal communities.

Importantly, genocide is not a just a historical concept, but one practised today. Recently, ethnic and geographic conflicts in the Darfur region of Sudan have led to hundreds of thousands of deaths. As part of an ongoing land conflict, the Sudanese government and their state-sponsored Janjaweed militia have led a campaign of killing, forced displacement, and systematic rape of Darfuri people. A treaty was signed in 2011.

Expulsion

Expulsion refers to a dominant group forcing a subordinate group to leave a certain area or country. As seen in the examples of the Beothuk and the Holocaust, expulsion can be a factor in genocide. However, it can also stand on its own as a destructive group interaction. Expulsion has often occurred historically with an ethnic or racial basis. The Great Expulsion of the French-speaking Acadians from Nova Scotia by the British beginning in 1755 is perhaps the most notorious case of the use of expulsion to manage the problem of diversity in Canada.

The British conquest of Acadia (which included contemporary Nova Scotia and parts of New Brunswick, Quebec, and Maine) in 1710 created the problem of what to do with the French colonists who had been living there for 80 years. In the end, approximately three-quarters of the Acadian population were rounded up by British soldiers and loaded onto boats without regard for keeping families together. Many of them ended up in Spanish Louisiana where they formed the basis of contemporary Cajun culture.

On the West Coast, the War Measures Act was used in 1942 after the Japanese government's attack on Pearl Harbor to designate Japanese Canadians as enemy aliens and intern them in camps in the Slocan Valley in British Columbia, in southern Alberta, and elsewhere in Canada. Their property and possessions were sold to pay for their forced removal and internment. Over 22,000 Japanese Canadians (14,000 of whom were born in Canada) were held in these camps between 1941 and 1949, despite the fact that the RCMP and the Department of National Defence reported there was no evidence of collusion or espionage. In fact, many Japanese Canadians demonstrated their loyalty to Canada by serving in the Canadian military during the war. This was the largest mass movement of people in Canadian history. At the end of World War II, Japanese Canadians were obliged to settle east of the Rocky Mountains or face deportation to Japan. This ban only ended after 1949, four years after the war's end. In 1988, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney issued a formal apology for this expulsion, and compensation of $21,000 was paid to each surviving internee.

Segregation

Segregation refers to the physical separation of two groups, particularly in residence, but also in workplace and social functions. It is important to distinguish between *de jure* segregation (segregation that is enforced by law) and *de facto* segregation (segregation that occurs without laws but because of other factors). A stark example of *de jure* segregation is the apartheid movement of South Africa, which existed from 1948 to 1994. Under apartheid, black South Africans were stripped of their civil rights and forcibly relocated to areas that segregated them physically from their white compatriots. Only after decades of degradation, violent uprisings, and international advocacy was apartheid finally abolished.

De jure segregation occurred in the United States for many years after the Civil War. During this time, many former Confederate states passed "Jim Crow" laws that required segregated facilities for blacks and whites. These laws were codified in 1896's landmark Supreme Court case *Plessey v. Ferguson*, which stated that "separate but equal" facilities were constitutional. For the next five decades, blacks were subjected to legalized discrimination, forced to live, work, and go to school in separate — but *unequal* — facilities. It wasn't until 1954 and the *Brown v. Board of Education* case that the Supreme Court declared that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal," thus ending *de jure* segregation in the United States.

Figure 11.7. In the "Jim Crow" South, it was legal to have "separate but equal" facilities for blacks and whites. (Photo courtesy of Library of Congress/Wikimedia Commons)

De jure segregation was also a factor in Canada's development. Although slavery ended in Canada in 1834, when Britain abolished slavery throughout the empire, the approximately 60,000 blacks who arrived with the British Empire Loyalists following the American Revolution and through the "Underground Railroad" up until the end of the American Civil War, were subject to discrimination and differential treatment. Legislation in Ontario and Nova Scotia created racially segregated schools, while *de facto* segregation of blacks was practised in the workplace, restaurants, hotels, theatres, and swimming pools. Similarly, segregating laws were passed in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Ontario preventing Chinese- and Japanese-owned restaurants and laundries from hiring white women out of concern that the women would be corrupted (Mosher, 1998). The reserve system created through the treaty process with First Nations peoples can

also be regarded as a form of *de jure* segregation. As was the case in the United States, *de jure* segregation (with the exception of the reserve system) was largely eliminated in Canada by the 1950s and 1960s.

De facto segregation, however, cannot be abolished by any court mandate. Segregation has existed throughout Canada, with different racial or ethnic groups often segregated by neighbourhood, borough, or parish. Various Chinatowns or Japantowns developed in Canadian cities in the 19th and 20th centuries. The community of Africville was a residentially and socially segregated black enclave in Halifax established by escaped American slaves. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, some urban neighbourhoods like Richmond, Surrey, and Markham are home to high concentrations of Chinese and South Asians.

Sociologists use segregation indices to measure racial segregation of different races in different areas. The indices employ a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 is the most integrated and 100 is the least. In Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal, these indices were relatively high (2001 data) for visible minorities as a whole — over 40 — and higher for Chinese and South Asians — over 50 (Walks & Bourne, 2006). This means that 40% of either visible minorities or whites, 50% of Chinese and South Asians or whites, would have to move in order for each neighbourhood to have the same racial balance as the whole metro region. However, these indices are much lower than those observed in the United States for black populations. In the New York metropolitan area, for instance, the black-white segregation index was 79 for the years 2005–2009. This means that 79% of either blacks or whites would have to move in order for each neighbourhood to have the same racial balance as the whole metro region (Population Studies Center, 2010).

Assimilation

Assimilation describes the process by which a minority individual or group gives up its own identity by taking on the characteristics of the dominant culture. In Canada, assimilation was the policy adopted by the government with the Indian Act, which attempted to integrate the Aboriginal population by Europeanizing them. Assimilation was also the policy for absorbing immigrants from different lands through the function of immigration.

Figure 11.8. Government advertisement in 1907 to encourage immigration and settlement of the western provinces. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Canada is a settler nation. With the exception of Aboriginal Canadians, all Canadians have immigrant ancestors. In the 20th century, there were three waves of immigration to Canada (Li, 1996). During the wheat boom from 1900 to the beginning of World War I, Canada recruited almost

3 million settlers from various parts of Europe, although many subsequently emigrated to the United States. For the two decades following World War II, another 3 million immigrants arrived (96% from Europe between 1946 and 1954, and 83% from Europe between 1954 and 1967). As we saw at the beginning of the chapter, the third wave of immigration following the change of the race-based immigration policy saw increasingly larger proportions of immigrants from non-European countries. Most immigrants are eventually absorbed into Canadian culture, although sometimes after facing extended periods of prejudice and discrimination. Assimilation means the loss of the minority group's cultural identity as ithe people in that group become absorbed into the dominant culture, while there is minimal to no impact on the majority group's cultural identity.

Some assimilated groups may keep only symbolic gestures of their original ethnicity. For instance, many Irish Canadians may celebrate Saint Patrick's Day, many Hindu Canadians enjoy the Diwali festival, and many Chinese Canadians may celebrate Chinese New Year. However, for the rest of the year, other aspects of their originating culture may be forgotten.

Assimilation is antithetical to the "cultural mosaic" model understood by Canadian multiculturalism; rather than maintaining their own cultural flavour, subordinate cultures give up their own traditions in order to conform to their new environment. Cultural differences are erased. It is sometimes understood as the American "melting pot" model, although ideally the "melting pot" sees the combination of cultures resulting in a new culture entirely. Sociologists measure the degree to which immigrants have assimilated to a new culture with four benchmarks: socioeconomic status, spatial concentration, language

assimilation, and intermarriage. When faced with racial and ethnic discrimination, it can be difficult for new immigrants to fully assimilate. Language assimilation, in particular, can be a formidable barrier, limiting employment and educational options and therefore constraining growth in socioeconomic status.

Multiculturalism

In the government document, *Multiculturalism: Being Canadian*, **multiculturalism** is defined as "the recognition of the cultural and racial diversity of Canada and of the equality of Canadians of all origins" (as cited in Day, 2000, p. 6). It is represented in Canada by the metaphor of the mosaic, which suggests that in a multicultural society each ethnic or racial group preserves its unique cultural traits while together contributing to national unity. Each culture is equally important within the mosaic. There is a great mixture of different cultures where each culture retains its own identity and yet adds to the colour of the whole. The ideal of multiculturalism is characterized by mutual respect on the part of all cultures, both dominant and subordinate, creating a polyethnic environment of mutual tolerance and acceptance.

Figure 11.9. The Monument to Multiculturalism (1985) by Francesco Pirelli, in front of Union Station, Toronto (Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

As a strategy for managing diversity, Canada was the first country to adopt an official multicultural policy. In 1971, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau implemented both a policy of official bilingualism (both French and English would be the languages of the state) and a policy of multiculturalism. The multicultural policy was designed to assist the different cultural groups in Canada to preserve their heritage, overcome cultural barriers to participation in Canadian society, and exchange with other cultural groups in order to contribute to national unity (Ujimoto, 2000). Critics argue that Trudeau's motives were more oriented to undermining the Québécois separatist movement and winning the votes of urban ethnic communities than distributing more power to ethnic communities (Li, 1996). However, as a result of this policy initiative,

multiculturalism was enshrined in the Canadian Constitution in 1982 and in the Multiculturalism Act of 1988 as a fundamental principle of Canadian society. The result is a mechanism, stated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, that obliges Canadian law and federal institutions to operate "in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians" (as cited in Li, 1996, p. 132).

Whereas constitutional democracies like Canada are typically based on the protection of individual rights, multiculturalism implies that the protection of cultural difference also depends on protecting **group-specific rights** or group-differentiated rights (i.e., rights conferred on individuals by virtue of their membership in a group). Kymlicka notes that there are three different ways that the principle of multicultural group-specific rights can be conceived: (1) as *self-government rights* in which culturally distinct nations within a society attain some degree of political autonomy and self-determination to ensure their survival and development as unique peoples; (2) as *polyethnic rights* in which culturally distinct groups are able to express their particular cultural beliefs and practices without being discriminated against, and (3) as *special representation rights* in which the systematic underrepresentation of minorities in the political process is addressed by some form of proportional representation (e.g., reserving a certain number of parliamentary seats for specific ethnic minorities or language groups) (1995). While multicultural policy in Canada has generally been implemented on the basis of polyethnic rights, self-government rights have been a key part of First Nations' claims and special representation rights have also occasionally been proposed, as was the case during the Charlottetown Accord debate in 1992.

While the outcome of Canadian multicultural policy has been the establishment of a generally accepted norm in which no culture takes precedence over any other in Canadian society, at least not in official practice, and all Canadians are recognized as "full and equal participants in Canadian society" (as stated in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988), there have been a number of flashpoints in which the viability of the policy has been called into question. The case of whether Sikhs in the RCMP should be allowed to wear *dastaar* while in uniform was an early example. Although it seems trivial today, in 1990 many felt that the right of Sikhs to maintain their religious practice undermined a core and inviolable tradition of both the police force and Canada. As such, the case served as an emblem of a deeper fear about multiculturalism, namely that it would foster a dangerous fragmentation of an already fragile Canadian unity. In particular, new non-European immigrants were seen by some as too different and their demands for accommodation too disruptive to "Canadian" values and practices to sustain. Of course, similar claims about the unassimilable differences of immigrants from Ireland, eastern Europe, and southern Europe were made in earlier waves of immigration. More recently a similar issue played out with respect to the Parti Québécois' Quebec Charter of Values, which sought to secularize government institutions by removing visible symbols of religious practice like the Sikh *dastaar*, Muslim *hijab*, or Jewish *kippah* from public service.

While the positive outcome of the multicultural policy is that the Canadian population remains remarkably accepting of diversity — the most accepting of all OECD countries in 2011 according to the Gallup World Poll (Conference Board of Canada, 2013) — issues around

multiculturalism continually bring up the problem of **ethical relativism**, the idea that all cultures and all cultural practices have equal value. In a fully multicultural society, what principles can be appealed to in order to resolve issues where different cultural beliefs or practices clash? Richard Day has argued that rather than resolving the problem of diversity, official multiculturalism has exacerbated it. "Far from achieving its goal, this state sponsored attempt to design a unified nation has paradoxically led to an increase in both the number of minority identities and in the amount of effort required to 'manage' them" (2000, p.3).

Hybridity

Hybridity is the process by which different racial and ethnic groups combine to create new or emergent cultural forms of life. Rather than a multicultural mosaic, where each culture preserves its unique traditions, or a melting pot, where cultures assimilate into the majority group, the hybrid combination of cultures results in a new culture entirely. The post-colonialist theorist Homi Bhabha (b. 1949) suggested that the mingling of formerly fixed cultural identities "open[s] up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (1994, p. 4). The contemporary cultures of the Caribbean, for example, is a mixture of European colonization, African roots, and "New World" setting that defies the imposition of a single cultural identity. Those things that are regarded as essentially Caribbean like the accents, racial blendings, religious beliefs, spicy cuisines, and music have thoroughly diverse origins while being continuously reinvented (Hall, 1990).

As we noted earlier in this chapter, intermarriage

between people of different races or cultures creates new hybrid identities. The Métis were Canada's original hybrid culture (Day, 2000). More recently, Canadian culture has been home to numerous emergent cultural forms, some superficial and some profound, due to the intermingling of people from diverse backgrounds. From fusion cuisine to martial arts and yoga, from hip hop to reggae, and including alternative spiritual and healing practices hybridity seems to capture some of the fluidity of contemporary Canadian culture. As the category of multiple ethnic origins by which people identify themselves grows, it is possible that the distinctions between ethnicities or between races that supported the "us versus them" narratives of earlier forms of racism and ethnocentrism might disappear all by themselves (Day, 2000).

11.5. Race and Ethnicity in Canada

When colonists came to the New World, they found a land that did not need "discovering" since it was already occupied. While the first wave of immigrants came from western Europe, eventually the bulk of people entering North America were from northern Europe, then eastern Europe, then Latin America and Asia. And let us not forget the forced immigration of African slaves. Most of these groups underwent a period of disenfranchisement in which they were relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy before they managed (those who could) to achieve social mobility. Today, our society is multicultural, although the extent to which this multiculturality is embraced varies, and the many manifestations of multiculturalism carry significant political repercussions. The sections below describe how several groups became part of Canadian

society, discuss the history of intergroup relations for each group, and assess each group's status today.

Aboriginal Canadians

The only non-immigrant ethnic group in Canada, Aboriginal Canadians were once a large population, but by 2011 they made up only 4.3% of the Canadian populace (Statistics Canada, 2013).

Making Connections: Social Policy and Debate

Sports Teams with Indigenous Names

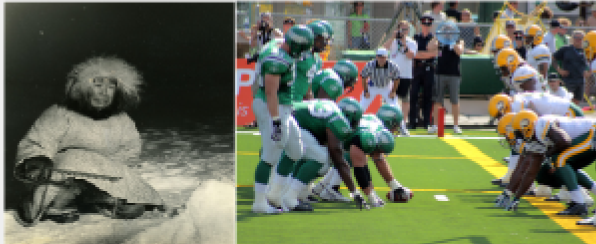


Figure 11.10. Many people believe sports teams with names like the Eskimos, Indians, Braves, and Warriors perpetuate unwelcome stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples. (Photo (left) courtesy of born1945/Flickr; Photo (right) courtesy of Daniel Paquet/Flickr)

The sports world abounds with team names like the Eskimos, Indians, Warriors, Braves, and even Savages and Redskins. These names arise from historically prejudiced views of Aboriginal people

as fierce, brave, and strong savages: attributes that would be beneficial to a sports team, but are not necessarily beneficial to North Americans who should be seen as more than just fierce savages.Speaking with regard to the Edmonton Eskimos football team, Natan Obed of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (the national Inuit organization) argues that the term "Eskimo" is derogatory and represents a legacy of colonialism and disrespect." If I was called an Eskimo or introduced as an Eskimo by anyone else, I would be offended by that…. It is something that was acceptable at one time but now just isn't…. It's time for the team to change its name. And it's time also for all sports teams to change their names if they continue to use Indigenous people as their mascots" (CBC, 2015).

Since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has been campaigning against the use of such mascots, asserting that the "warrior savage myth … reinforces the racist view that Indians are uncivilized and uneducated and it has been used to justify policies of forced assimilation and destruction of Indian culture" (NCAI Resolution #TUL-05-087, 2005). The campaign has met with only limited success. While some teams have changed their names, hundreds of professional, college, and K–12 school teams still have names derived from this stereotype. Another group, American Indian Cultural Support (AICS) is especially concerned with such names at K–12 schools, grades where children should be gaining a fuller and more realistic understanding of

Aboriginal people than such stereotypes supply (2005).

What do you think about such names? Should they be allowed or banned? What argument would a symbolic interactionist make on this topic?

How and Why They Came

The earliest humans in Canada arrived millennia before European immigrants. Dates of the migration are debated with estimates ranging from between 45,000 and 12,000 BCE. It is thought that people migrated to this new land from Asia in search of big game to hunt, which they found in huge herds of grazing herbivores in the Americas. Over the centuries and then the millennia, Aboriginal cultures blossomed into an intricate web of hundreds of interconnected groups, each with its own customs, traditions, languages, and religions.

History of Intergroup Relations

Figure 11.11. Elders and Aboriginal soldiers in the uniform of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in World War I. Seated in the middle is W. M. Graham, an ambitious official in the Department of Indian Affairs, whose career was focused on preventing Canadian Indians from "regressing" to their old, traditions. To his mind ceremonial dancing was an unmitigated evil that only "demoralized the Indians" (Titley, 1983). (Photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/Wikimedia Commons).

Aboriginal cultures prior to European settlement are referred to as pre-contact or pre-Columbian: that is, prior to the coming of Christopher Columbus in 1492. Mistakenly believing that he had landed in the East Indies, Columbus named the Indigenous people "Indians:" a name that has persisted for centuries despite it being a geographical misnomer used to homogenously label over 500 distinct groups who have their own languages and traditions.

The history of intergroup relations between European

colonists and Aboriginal peoples is a brutal one that most Canadians are familiar with. As discussed in the section on genocide, the effect of European settlement was to nearly destroy the Aboriginal population. And although Aboriginal people's lack of immunity to European diseases caused the most deaths, overt mistreatment by Europeans was equally devastating.

The history of Aboriginal relations with Europeans in Canada since the 16th century can be described in four stages (Patterson, 1972). In the first stage, the relationship was largely mutually beneficial and profitable as the Europeans relied on Aboriginal groups for knowledge, food, and supplies, whereas the Aboriginals traded for European technologies. In the second stage, however, Aboriginal people were increasingly drawn into the European-centred economy, coming to rely on fur trading for their livelihood rather than their own indigenous economic activity. This resulted in diminishing autonomy and increasing subjugation economically, militarily, politically, and religiously. In the third stage, the reserve system was established, clearing the way for full-scale European colonization, resource exploitation, agriculture, and settlement. If Aboriginal people tried to retain their stewardship of the land, Europeans fought them off with superior weapons. A key element of this issue is the Aboriginal view of land and land ownership. Most First Nations cultures considered the Earth a living entity whose resources they were stewards of; the concepts of land ownership and conquest did not exist in Aboriginal societies. The last stage of the relationship developed after World War II, when Aboriginal Canadians began to mobilize politically to challenge the conditions of oppression and forced assimilation they had been subjected to. In this stage, Aboriginal people developed political

organizations and turned to the courts to fight for treaty rights and self-government.

A key turning point in Aboriginal-European relations was the Royal Proclamation of 1763 which established British rule over the former French colonies, but also established that lands would be set aside for First Nations people. It legally established that First Nations had sovereign rights to their territory. Although these were often disputed, challenged, or ignored by the arriving waves of colonists, land speculators, and subsequent government administrations, they became the basis of contemporary treaty rights and negotiations.

The Indian Act of 1876 was another turning point. The Act attempted to codify and formalize the provisions of the Royal Proclamation and all other accumulated acts of government with respect to First Nations along the lines of a paternalistic “civilizing policy.” The care of the Aboriginal population was placed under the control of the federal government until they were assimilated into European culture. In effect, discrimination against Aboriginal Canadians was institutionalized in a series of provisions intended to subjugate them and keep them from gaining any power. The belief was that a separate act to govern Aboriginal peoples would no longer be necessary once they had integrated into society. As the deputy superintendent of Indian Affairs said in 1920, “Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department” (as cited in Leslie, 1978, p. 114). Nevertheless the Indian Act became the most pervasive mechanism in Aboriginal life, regulating and controlling everything from who could be defined as an Indian, to the reserve and band council system, to the types of Aboriginal activities that would

no longer be permitted (e.g., *potlatch* and ceremonial dancing).

Some of the most impactful provisions of the Indian Act (and its subsequent amendments) were:

- The prohibition against owning, acquiring, or “pre-empting” land
- The dismantling of traditional institutions of Aboriginal government and the banning of ceremonial practices
- The imposition of the band council system, which was foreign to Aboriginal tradition and powerless to make meaningful decisions without approval of the Department of Indian Affairs
- Denial of the power to allocate funds and resources
- The prohibition against hiring lawyers or seeking legal redress in pursuing land claims
- The denial of the right to vote municipally (until 1948), provincially (until 1949), and federally (until 1960) (Mathias & Yabsley, 1991)

Aboriginal Canadian culture was further eroded by the establishment of residential schools in the late 19th century, as we saw earlier in this chapter. These schools, run by both Christian missionaries and the Canadian government, also had the express purpose of “civilizing” Aboriginal Canadian children and assimilating them into European society. The residential schools were located off-reserve to ensure that children were separated from their families and culture. Schools forced children to cut their hair, speak English or French, and practise Christianity.

Education in the schools was substandard, and physical and sexual abuses were rampant for decades; only in 1996 did the last of the residential schools close. Prime Minister Stephen Harper delivered an apology on behalf of the Canadian government in 2008. Many of the problems that Indigenous Canadians face today result from almost a century of traumatizing mistreatment at these residential schools.

Current Status

The eradication of Aboriginal Canadian culture continued until the 1960s, when First Nations began to mobilize politically and intensify their demands for Aboriginal rights. The Liberal government's White Paper of 1969 became a focus of Aboriginal protest as it proposed to eliminate the Indian Act, the Department of Indian Affairs, and the concept of Aboriginal rights altogether. First Nations people would be treated just like everyone else, as if the sovereign treaties and centuries of oppression had not occurred. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau declared, "No society can be built on historical might-have-beens" (as cited in Weaver, 1981, p. 55). By the time of the repatriation of the Constitution in 1982, the government's position had reversed and the status of Indians, Inuit, and Métis were recognized, as were existing Aboriginal and treaty rights. The 1996 Nisga'a Treaty of the Nisga'a people of the Nass Valley in northern British Columbia is the first modern treaty in British Columbia. The comprehensive treaty provisions for the Nisga'a's right to self-government and authority over lands and resources serve as a new model for First Nations–Crown relations in Canada.

However, First Nations people still suffer the effects of

centuries of degradation. As noted earlier in the chapter, the income of Aboriginal people in Canada is far lower than that of non-Aboriginal people and rates of child poverty are much greater. Even though the last residential school closed in 1996, the problem of Aboriginal education remains grave with 40% of all Aboriginal people failing to complete high school. Long-term poverty, inadequate education, cultural dislocation, and high rates of unemployment contribute to Aboriginal Canadian populations falling to the bottom of the economic spectrum. Aboriginal Canadians also suffer disproportionately with lower life expectancies than most groups in Canada.

The Québécois

Modern Canada was founded on the displacement of the Aboriginal population by two colonizing nations: the French and the British. The French and the British were the two "charter groups" of Confederation and the British North America Act. The Constitution Act of 1867 protected the linguistic, religious, and educational of the French and English in Quebec and Ontario, as well as the rest of the country. However, the French were both colonized by the English and were a numerically smaller group, leading to a relationship of inequality that has been a prominent issue throughout Canada's history. Due to their linguistic and cultural isolation in English speaking North America, the Québécois — descendants of the original settlers from France — developed a unique identity, which became the basis of nationalist and sovereigntist aspirations during the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s.

How and Why They Came

French colonists began to settle New France after Jacques Cartier's exploration of the St. Lawrence River in 1534. Permanent French settlements were established in Port Royal, Acadia (now Nova Scotia) in 1605, and Quebec City in 1608. By the time of the British conquest of Acadia in 1710 and the defeat of Montcalm's army in Quebec in 1760, there were approximately 60,000 French settlers. Most of the settlers could trace their origins to the northwest of France, particularly present-day Normandy. One estimate suggests that the Québécois descend from only 5,800 original immigrants from France who arrived between 1608 and 1760 (Marquis, 1923). The economy of New France was based on agriculture and the fur trade, but with the arrival of the British and especially the British Loyalists escaping the American Revolution in 1776, a pattern of British economic and financial domination emerged.

History of Intergroup Relations

The establishment of British rule in Canada was accomplished by **conquest**; that is, the forcible subjugation of territory and people by military action. Port Royal was ceded to the British in the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 and Quebec and Montreal in the Treaty of Paris of 1763. As we noted earlier, after attempts at assimilating the French population, the conquest of Port Royal and Acadia led eventually to the Great Expulsion of 1755, in which a large portion of the Acadian French population was deported from Nova Scotia. However, from the time of the Treaty of Paris onward, the British recognized the need to accommodate the French in Canada to avoid the problem of pacifying a large and hostile population. The Quebec

Act of 1774 granted religious and linguistic rights to the French, and the Constitution Act of 1791 divided the province of Canada into Upper and Lower Canada, each with the power of self-government. The division of Canada into two founding charter groups — French and English — was further established by Confederation. The Constitution Act of 1867 protected the religious, educational, and linguistic rights of the French and English in Canada. In addition, civil law in Quebec continued to be based on the French Napoleonic Code of 1804: the Civil Code of Lower Canada (1866).

Despite the notion of equality behind the two-founding-nations theme of Canadian Confederation, English-speaking Canadians in Montreal held the positions of power in the economy. English was the language of commerce in Quebec. The French-speaking population in Quebec were largely rural, agricultural, and dominated by the Catholic Church until the mid-20th century. Although the Québécois achieved status as a new middle class of lawyers, doctors, administrators, politicians, scientists, and intellectuals, they were effectively barred from the upper echelons of the stratified system. English and French tended to live in what Canadian author Hugh MacLennan famously called "two solitudes." This ethnic stratification system began to be challenged during the period of the Quiet Revolution in Quebec in the 1960s when the control of the Catholic Church was challenged in the spheres of education, health, and welfare, and the long-standing reactionary Union Nationale government of Maurice Duplessis was defeated by Jean Lesage's Liberals. In the process of modernizing the state to address the new conditions of industrialization, urbanization, and continental capitalism, the Quebec independence

movement emerged alongside an increasingly militant labour movement.

To address the emerging crisis of Canadian unity, the federal government appointed the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963. True to its name, the commission tried to address the grievances of the Québécois solely as cultural and linguistic matters. The report of the commission emphasized ways in which the equality of the two founding peoples could be recognized and led to the Official Languages Act of 1969. The Act recognized French and English as the two official languages in Canada and mandated that federal government services and the judicial system would be conducted in both languages. However, when a small terrorist group — the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) — kidnapped a provincial government minister and a British diplomat in 1970, the response of the federal government was to implement the War Measures Act, suspending the rights of Canadians from coast to coast and arresting and detaining hundreds of individuals without legal due process. The notion of equal partnership between French and English Canada was proven to be questionable at best.

Figure 11.12. St. Jean Baptiste Day, La Fête Nationale, celebrated in Quebec on June 24. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons).

In 1976, the Parti Québécois was elected as an explicitly separatist political party. It failed to get sufficient votes to separate in the provincial referendum on sovereignty in 1980, but the move to repatriate the constitution from Great Britain without the consent of Quebec in 1982 fuelled nationalist sentiment. Subsequent attempts to include Quebec as a voluntary signatory to the constitution failed in 1987 (the Meech Lake Accord) and 1992 (the Charlottetown Accord). Many people in Quebec regarded these failures as rejection of Quebec by the English majority in other parts of the country. In 1995 a second referendum on Quebec sovereignty was a narrowly defeated by a vote of 50.5% to 49.5%. The history of intergroup relations between the French and English in Canada on the model of equal partnership has therefore proven to be a tenuous experiment in dual nationhood.

Current Status

A major component of the grievances between the French and English in Canada has been the social inequality of the French and English and the threat to Québécois linguistic and cultural survival. Income data from 1991 indicated that the income disparity between French and English Canadians both within and outside the province of Quebec had more or less disappeared, suggesting that the issues of intergroup relations had shifted to political, linguistic, and cultural alienation in Canada (Li, 1996).

Bill 101 or the Charter of the French Language was passed in 1977 in Quebec to protect the French language in Quebec. It defines French as the official language of Quebec, limits the use of English in commercial signs, and restricts who may enroll in English schools. Although it remains controversial, it appears to have been somewhat effective in preserving the French language. Linguistically, there were 7 million people who reported speaking French *most often* at home in 2011 compared to 6.7 million in 2006, although this represented a decline from 21.4% to 21% of the total population of Canada. (This is much lower than the 28 to 30% of population who claimed French origin in the first half of the 20th century, however). In Quebec, 75.1% of the population spoke *only French* at home in 2006 compared to 72.8% in 2011. This decline was paralleled by the decline in the proportion of the population who spoke only English at home in the rest of Canada from 77.1% to 74.1% between 2006 and 2011 (due to immigration). On the other hand, the number of people reporting that they were able to conduct conversation in both French and English increased by 350,000 to 5.8 million people in 2011. Bilingualism was reported by 17.5% of the population, albeit largely in Quebec. In

Quebec, 42.6% of people reported being able to conduct conversation in both English and French (Statistics Canada, 2012).

Black Canadians

As discussed in the section on race, the term "black Canadian" is usually preferred to the term African Canadian. Many people with dark skin in Canada have roots in the Caribbean rather than being descendants of the African slaves from the United States. They see themselves ethnically as Caribbean Canadians. Further, actual immigrants from Africa may feel that they have more of a claim to the term "African Canadian" than those who are many generations removed from ancestors who originally came to this country. The commonality of black Canadians is more a function of racism rather than origin.

How and Why They Came

The first black Canadians were slaves brought to Canada by the French in the 17th century. It is reported that at least 6 of the 16 legislators in English Upper Canada also owned slaves (Mosher, 1998). The economic conditions in Canada were not conducive to slavery so the practice was not widespread. Nevertheless, it was not until 1834 that slavery was banned throughout the British Empire, including Canada. Canada became the terminus of the famous Underground Railroad, a secret network organized by American abolitionists to transport escaped slaves to freedom. Between the American Revolution in 1776 and the end of the American Civil War in 1865, Canada received approximately 60,000 runaway slaves and black Empire Loyalists from the United States. It is estimated

that 10% of the Empire Loyalists who came to Canada following the American Revolution were black (Walker, 1980). Many black Canadians returned to the United States after the Civil War, and by 1911 there were only about 17,000 left in Canada (Mosher, 1998).

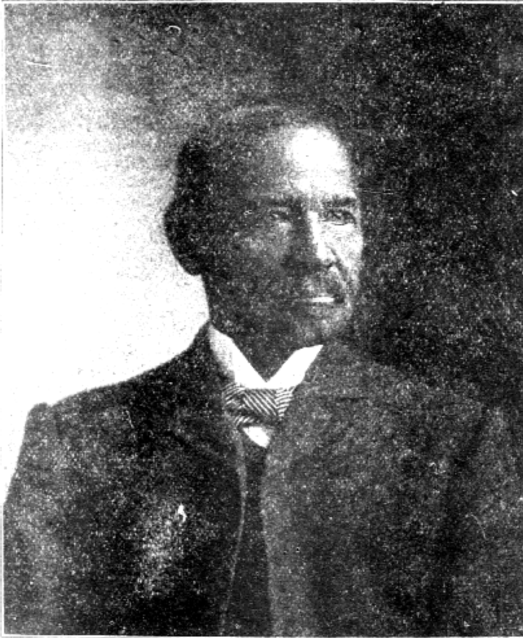
After the change in immigration policy in the late 1960s, blacks from the Caribbean and elsewhere began to immigrate to Canada in increasing numbers. Prior to 1971, Canadians of black origin made up less than 1% of the population (Li, 1996). In the 2011 census, they made up 2.9% of the population and 15.1% of all visible minorities in the country; 42% of blacks lived in Toronto and 22.9% in Montreal (making them the largest visible minority group in Montreal) (Statistics Canada, 2013). Blacks with origins in the Caribbean make up the largest proportion of black Canadians with nearly 40% having Jamaican heritage and an additional 32% having heritage elsewhere in the Caribbean (Statistics Canada, 2007). Many Caribbean people come to Canada as part of the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program or as domestic workers with temporary work permits, although the permanent Caribbean community in Canada has more or less the same higher education attainments and full-time employment rates as the rest of the population.

More recently, there has been an increase in immigration of Somalis from Africa as people fled conflict in the area. In the 2011 census, 4.4% of the black population in Canada claimed Somali origin (Statistics Canada, 2013). Between 1988 and 1996, more than 55,000 Somali refugees arrived in Canada, representing the largest black immigrant group ever to come to Canada in such a short time (Abdulle, 1999).

Although slavery became in illegal in Canada in 1834, blacks did not effectively enjoy equal rights in Canada. Blacks had the same legal status as whites in Canada, but strongly held prejudices and informal practices of segregation lead to pervasive discrimination against the escaping slaves and black Empire Loyalists in the 19th century. Blacks could vote and sit on juries, but these rights were frequently challenged by white citizens. As noted earlier in this chapter, Ontario (outside of Toronto) and Nova Scotia enacted laws to segregate schools along racial lines that remained in effect until 1965 in Ontario and 1983 in Nova Scotia (Black History Canada, 2014).

Blacks were also segregated into residential neighbourhoods in Toronto, Hamilton, and Windsor (Mosher 1998). In Halifax, the community of Africville was set aside for blacks as early as 1749, although most accounts place its establishment to the arrival of black Loyalists after the War of 1812. It was considered a slum by city councillors and was bulldozed between 1965 and 1970 without meaningful consultation with its residents.

Blacks were also restricted by the type of occupations they could pursue. The employment of blacks through the first half of the 20th century was typically limited to being domestic workers or railroad porters. For example, the father of Oscar Peterson, the famous jazz pianist, was a Canadian Pacific railroad porter in Montreal, while his mother was employed as a domestic worker (Library and Archives Canada, 2001). Otherwise, for most of the 20th century, black Canadians were mostly employed in low-pay service jobs or as unskilled labour.



HON. MIFFLIN WISTAR GIBBS.

Figure 11.13. Mifflin Wistar Gibbs (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons).

The story of a large group of black immigrants who arrived in Victoria, British Columbia, from San Francisco in the 1850s, illustrates some of the ambiguities of the early black experience in Canada. The blacks were initially welcomed to the British colony by Governor Douglas, who assured them they would have full civic rights. Douglas and others were worried that the immigration of white Americans to Vancouver Island might lead to annexation by the United States and the arrival of several hundred black immigrants would help to prevent that eventuality. There was also need for an industrious and reliable workforce and by 1858 the black immigrants were fully employed. In 1859, an all-black Victoria Pioneer Rifle Company was formed to

fight in the “Pig War” dispute with the United States over the San Juan Islands. The de facto leader of the black immigrant group, Mifflin Gibbs (1823-1915), was a successful shopkeeper and prominent member of the community. He won a seat on city council in the wealthiest ward of the city, James Bay, and acted as temporary mayor for a time. He was also the Salt Spring Island representative to the Yale Convention where British Columbia’s terms for joining Confederation were drawn up.

On the other hand, tensions and discrimination began to develop between the black and white communities. Schools were integrated and only one church was segregated. However a dispute over black voting led to a racist campaign by future premier Amor de Cosmos. Blacks began to be denied access to some saloons and desired seating in theatres. An incident in 1860 involving a brawl that began when two blacks were denied their legitimate entry into Victoria’s Colonial Theatre generated newspaper accounts that blamed the blacks for causing trouble. As influential as Gibbs was, he was denied tickets to the retirement banquet of Governor Douglas, who had originally been a great supporter of the black immigrants. By the time Gibbs returned to the United States in 1870, the end of slavery after the U.S. Civil War had already led to many of the black community leaving Victoria. Without Gibbs’s presence, the black community declined even further and eventually disappeared (Ruttan, 2014).

Current Status

Although formalized discrimination against black Canadians has been outlawed, in many respects true equality does not yet exist. The 2006 census shows that black Canadians earned 75.6 cents for every dollar a white

worker earned in Canada, or $9,101 less per year. In 2006, 24% of black individuals in families and 54% of single black individuals lived in poverty (compared to 6.4% of individuals in white families and approximately 26% of single white individuals) (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). In addition blacks are subject to greater degrees of *racial profiling* than other groups. Racial profiling refers to the practice of selecting specific racial groups for greater levels of criminal justice surveillance. Despite police denials, Wortley and Tanner's study confirms black complaints in Toronto that they are more frequently stopped, questioned, and searched by the police for "driving while being black" violations than other groups (2004).

Asian Canadians

85605

DOMINION OF CANADA

IMMIGRATION BRANCH – DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Lee Don

Dated at Vancouver on 2nd August 1918

Figure 11.14. A Chinese head tax receipt for $500 issued on August 2, 1918. (Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons).

Like many groups this section discusses, Asian Canadians represent a great diversity of cultures and backgrounds. The national and ethnic diversity of Asian Canadian immigration history is reflected in the variety of their experiences in joining Canadian society. Asian immigrants have come to Canada in waves, at different times, and for different reasons. The experience of a Japanese Canadian whose family has been in Canada for five generations will be drastically different from a Laotian Canadian who has only been in Canada for a few years. This section primarily discusses the experience of Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian immigrants.

How and Why They Came

The first Asian immigrants to come to Canada in the mid-19th century were Chinese. These immigrants were primarily men whose intention was to work for several years in order to earn incomes to support their families in China. Their first destination was the Fraser Canyon for the gold rush in 1858. Many of these Chinese came north from California. The second major wave of Chinese immigration arrived for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway when contractors recruited thousands of workers from Taiwan and Guandong Province in China. Chinese labourers were paid approximately a third of what white, black, and Aboriginal workers were paid. Even so, they were used to complete the most difficult sections of track through the rugged Fraser Valley Canyon, living under squalid and dangerous conditions; 600 Chinese workers died during the construction of the rail line. Chinese men also engaged in other manual labour like mining, laundry, cooking, canning, and agricultural work.

The work was gruelling and underpaid, but like many immigrants they persevered (Chan, 2013).

Figure 11.15. Japanese internment camp in British Columbia. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons/Jack Long)

Japanese immigration began in 1887 with the arrival of the first Japanese settler, Manzo Nagano. The *Issei* (first wave of Japanese immigrants) were, like the first Chinese immigrants, mostly men. They came from fishing and farming backgrounds in the southern Japanese islands of Kyushu and Honshu. They settled in Japantowns in Victoria and Vancouver, as well as in the Fraser Valley and small towns along the Pacific coast where they worked

mostly in fishing, farming, and logging. Like the Chinese settlers, they were paid much less than workers from European backgrounds and were usually hired for menial labour or heavy agricultural work. With restrictions imposed on the immigration of Japanese men after 1907, most of the early Japanese immigrants after 1907 were women, either the wives of Japanese immigrants or women betrothed to be married (Sunahara & Oikawa, 2011).

South Asians refer to a diverse group of people with different ethnic backgrounds in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The first South Asians in Canada were Sikhs whose origins were in the Punjab region of India. The first group of Sikhs arrived in Vancouver in 1904 from Hong Kong, attracted by stories of high wages from British Indian troops who had travelled through Canada the previous year (Buchignani, 2010). They were encouraged by Hong Kong–based agents of the Canadian Pacific Railway who had seen travel on their passenger liners plummet with the head tax imposed on Chinese immigration. Most of the first Sikhs in Canada arrived via Hong Kong or Malaysia, where the British had typically employed them as policemen, watchmen, and caretakers. They were originally from rural areas of Punjab and mortgaged their properties for passage with the prospect of sending money home. Many arrived in Canada unable to speak English but eventually found employment in mills, factories, the railway, and Okanagan orchards (Johnston, 1989). By 1908 there were over 5,000 South Asians in British Columbia, 90% of them Sikh. Many of them settled in Abbotsford (Buchignani, 2010).

History of Intergroup Relations

Asian Canadians were subject to particularly harsh racism

in British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada in the 19th and 20th centuries. Based on orientalist stereotypes, they were not considered "suitable" for Canadian citizenship. The 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration declared that the Japanese and Chinese were "unfit for full citizenship. They are so nearly allied to a servile class that they are obnoxious to a free community and dangerous to the state" (CBC, 2001). The right of Asians to vote, own property, and seek employment, as well as their ability to immigrate and integrate into Canadian society were therefore severely restricted. The right to vote federally and provincially was denied to Chinese Canadians in 1874, Japanese Canadians in 1895, and South Asians in 1907. This disenfranchisement also prevented these groups from having access to political office, jury duty, the professions like law, civil service jobs, underground mining jobs, and labour on public works because these all required being on provincial voters lists. Voting rights were only returned to Chinese and South Asian Canadians in 1947 and to Japanese Canadians in 1949, whereas immigration restrictions were not removed until the 1960s.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the immigration of Chinese workers to Canada, especially during the final stages of the building of Canadian Pacific Railway, led to increasing numbers of single Chinese men in the country who sought to bring their wives to join them. The imposition of "head taxes" of $50 in 1885 and $500 in 1903 were attempts to restrict Chinese immigration. As the Chinese workers were typically paid much lower wages than workers of European origin, various Asian exclusion leagues developed to press for further restrictions on Asian immigration. This led to riots in Vancouver in 1907 and

eventually in 1923 to a complete ban on Chinese immigration.

For similar reasons, the immigration of Japanese men was restricted to 400 a year after 1907, and further reduced to 150 individuals a year after 1928. Their success in the fishing industry led the federal fisheries department to arbitrarily reduce Japanese trolling licences by one-third in 1922. They, like the Chinese, were also subject to "yellow peril" hysteria. When the Japanese, many veterans of the Russo-Japanese war of 1905, successfully defended their community against white supremacist mobs in the 1907 anti-Asian riots in Vancouver, they were accused of smuggling a secret army into Canada (Sunahara & Oikawa, 2011). An even uglier action was the establishment of Japanese internment camps of World War II, discussed earlier as an illustration of expulsion.

Figure 11.16. South Asians aboard the Komagata Maru in English Bay, Vancouver, in 1914. (Photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/Wikimedia Commons).

Of the three groups, South Asians were the most recent to arrive. However, by 1908 the large number of arrivals led to the imposition of immigration restrictions. As the South Asians were British subjects, the restrictions took a more devious form, however. Immigrants from South Asia were obliged to possess at least $200 on arrival (very challenging considering that in British India they might be able to earn 10 to 20 cents a day), and they had to arrive in Canada by continuous passage from India. The government then put pressure on steamship companies not to sell direct through-passage tickets from Indian ports. The famous incident of the freighter Komagata Maru in 1914 was a direct consequence of this restriction. The ship, carrying 376 South Asian immigrants, many of whom had boarded in Hong Kong, was prevented from docking and kept in isolation in Vancouver harbour for two months until forced to return to Asia. Only 20 of the 376 passengers were allowed to stay in Canada (Johnston, 1989).

Current Status

Asian Canadians certainly have been subject to their share of racial prejudice, despite their seemingly positive stereotype today as the model minority. The **model minority** stereotype is applied to a minority group that is seen as reaching significant educational, professional, and socioeconomic levels without challenging the existing establishment. In the 2006 census, those identifying as Japanese earned 120% of the income of white Canadians, Chinese 88.6%, and South Asians 83.3% (Block & Galabuzi, 2011).

This stereotype is typically applied to Asian groups in Canada, and it can result in unrealistic expectations, putting a stigma on members of this group that do not meet the

expectations. Stereotyping all Asians as smart, industrious, and capable can also lead to a lack of much-needed government assistance and to educational and professional discrimination. Some critics speak of a “bamboo ceiling” when it comes to Asians reaching the highest echelons of corporate success. It has been difficult for Asian Canadians to overcome the stereotypes that they are passive, lack communication skills, are “techies,” or not “real” Canadians.

Key Terms

assimilation: The process by which a minority individual or group takes on the characteristics of the dominant culture.

conquest: The forcible subjugation of territory and people by military action.

culture of prejudice: The theory that prejudice is embedded in our culture.

discrimination: Prejudiced action against a group of people.

dominant: Can be used interchangeably with the term majority.

dominant group: A group of people who have more power in a society than any of the subordinate groups.

ethical relativism: The idea that all cultures and all cultural practices have equal value.

ethnicity: Shared culture, which may include heritage, language, religion, and more.

exogamy: Refers to marriage outside of the group (community, tribe, etc.).

expulsion: When a dominant group forces a subordinate group to leave a certain area or the country.

genocide: The deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group.

group-specific rights: Rights conferred on individuals by virtue of their membership in a group.

hybridity: The process by which different racial and ethnic groups combine to create new or emergent cultural forms and practices.

institutional racism: When a societal system has developed with an embedded disenfranchisement of a group.

internal colonialism: The process of uneven regional development by which a dominant group establishes control over existing populations within a country by maintaining segregation of ethnic and racial groups.

intersection theory: Theory that suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes.

minority group: Any group of people who are singled out from others for differential and unequal treatment.

miscegenation: The blending of different racialized groups through sexual relations, procreation, marriage, or cohabitation.

model minority: The stereotype applied to a minority group that is seen as reaching higher educational, professional, and socioeconomic levels without protest against the majority establishment.

multiculturalism: The recognition of cultural and racial diversity and of the equality of different cultures.

prejudice: Biased thought based on flawed assumptions about a group of people.

racial profiling: The selection of individuals for greater surveillance, policing, or treatment on the basis of racialized characteristics.

racial steering: When real estate agents direct prospective homeowners toward or away from certain neighbourhoods based on their race.

racialization: The social process by which certain social groups are marked for unequal treatment based on perceived physiological differences.

racism: A set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices used to justify the belief that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others.

scapegoat theory: A theory stating that the dominant group will displace its unfocused aggression onto a subordinate group.

segregation: The physical separation of two groups, particularly in residence, but also in workplace and social functions.

settler society: A society historically based on colonization through foreign settlement and displacement of Aboriginal inhabitants.

stereotypes: Oversimplified ideas about groups of people.

strategy for the management of diversity: The systematic methods used to resolve conflicts, or potential conflicts, between groups that arise based on perceived differences.

subordinate: Can be used interchangeably with the term minority.

subordinate group: A group of people who have less power than the dominant group.

white privilege: The benefits people receive simply by being part of the dominant group.

visible minority: Persons, other than Aboriginal persons, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.

Section Summary

11.1. Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups
Race is fundamentally a social construct. Ethnicity is a term that describes shared culture and national origin. Minority groups are defined by their lack of power.

11.2. Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination
Stereotypes are oversimplified ideas about groups of people. Prejudice refers to thoughts and feelings, while discrimination refers to actions. Racism refers to the belief that one race is inherently superior or inferior to other races.

11.3. Theories of Race and Ethnicity
Functionalist views of race study the role dominant and subordinate groups play to create a stable social structure. Critical sociologists examine power disparities and struggles between various racial and ethnic groups. Interactionists see race and ethnicity as important sources of individual identity and social symbolism. The concept of culture of prejudice recognizes that all people are subject to stereotypes that are ingrained in their culture.

11.4. Intergroup Relations and the Management of Diversity
Intergroup relations range from a tolerant approach of pluralism to intolerance as severe as genocide. In

pluralism, groups retain their own identity. In assimilation, groups conform to the identity of the dominant group. In assimilation, groups combine to form a new group identity.

11.5. Race and Ethnicity in Canada

The history of the Canadian people contains an infinite variety of experiences that sociologists understand follow patterns. From the Aboriginal people who first inhabited these lands to the waves of immigrants over the past 500 years, migration is an experience with many shared characteristics. Most groups have experienced various degrees of prejudice and discrimination as they have gone through the process of assimilation.

Section Quiz

11.1. Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

1. The racial term "black Canadian" can refer to ________________________________.

    1. A black person living in Canada
    2. People whose ancestors came to Canada through the slave trade
    3. A white person who originated in Africa and now lives in Canada
    4. Any of the above

2. What is the one defining feature of a minority group?

    1. Self-definition
    2. Numerical minority
    3. Lack of power
    4. Strong cultural identity

3. Ethnicity describes shared ______________.

1. Beliefs
2. Language
3. Religion
4. Any of the above

4. Which of the following is an example of a numerical majority being treated as a subordinate group?

1. Jewish people in Germany
2. Creoles in New Orleans
3. White people in Brazil
4. Blacks under apartheid in South Africa

5. Scapegoat theory shows that _________________________________.

1. Subordinate groups blame dominant groups for their problems
2. Dominant groups blame subordinate groups for their problems
3. Some people are predisposed to prejudice
4. All of the above

11.2. Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination

6. Stereotypes can be based on ________.

1. Race
2. Ethnicity
3. Gender
4. All of the above

7. What is discrimination?

1. Biased thoughts against an individual or group
2. Biased actions against an individual or group
3. Belief that a race different from yours is inferior
4. Another word for stereotyping

8. Which of the following is the best explanation of racism as a social fact?

1. It needs to be eradicated by laws.
2. It is like a magic pill.
3. It does not need the actions of individuals to continue.
4. None of the above

11.3. Theories of Race and Ethnicity

9. As a Caucasian in Canada, being reasonably sure that you will be dealing with authority figures of the same race as you is a result of ____________________.

1. Intersection theory
2. Conflict theory
3. White privilege
4. Multiculturalism

10. The Speedy Gonzales cartoon character is an example of ___________________.

1. Intersection theory
2. Stereotyping

3. Interactionist view
4. Culture of prejudice

[**11.4. Intergroup Relations and the Management of Diversity**]

11. Which intergroup relation displays the least tolerance?

1. Segregation
2. Assimilation
3. Genocide
4. Expulsion

12. What doctrine justified legal segregation in the American South?

1. Jim Crow
2. *Plessey v. Ferguson*
3. *De jure*
4. Separate but equal

13. What intergroup relationship is represented by the "mosaic" metaphor?

1. Assimilation
2. Pluralism
3. Expulsion
4. Segregation

14. Assimilation is represented by the _______________ metaphor.

1. Melting pot

2. Mosaic
3. Salad bowl
4. Separate but equal

11.5. Race and Ethnicity in Canada

15. What makes aboriginal Canadians unique as a subordinate group in Canada?

1. They are the only group that experienced expulsion.
2. They are the only group that was segregated.
3. They are the only group that was enslaved.
4. They are the only group that did not come here as immigrants.

16. Which subordinate group is often referred to as the “model minority?”

1. Black Canadians
2. Asian Canadians
3. White ethnic Canadians
4. First Nations

17. Which federal act or program was designed to address Québécois nationalism?

1. Official Languages Act
2. The Treaty of Utrecht
3. The Multiculturalism Act
4. The repatriation of the Constitution

18. The Komagata Maru incident affected which visible minority?

1. Métis
2. Japanese
3. South Asians
4. Chinese

19. Which of the following groups is not considered a visible minority in Canada?

1. The *Issei*
2. Somali Canadians
3. Sikhs
4. Aboriginal Canadians

[Quiz answers at end of chapter]

Short Answer

11.1. Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

1. Why do you think the term “minority” has persisted when the word “subordinate” is more descriptive?
2. How do you describe your ethnicity? Do you include your family’s country of origin? Do you consider yourself multiethnic? How does your ethnicity compare to that of the people you spend most of your time with?

11.2. Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination

1. How does racial stereotyping contribute to institutionalized racism?
2. Give an example of stereotyping that you see in everyday life. Explain what would need to happen for this to be eliminated.

11.3. Theories of Race and Ethnicity

1. Give three examples of white privilege. Do you know people who have experienced this? From what perspective?
2. What is the worst example of intersection theory you can think of? What are your reasons for thinking it is the worst?

11.4. Intergroup Relations and the Management of Diversity

1. Do you believe immigration laws should foster an approach of pluralism, assimilation, or amalgamation? Which perspective do you think is most supported by current Canadian immigration policies?
2. Which intergroup relation do you think is the most beneficial to the subordinate group? To society as a whole? Why?

11.5. Race and Ethnicity in Canada

1. In your opinion, which group had the easiest time coming to this country? Which group had the hardest time? Why?
2. Which group has made the most socioeconomic gains? Why do you think that group has had more success than others?

Further Research

11.1. Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups
Explore aspects of race and ethnicity at PBS's site, "What Is Race?": http://www.pbs.org/race/001_WhatIsRace/001_00-home.htm

11.2. Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination
How far should multicultural rights extend? Read more about multiculturalism in a world perspective at the Multiculturalism Policies in Contemporary Democracies website: http://www.queensu.ca/mcp/home

11.3. Theories of Race and Ethnicity
Do you know someone who practises white privilege? Do you practise it? Explore the concept with this white privilege checklist [PDF] to see how much of it holds true for you or others: http://www.sap.mit.edu/content/pdf/white_privilege_checklist.pdf

11.4. Intergroup Relations and the Management of Diversity
So you think you know your own assumptions? Check and find out with the Implicit Association Test: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/canada/takeatest.html

11.5. Race and Ethnicity in Canada
Are people interested in reclaiming their ethnic identities? Read this article and decide: "The White Ethnic Revival": http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/23824

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Solutions to Section Quiz

1 D, | 2 C, | 3 D, | 4 D, | 5 B, | 6 D, | 7 B, | 8 C, | 9 C, | 10 B, | 11 C, | 12 D, | 13 B, | 14 A, | 15 D, | 16 B, | 17 A, | 18 C, | 19 D, [Return to quiz]

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Chapter 9: Social Interaction

Figure 22.1. The dynamics of unspoken conversation. (Image courtesy of Yusaini Usulludin/ Flickr)

Learning Objectives

22.1. Micro-Level Interaction

- Describe the social dimensions of emotional life.
- Understand the sociological concept of

“reality as a social construct.”

- Describe the impact of social roles on individual identities and status.
- Use Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective to describe the social dynamics of self-presentation.

Introduction to Social Interaction

Face-to-face interaction of even the simplest sort is a far more socially intricate operation than we generally recognize. It is rife with unacknowledged rituals, tacit understandings, covert symbolic exchanges, impression management techniques, and calculated strategic maneuverings.

The Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman went to the Shetland Islands in the 1950s to do fieldwork on the social structure of the island community for his PhD dissertation. However, he found that the complex interpersonal relationships in the hotel he stayed at to be a much richer site for social study. The theories that became the basis for his dramaturgical approach in *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1959) developed from his detailed observations of the elaborate “interaction rituals” in everyday social interaction.

Figure 22.2. "The face is like a switch on a railroad track. It affects the trajectory of the social interaction the way the switch would affect the path of the train" (Alan Fridlund, 1994). (Image courtesy of Derrick Tyson/ Flickr).

Goffman describes the way that people try to control the impression they make on others in social encounters. They want to be received well. They want to be taken as credible. At the same time, the others are interested in checking up on the person's sincerity, trustworthiness and general suitability as someone worth spending time with. In face-to-face encounters in "real time," they might not have access to information from the person's background. So in the absence of confirming or disconfirming information that the person is as they claim, they compare what the person intentionally expresses about themselves against

other expressions that the person unintentionally "gives off": facial expressions, mannerisms, gestures, nervousness, quality of clothing, application of make-up, use of language and so on. This dynamic between a person's self-presentation and the audience's critical discernment sets in motion a number of micro-level structures that govern the course of social interactions no matter their specific content.

In the Shetland Islands, Goffman observed how islanders were sometimes amused to watch the manners of neighbours who dropped in for a cup of tea. As there were no impediments to the view in front of the simple cottages and no electric lights inside, they were well positioned to see how the neighbour would drop one expression as he or she approached and adopt another as they entered the door. The visitor consciously composed his or her "social face" by adopting a "warm expectant smile." Based on these cues the hosts were able to judge how the neighbour really felt about them. However, other neighbours who were aware of this dynamic of examination, adopted a social face well before turning into the cottage "thus ensuring the projection of a constant image" (Goffman, 1959). Successful impression management requires an awareness of both the expressions that one gives and the expressions that one gives off. In this manner Goffman examines how impression management in social interaction always involves some degree of cynical performance.

In his essay "On Face-Work," Goffman (1972) suggests that individuals in any social encounter attempt to establish and act out a **line**, not unlike the pick-up line a suitor might try out on a potential companion in a bar. The line the individual adopts in any social encounter expresses their view of the situation, their attitude towards the other members of the group, and especially, their attitude

towards themselves. Consciously or unconsciously, they decide what “line” they are going to take to respond to the situation. Their line might be, “I’ve been down on my luck, can you help me out?” or “I know more about wine than that guy, so I’m going to let him know it” or “I am really polite so I am not going to say directly that the dress does nothing for her,” etc.

As a result of this line, they present a certain **face** to the group that Goffman describes as a claim to a “positive social value” for themselves.

> Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes–albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself (Goffman, 1972).

They present themselves as humble, sincere, knowledgeable, decisive, aggressive, or easygoing, depending on the circumstances and the nature of the social crowd present. Goffman remarks that whether they intentionally take a specific line or present a specific face, or not, they will find that the others assume they have done so and will act towards them accordingly.

Therefore, the dynamics of social encounters play out based on whether an individual is successful in his or her bid to “maintain face” or whether they make a gaff or do something that inadvertently interrupts their performance. If they are a professor, they might misspell a word on the blackboard, which undermines their claim to rarefied knowledge and erudition. If they are a new MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), they might have to account for inappropriate pictures or posts on their Facebook page which undermine their claim to have the requisite responsibility and perspicuity for the job. If they are a

driver, the hint of liquor on their breath might undermine the appearance of sobriety they wish to display to a police officer at a check stop. Then it becomes a question of whether they can “save face” or whether they will end up “shame faced.” Goffman calls the management of one’s face in light of the responses of others—how we make it consistent with the line we are acting out, how we make adjustments to cover over inconsistencies or incidents, etc.—**face-work**.

The strange insight that Goffman offers is that one’s “face”—essentially positive social attributes one claims for oneself in any situation, but also one’s actual face (its expressiveness, nonverbal cues, potential for betrayal)—does not really belong to the individual:

> A person may be said to have, or be in or maintain face when the line he effectively takes presents an image of him that is internally consistent, that is supported by judgments and evidence conveyed by other participants, and that is confirmed by evidence conveyed through impersonal agencies in the situation. At such times the person’s face clearly is something that is not lodged in or on his body, but rather something that is diffusely located in the flow of events in the encounter and becomes manifest only when these events are read and interpreted for the appraisals expressed in them. (1972, pp. 6–7)

The acceptance or rejection of one’s face is in the hands of the others who generally are prepared to accommodate small glitches in performance, but not indefinitely. In Goffman’s analysis, a social encounter is a precarious affair in which each of the participants desperately hopes to survive without disaster or mishap. An elaborate system of tact and etiquette evolves to which the participants in a face-to-face encounter consciously or unconsciously submit, even when they have their doubts about the

credibility of a performance, so that the group as a whole can maintain face. If the disruption to someone's face becomes too severe however a "scene" is created and the encounter falls apart. Goffman illustrates the way in which even the seemingly free and spontaneous interactions of everyday life are governed by intricate and predictable structures of self-presentation and mutual accommodation.

22.1. Micro-level Interaction

Social interaction is the process of reciprocal influence exercised by individuals over one another during social encounters. Usually it refers to face-to-face encounters in which people are physically present with one another for a specified duration. However, in contemporary society we can also think of social encounters that are technologically mediated like texting, skyping, or messaging. In terms of the different levels of analysis in sociology–micro, meso, macro, and global–social interaction is generally approached at the micro-level where the structures and **social scripts**, the pre-established patterns of behaviour that people are expected to follow in specific social situations, that govern the relationship between particular individuals can be examined. However, as the sociological study of emotions indicates, the micro-level processes of everyday life are also impacted by macro-level phenomena such as gender inequality and historical transformations.

Emotional Management

Figure 22.3. A-maze-ing Laughter sculpture (2009) by Chinese artist Yue Minjun, Vancouver B.C. (Image courtesy of Ted McGrath/Flickr)

The study of micro-level interaction has been a rich source of insight in sociology. The idea that our emotions, for example, have a social component might not be all that surprising at first because often we are subject to having "emotional reactions" to other people, positive or negative. The other person, or the social situation itself, brings on an emotion that otherwise would not arise.

However, sociological research has shown that our emotions also can have a systematic, socially structured quality of which we are not immediately aware. Studies of face-to-face conversations show that the outward signs of emotion like smiling or laughing are not equally distributed. For example, the predisposition to show emotion by laughing in a conversation is structured by differences in gender, status, role, and norm. Robert Provine (1996) studied 1200 two-person conversations, observed discretely in public places like shopping malls. He discovered that when a woman was speaking and a man was listening the woman laughed more than twice as much as the man. Similarly when a man was speaking and a woman listening, she was still more likely to laugh than him. "Female speakers laugh 127 percent more than their male audience. In contrast, male speakers laugh about 7 percent less than their female audience" (Provine, 1996).

Provine suggests that this shows that males lead in producing humour while females lead in laughing at humour, but it might also show a pattern of social deference reflecting the unequal social status of men and women.

How a culture laughs, when it laughs and at what it laughs also varies through history. Jokes often hone in on what we are most anxious about as a culture. The Roman Classicist Mary Beard (2014) argues that while it is very difficult to go from the recorded literature to a confident appraisal of what laughter and its place in social life in ancient Rome was like, the nature of the jokes the Romans told reveals an anxiety about the ability to demonstrate identity unique to Roman culture. Many jokes had the common theme of “how do I know that I am me?” and how can I prove to others that I am me?”

> For example, “two friends meet in the street and one says to the other, ‘I heard that you were dead,’ and the other says, ‘I’m not dead, you can see me, here I am,’ to which the first replies, ‘But the person who told me you were dead is much more reliable than you are.’ “

This typical Roman joke refers to a cultural context in which demonstrating status was extremely important but official proofs of identity like passports or ID cards were minimal (Beard 2014).

Figure 22.4. The Emperor Commodus (depicted recently in the film Gladiator, 2000). Roman statues do not depict their subjects with smiles. What does the absence of a culture of smiling indicate about the emotional experience of everyday social interaction in ancient Rome? (Image courtesy of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna/ Wikimedia Commons)

On the other hand, one rare account from ancient Rome in which the physical, bodily, uncontrollable nature of laughter is actually recorded was when the Emperor Commodus was playing at being a gladiator in the Roman forum. He decapitated an ostrich and threatened the Roman senators in the front row by waving its head and neck at them. What a modern audience would probably find horrifying or disgusting, the Roman senator Dio Cassius

found so ridiculous he had to bite down on a laurel leaf from the wreath he was wearing to suppress his urge to giggle (Beard 2014).

What is perhaps even more significant with regard to the unique emotional life of the Romans is Beard's claim that the Romans did not smile, or more accurately, that the expression we experience as smiling played no significant role in Roman facial communication. The Romans might have turned their mouths up at the corners but the smile was not a significant gesture in their social interaction. There are no accounts of smiling in Roman literature. The Roman words that are sometimes translated into English as smile are *ridere* and *subridere* which mean "laugh" and "little laugh" respectively; no word for smile exists. Beard concludes that the culture of the smile that figures so prominently in modern life (smiling when we meet someone, smiling to show pleasure, smiling in photographs, etc.) did not exist in Roman life. Medieval scholars suggest that the culture of the smile was not invented until the middle ages (Beard 2014).

In fact our emotional life follows detailed cultural scripts and **feeling rules**. Feeling rules are a set of socially shared guidelines that direct how we want to try to feel and not to feel emotions according to given situations (Hochschild, 1979). We are obliged to systematically manage our emotions in response to different social situations.

> For example, we often speak of "having the right" to feel angry at someone. Or we say we "should feel more grateful" to a benefactor. We chide ourselves that a friend's misfortune, a relative's death, "should have hit us harder," or that another's good luck, or our own, should have inspired more joy. We know feeling rules, too, from how others react to what they infer from our emotive display. Another may say to us, "You shouldn't feel so guilty; it wasn't your fault,"

> or "You don't have a right to feel jealous, given our agreement" (Hochschild, 1979).

As Hochschild argues, the fact that we are even *able* to distance ourselves enough from our feelings to recognize that something like a set of feeling rules may or may not apply in certain situations is a product of the modern "ironic" posture towards ourselves, quite foreign to traditional cultures.

Figure 22.5. Do funeral selfies violate deeply held feeling rules? (Image courtesy of MudflapDC/Flickr)

An example of issue that revolves around feeling rules is the controversy that emerged over people, generally teenagers, or millennials, posting selfies at funerals. Selfies are the photographic self portraits taken with camera at arms length to be shared on social media. Taking and posting selfie photographs on social media like Instagram is commonly regarded as a frivolous, if not a purely narcissistic and self-absorbed pastime. A headline in the *Huffington Post* read, "Funeral Selfies Are The Latest Evidence Apocalypse Can't Come Soon Enough" (Huffington Post, 2013). Taking selfies at funerals is seen

to violate deeply held views about the solemnity and emotional tenor of funerals and the etiquette of mourning.

A commentator on an article that defended funeral selfies stated the problem clearly:

> But I can't comprehend WHY you would be taking pictures of yourself if you're so deep into the grieving process. It does not compute. When my mother died six years ago … I didn't decide to whip out my phone and take photos of myself in my cute outfit or pretty makeup …. I didn't even think about that stuff. I was too busy grieving the loss of someone that I loved. I just don't understand how taking a selfie has anything to do with the grieving process. It's just wildly inappropriate imo [in my opinion]. It bugs me that they don't think of this before they post the damn pic or don't care (Doughty, 2013).

For this commentator, it is not just that selfies are seen as frivolous, but that the people taking them do not know how to feel the appropriate feelings. She sees this as a character defect.

The defender of funeral selfies, a mortician herself, makes a similar argument but from the other side of the issue. Breaking the feeling rules of funerals is not good etiquette but reflects "our tragic disengagement with the reality of death" rather than a personal defect. "Modern death practices in the West, created by the funeral industry, have given teenagers diddly squat to do when someone dies" and therefore their feelings have no support in collective ritual (Doughty, 2013).

Emotions are therefore subject to more or less conscious practices of **emotion management,** the way individuals work on producing or inhibiting feelings according to the social expectations of different situations. They are not as natural, spontaneous or involuntary as we typically assume. Moreover, this intimate and personal component

of our life is subject to macro-level processes like commodification. In post-industrial societies, services—nursing and care professions, flight attendants, call center employees, waiters, sales clerks, teachers, community policing officers, therapists, etc.—increasingly require expertise in the use of **emotional labour.** We speak of emotional labour "when deep gestures of exchange enter the market sector and are bought and sold as an aspect of labour power" (Hochschild, 1979). Managing emotion according to meticulous protocols becomes part of the job description because emotional tonality is part of the commodity being sold.

As Brym et al., (2013) argue, "the common sense view of emotions as unique, spontaneous, uncontrollable, authentic, natural, and perhaps even rooted exclusively in our biological makeup proves to be misguided."

Social Constructions of Reality

Figure 22.6. Who are we? What role do we play in society? According to sociologists, we construct reality through our interactions with others. In a way, our day-to-day interactions are like those of actors on a stage. (Photo courtesy of Jan Lewandowski/flickr)

In 1966 sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann wrote *The Social Construction of Reality*. In it, they argued that society is created by humans and human interaction, which they call **habitualization**. Habitualization describes how "any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be … performed again in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort" (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Not only do we construct our own society, but we accept it as it is because others have created it before us. Society is, in fact, "habit."

For example, your school exists as a school and not just as a building because you and others agree that it is a school. If your school is older than you are, it was created

by the agreement of others before you. In a sense, it exists by consensus, both prior and current. This is an example of the process of **institutionalization**, the act of implanting a convention or norm into society. Bear in mind that the institution, while socially constructed, is still quite real.

Another way of looking at this concept is through W. I. Thomas's notable **Thomas theorem** which states, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas and Thomas 1928). That is, people's behaviour can be determined by their subjective construction of reality rather than by objective reality. For example, a teenager who is repeatedly given a label—overachiever, player, bum, delinquent—might live up to the term even though it initially was not a part of his or her character.

Howard Becker (1963) elaborates on this idea in his theory of labelling and deviance. If someone violates a particular rule it does not mean that they are deviant in other respects. But being labelled "deviant" by authorities (police, parents, teachers, etc.) initiates a chain of consequences for the individual which make it difficult for him or her to participate in conventional groups and activities (like holding a job or going to school) with the "normals." The individual is also subject to common popular diagnoses about why he or she has "gone" that way–e.g. "he is a bad seed," "she is weak willed," etc.–which results in furthering the perception that he or she is an outsider. These factors in turn make it more difficult for the individual to conform to other rules which he or she had no intention of violating. The individual is placed in an increasingly untenable position in which it becomes increasingly likely they will need to resort to deceit and rule violation. "Treating a person as though

he [or she] were generally rather than specifically deviant produces a self-fulfilling prophecy" (Becker, 1963).

Like Berger and Luckmann's description of habitualization, and Becker's description of labelling, Thomas states that our moral codes and social norms are created by "successive definitions of the situation." This concept is defined by sociologist Robert K. Merton as a **self-fulfilling prophecy**. Merton explains that with a self-fulfilling prophecy, even a false idea can become true if it is acted on. Merton gives the example of a "bank run." Say for some reason, a number of people falsely fear that their bank is soon to be bankrupt. Because of this false notion, people run to their bank and demand all their cash at once. As banks rarely, if ever, have that much money on hand, the bank does indeed run out of money, fulfilling the customers' prophecy. On the other hand, "investor confidence" is another social construct, which as we saw in the lead up to the financial crisis of 2008, is "real in its consequences" but based on a fiction. Reality is constructed by an idea.

Figure 22.7. The story line of a self-fulfilling prophecy appears in many literary works, perhaps most famously in the story of Oedipus. Oedipus is told by an oracle that he will murder his father and marry his mother. In going out of his way to avoid his fate, Oedipus inadvertently fulfills it. Oedipus's story illustrates one way in which members of society contribute to the social construction of reality. (Photo courtesy of Jean-Antoine-Theodore Giroust/Wikimedia Commons)

Symbolic Interaction

How do we understand the way a definition of the situation comes to be established in everyday social interaction? Social interaction is in crucial respects **symbolic interaction**–interaction which is mediated by the exchange and interpretation of symbols. In symbolic interaction, people contrive to reach a mutual understanding of each other and of the tasks at hand through the exchange and

interpretation of symbols. Only on this basis can a coordinated action be accomplished. The process of communication is the central quality of the human social environment. Social interaction depends on communication.

George Herbert Mead (1934) argues that we often act as if an idea we have "in our head" defines who we are and what the situation in front of us is. But our ideas are in fact nebulous. They have to be confirmed by the others in the situation before they can become "real" or "actual." Therefore, communication is central to defining social situations. Moreover, it operates primarily based on *indications* or *gestures* of meaning that call out responses in others. As Mead puts it, in a somewhat complicated way, "the meaning of a gesture by one organism … is found in the response of another organism to what would be the completion of the act of the first organism which that gesture initiates and indicates" (Mead, 1934).

Herbert Blumer (1969) clarifies the three parts of this communication processes as follows. Ones own and the others actions are *symbolic* in that they refer beyond themselves to meanings which call out for the response of the other: (a) they indicate to the other what they are expected to do, (b) they indicate what the speaker plans to do, and (c) on this basis they form a mutual definition of the situation that indicates how a joint action will be agreed upon, carried out, and accomplished. Until each of the "indications" is confirmed by the other, the situation is undefined and no coordinated joint action is possible. A robber tells a victim to put his or her hands up, which indicates (a) what the victim is supposed to do (i.e., not resist); (b) what the robber intends to do (i.e., take the victim's money), and (c) what the joint action is going to be (i.e., a robbery). Blumer writes: "If there is confusion

or misunderstanding along any one of these three lines of meaning, communication is ineffective, interaction is impeded, and the formation of joint action is blocked" (Blumer, 1969).

In this model of communication, the **definition of the situation**, or mutual understanding of the tasks at hand, arises out of ongoing communicative interaction. Situations are not defined in advance, nor are they defined by the isolated understandings of the individuals involved. They are defined by the indications of meaning given by participants and the responses by the others. "Such a response is its meaning, or gives it its meaning" (Mead, 1934). Even the most habitualized situations involve a process of symbolic interaction in which a definition of the situation emerges through a mutual interpretation of signs or indications.

Making Connections: Sociological Research

Conversation Analysis

Figure 22.8. In this conversation, how do the body gestures indicate the meaning of what is being said. How do you "read" body gestures? [Long Description] (Image courtesy of Search Engine People Blog/Flickr)

Examine a recent conversation in which you participated. If possible, record it or write it out.

- How was your conversation a joint action in the sense defined by Mead and Blumer? How would you define the joint action you accomplished in this conversation (e.g., a casual passing of time, a game, a decision, a command, a fight, a work task, an agreement to disagree, etc.)?
- Compare a recent joint action you

were involved with at home, at work, or in a recreational setting that failed (i.e., in the manner Blumer describes). Along which of the three "lines of meaning" did it fail? Did you or someone else fail to express their intentions clearly? Did the others fail to interpret the intentions correctly? Was the definition of the situation unclear or ambiguous?

- In what way was your conversation a conversation of indications or gestures? In what way did the conversation unfold according to your initial intention or your initial opinion about things (i.e. according to the "indication" you expressed)? On the other hand, in what way did you have to modify your line of conversation as a result of the responses of the other person, and vice versa? In what way was the course, meaning, or content of the conversation socially determined through the process of conversation itself?
- With respect to any specific statement made in the conversation, is Mead right in saying that it is only the response of the other that "gives it its meaning"? If you said, "it's a nice day," does this require confirmation from the other person to make it so? Does the meaning of a statement like that change

according to the other person's response? What does this imply for the social nature of conversation and language? Is it ever possible to refer to fixed meanings or already existing definitions of the situation in particular social settings? Or is meaning always unfixed or "emergent," waiting to be discovered at the outcome of an interaction?

- In light of the concept of communication described by Mead and Blumer, define what is meant by "symbol" and what is meant by "interaction" in the term symbolic interaction. How was your conversation a symbolic interaction?

Roles and Status

As you can imagine, people employ many types of behaviours in day-to-day life. **Roles** are patterns of behaviour expected of a person who occupies particular social status or position in society. Currently, while reading this text, you are playing the role of a student. However, you also play other roles in your life, such as "daughter," "neighbour," or "employee." These various roles are each associated with a different status.

Sociologists use the term **status** to describe a social position a person occupies. Some statuses are

ascribed—those you do not select, such as son, elderly person, or female. Others, called **achieved statuses**, are obtained by personal effort or choice, such as a high school dropout, self-made millionaire, or nurse. As a daughter or son, you occupy a different status than as a neighbour or employee. One person can be associated with a multitude of roles and statuses. Even a single status such as "student" has a complex **role-set**, or array of roles, attached to it (Merton 1957).

If too much is required of a single role, individuals can experience **role strain**. Consider the duties of a parent: cooking, cleaning, driving, problem solving, acting as a source of moral guidance—the list goes on. Similarly, a person can experience **role conflict** when one or more roles are contradictory. A parent who also has a full-time career can experience role conflict on a daily basis. When there is a deadline at the office but a sick child needs to be picked up from school, which comes first? When you are working toward a promotion but your children want you to come to their school play, which do you choose? Being a college student can conflict with being an employee, being an athlete, or even being a friend. Our roles in life have a great effect on our decisions and on who we become.

Presentation of Self

Of course, it is impossible to look inside a person's head and study what role he or she is playing. All we can observe is behaviour, or role performance. **Role performance** is how a person expresses his or her role; describing it as a "performance" emphasizes that individuals use certain gestures, manners and "routines" to seek to influence others in their enactments of specific roles. In this sense, individuals in social contexts are

always performers. The focus on the importance of role performance in everyday life led Erving Goffman (1922–1982) to develop a framework called **dramaturgical analysis**. It represents a sociological reflection on the famous line from Shakespeare's *As You Like It,* "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

Goffman used the theater as an analogy for social interaction, (i.e. dramaturgy in theater is the art of dramatic composition on stage). He recognized that people played their roles and engaged in interaction *theatrically*, often following common social scripts and using props and costumes to support their roles. For example, he notes that simply wearing a white lab coat brings to mind in the observer stock images of cleanliness, modernity, scrupulous exactitude and authoritative knowledge. In England in the 1950s, even chimney sweeps and perfume clerks wore white lab coats as props "to provide the client with the understanding that the delicate tasks performed by these persons [would] be performed in … a standardized, clinical confidential manner" (Goffman, 1959). Whether the perfume clerk was clinically competent or not, the lab coat was used to bolster the impression that he or she was. Today, even without the lab coats, an analogous repertoire of props, sets and scripts are used to convey the clean, clinical, and confidential tasks of the perfume clerk.

Figure 22.9. Perfume shop in Mumbai, India. (Photo courtesy of monika.monika/Flickr)

Scripts and props are important in social encounters, because as we noted earlier individuals are constrained to present a “face” that represents how they want the others to see them. They appear “in-face.” They present themselves to others as they hope to be perceived. “First impressions” and “getting off on the right foot” are therefore crucial for the way the events during a social interaction unfold. Individuals project an image of themselves that, once proposed, they find themselves committed to for the duration of the encounter. Their presentation defines the situation but also entails that certain lines of responsive action will be available to them while others will not. It is difficult to change ones mode of self-presentation midway through a social interaction. The individual’s self-

presentation therefore has a promissory character that will either be borne out by the ensuing interactions or discredited. In either case, it commits the performer and the audience to a certain predictable series of events no matter what the content of the social encounter is.

The audience of a performance is not passive however. The audience also projects a definition of the situation through their responses to the performer. In general, the audience of a performance tries to attune their responses as much as possible so that open contradiction with each other or the performer does not emerge. The rules of *tact* dictate that the audience accommodates the performer's claims and agrees to overlook minor flaws in the performance so that the encounter can reach its conclusion without mishap. Goffman points out that this attunement is not usually a true consensus in which everyone expresses their honest feelings and agrees with one another in an open and candid manner. Rather, it is more like a covert agreement, much like that in a theater performance, to temporarily suspend disbelief. Individuals are expected to suppress their real feelings and project an attitude to the performance that they imagine the others will find acceptable. They establish a provisional "official ruling" on the performance. In this way social encounters work based on a temporary *modus vivendi* or "working consensus" with regard to "whose claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honoured" (Goffman, 1959).

As everyone who has been in an awkward social situation knows, the stakes of mutual accommodation in social interactions are high. Events that contradict, discredit or throw doubt upon the performer threaten to disrupt the social encounter. When it happens, this results in a kind of micro-level *anomie* or normlessness, which is

characterized by a general uncertainty about what is going to happen and is usually painful for everyone involved.

> When these disruptive events occur, the interaction itself may come to a confused and embarrassed halt. Some of the assumptions upon which the responses of the participants had been predicated become untenable, and the participants find themselves lodged in an interaction for which the situation has been wrongly defined and is now no longer defined. At such moments the individual whose presentation has been discredited may feel ashamed while the others present may feel hostile, and all the participants may come to feel ill at ease, nonplussed, out of countenance, embarrassed, experiencing the kind of anomie that is generated when the minute social system of face-to-face interaction breaks down (Goffman, 1959).

Therefore the logic of social situations, whatever their particular content or participants, dictates that it is in the interest of the performer to control the conduct and responses of the others through various defensive strategies or **impression management**, while it is in the interest of the audience to accommodate the performance as far as is practicable through various protective practices (e.g. tact, willful ignorance, etc.).

As a result, individuals are continually obliged to *manage the impression* they are making on the others, often using the same type of “props” and “lines” as an actor. Social interactions are governed by preventative practices employed to avoid embarrassments. Moreover, because it can be unclear what part a person may play in a given situation, he or she has to improvise his or her role as the situation unfolds. Each situation is a new scene, and individuals perform different roles depending on who is present. This led to Goffman’s focus on the ritualized nature of social interaction—the way in which the “scripts”

of social encounters become routine, repetitive, and unconscious. For example, the ritual exchange, “Hi. How are you?” “Fine, how are you?” is an exchange of symbolic tokens, ordinarily empty of actual content, which indicates sufficient mutual concern for the other, that it stands in for a complete social interaction in passing.

Nevertheless, the emphasis in Goffman’s analysis, as in symbolic interactionism as a whole, is that the social encounter, and social reality itself, is open and unpredictable. It relies on a continuous process of mutual interpretation, of signs given and signs received. Social reality is not *predetermined* by structures, functions, roles, or history but often draws on these in the same way actors draw on background knowledge and experience in creating a credible character.

Front Stage and Back Stage

Figure 22.10. Erving Goffman (1922–1982). "We move into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons" (Goffman, 1959). (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons).

Goffman observes that face-to-face performances usually take place in highly bounded "regions"—both spatially and temporally—which the impression and understanding fostered by the performances tend to saturate. A work meeting takes place in a board room for a specified period of time and generally provides the single focus for the participants. The same can be said for dinner in a restaurant, a ball hockey game or a classroom lecture. Following his theatrical metaphor, Goffman (1959) further breaks down the regions of performance into front stage

and back stage to examine the different implications they have for behaviour.

The **front stage** is the place where the performance is given to an audience, including the fixed sign-equipment or setting that supports the performance (the raised podium of the judge's bench, the family photos of the living room, the bookshelves of the professor's office, etc.). On the front stage the performer puts on a *personal front (*or face), which includes elements of *appearance*–uniforms, insignia, clothing, hairstyle, gender or racial characteristics, body weight, posture, etc.–that convey their claim to status, and elements of *manner*–aggressiveness or passivity, seriousness or joviality, politeness or informality–that foreshadow how they plan to play their role. The front stage is where the performer is on display and he or she is therefore constrained to maintain expressive control as a single note off key can disrupt the tone of an entire performance. A waitress for example needs to read the situation table by table in walking the tricky line between establishing clear, firm, professional boundaries with the paying clients, (who are generally of higher status than her), while also being friendly, courteous and informal so that tips will be forthcoming.

The **back stage** is generally out of the public eye, the place where the front stage performance is prepared. It is the place where "the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course" (Goffman, 1959). The waitress retreats to the kitchen to complain about the customers, the date retreats to the washroom to reassemble crucial make-up or hair details, the lawyer goes to the reference room to look up a matter of law she is not sure about, the neat and proper clerk goes out in the street to have a cigarette, etc. The back stage regions are where props are stored, costumes adjusted

and examined for flaws, roles rehearsed and ceremonial equipment hidden–like the good bottle of scotch–so the audience cannot see how their treatment differs from others. As Goffman says, back stage is where the performer goes to drop the performance and be themselves temporarily: “Here the performer can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character” (Goffman, 1959).

However, the implications of Goffman’s dramaturgical approach are that one is always playing a role. There is no single self. Even backstage the performer is not necessarily able to be their “true self.” Firstly, role performances are often performed as part of a team “whose intimate cooperation is required if a given projected definition of the situation is to be maintained”–the restaurant staff, the law office, the husband and wife team, etc. As Goffman describes, this means that team members are involved with each other in a relationship of *reciprocal dependence,* because any team member of a team has the power to give away the secrets of the show, and *reciprocal familiarity*, because team members are all “persons in the know” and not a position to maintain their front before each other. This entails that even backstage they are obliged to demonstrate their allegiance to the team project and play their respective “back stage” roles.

Secondly, whether one plays one’s role *sincerely*–fully taken in with one’s act–or with a degree of *cynicism* or **role distance–**aware of acting a role that one is not fully identified with–the self is never truly singular or authentic in Goffman’s view. The self is just a collection of roles that we play out for different people in different situations. Think about the way you behave around your coworkers versus the way you behave around your grandparents versus the way you behave with a blind date. Even if you’re

not consciously trying to alter your personal performance, your grandparents, coworkers, and date probably see different sides of you. Back stage or front stage, the self is always an artifact of the ongoing stratagems of accommodation and impression management involved in the social interaction with particular persons. The self is on one side "an image pieced together from the expressive implications of the full flow of events in an undertaking," and on the other, "a kind of player in a ritual game" (Goffman, 1972). The self is essentially a mask.

> It is probably no mere historical accident that the word person, in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role… It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves (Park quoted in Goffman, 1959)

Goffman's point here is not that individuals are completely inauthentic or phony. "In so far as this mask represents the conception we have formed of ourselves—the role we are striving to live up to—this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be" (Goffman, 1959).

The Individual and Society

Figure 22.11. The individual and society. (Image courtesy of Stefan Klauke/Flickr)

Many sociological findings like these strike the newcomer to the discipline as counter-intuitive because we are so steeped in a certain way of thinking about ourselves as unique individuals. This way of thinking is what Goffman called the schoolboy attitude: the idea that we make our way in life and establish our identity and our merits by personal effort and individual character (Goffman, 1972). In this way of thinking, the individual is understood to be independent of external influences; as having a private subjective interior life of memories, impressions, feelings, fantasies, likes and dislikes that is his or hers alone. The individual makes free, rational, and autonomous decisions between different courses of action and is therefore individually responsible for his or her decisions and actions, etc. From this perspective, the individual is unique, and his or her authenticity resides in finding and expressing this uniqueness. "Be yourself!" might be the dominant message we receive through childhood and adolescence, if not beyond.

However, these are ideas about the individual that go back to the political and ethical philosophies of the Enlightenment, the aesthetic reaction of the Romantic movement, and before that to the Stoic practices of the ancient Greeks and Romans. What this means is that the modern idea of the individual is not a product of universal "human nature" or of unique personal self-discovery but a type of *relationship to the self* that emerges under specific historical conditions. We make ourselves into individuals. The inquiry of micro-level sociology is to examine the various ways in which the individual is produced in social interaction, just like any other artifact.

In Monty Python's *Life of Brian* (1979), there is a scene in which Brian addresses the crowd of disciples that have assembled outside his window. He implores them to be themselves and not to follow him.

> Brian: Look, you've got it all wrong! You don't need to follow ME, You don't need to follow anybody! You've got to think for your selves! You're all individuals!
> The Crowd: Yes! We're all individuals!
> Brian: You're all different!
> The Crowd: Yes, we are all different!
> Man in crowd: I'm not…
> The Crowd: Ssssh!

The Python troupe put their finger on the paradox of the modern idea of the individual. The idea of the modern individual is to be defined by ones uniqueness and difference from all others. In a sense, one is *obliged* to be an individual in a manner that forces one to conform to the crowd. There is no individual choice in the matter. Moreover, as Goffman would have it, to be "an individual" is to make a claim for oneself before others using a common, shared repertoire impression management

stratagems to demonstrate it. Paradoxically, to be different means to be the same in many important aspects.

Figure 22.12. We are all individuals! (Image courtesy of RXAphotos/Flickr)

Key Terms

achieved statuses: Obtained by personal effort or choice, such as a high school dropout, self-made millionaire, or nurse.

ascribed status: The status outside of an individual's control, such as sex or race.

dramaturgical analysis: A technique sociologists use in which they view society through the metaphor of theatrical performance.

emotion management: Producing or inhibiting feelings according to the social expectations of different situations.

emotional labour: Emotional gestures of exchange required as an aspect of paid labour.

face: An image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes.

face-work: The management of one's face in light of the responses of others.

feeling rules: A set of socially shared guidelines that direct how we want to try to feel and not to feel emotions according to given situations.

habitualization: The idea that society is constructed by us and those before us, and it is followed like a habit.

impression management: Defensive strategies used by a performer to control the conduct and responses of the others in a social interaction.

institutionalization: The act of implanting a convention or norm into society.

line: A manner of self-presentation in which an individual expresses their view of the situation, their attitude towards the other members of the group, and their attitude towards themselves.

looking-glass self: Our reflection of how we think we appear to others.

role conflict: When one or more of an individual's roles clash.

role performance: The expression of a role.

role strain: Stress that occurs when too much is required of a single role.

role-set: An array of roles attached to a particular status.

roles: Patterns of behaviour that are representative of a person's social status.

self-fulfilling prophecy: An idea that becomes true when acted on.

social interaction: The process of reciprocal influence

exercised by individuals over one another during social encounters.

social scripts: Pre-established patterns of behaviour that people are expected to follow in specific social situations.

status: The responsibilities and benefits that a person experiences according to his or her rank and role in society.

Thomas theorem: How a subjective reality can drive events to develop in accordance with that reality, despite being originally unsupported by objective reality.

Section Summary

22.1. Micro-Level Interaction

Society is based on the social construction of reality. How we define society influences how society actually is. Likewise, how we see other people influences their actions as well as our actions toward them. We all take on various roles throughout our lives, and our social interactions depend on what types of roles we assume, who we assume them with, and the scene where interaction takes place.

Section Quiz

22.1. Micro-Level Interaction

1. Mary works full-time at an office downtown while her young children stay at a neighbour's house. She's just learned that the child care provider is leaving the country. Mary has succumbed to pressure to volunteer at her church, plus her ailing mother-in-law will be moving in with her next month. Which of the following is likely to occur as

Mary tries to balance her existing and new responsibilities?

1. role strain
2. self-fulfilling prophecy
3. status conflict
4. status strain

2. According to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, society is based on ________.

1. habitual actions
2. status
3. institutionalization
4. role performance

3. Paco knows that women find him attractive, and he's never found it hard to get a date. But as he ages, he dyes his hair to hide the grey and wears clothes that camouflage the weight he has put on. Paco's behaviour can be best explained by the concept of ___________.

1. role strain
2. the looking-glass self
3. role performance
4. habitualization

[Quiz answers at end of chapter]

Short Answer

22.1. Micro-Level Interactions

1. Draw a large circle and then "slice" the circle into pieces like a pie, labeling each piece with a role or status that you occupy. Add as many statuses, ascribed and achieved, that you have. Don't forget things like dog owner, gardener, traveller, student, runner, employee. How many statuses do you have? In which ones are there role conflicts?
2. Think of a "self-fulfilling prophecy" that you have experienced. Based on this experience, do you agree with the Thomas theorem? What are the implications of the Thomas theorem for the difference between studying natural as opposed to social phenomena? Or is there a difference?

Further Research

22.1. Micro-Level Interactions

TV Tropes is a website where users identify concepts that are commonly used in literature, film, and other media. Although its tone is for the most part humorous, the site provides a good jumping-off point for research. Browse the list of examples under the entry of "self-fulfilling prophecy." Pay careful attention to the real-life examples. Are there ones that surprised you or that you don't agree with?: http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/SelfFulfillingProphecy

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Solutions to Section Quiz

1 A, | 2 A, | 3 B, [Return to Quiz]

Long Descriptions

Figure 22.8 long description: Two people sit on benches facing each other. The woman sits with her legs crossed and shoulders hunched forward. The man leans back with his foot resting on the opposite knee. [Return to Figure 22.8]

Chapter 10. Groups and Organizations

Figure 6.1. Students, environmentalists, union members, and Aboriginal people showed up to protest at the Occupy movement in Victoria, B.C. (Photo courtesy of rpaterso/flickr)

Learning Objectives

6.1. How is Society Possible?

- Understand Simmel's argument "there is no such thing as society as such."
- Distinguish the forms and contents of social interactions.
- Situate sociological structures within three levels of analysis: micro, meso, and macro.

6.2 Groups

- Analyze the operation of a group as more than the sum of its parts.
- Understand primary and secondary groups as two key sociological groups.
- Recognize in-groups, out-groups, and reference groups as subtypes of primary and secondary groups.
- Distinguish between different styles of leadership.
- Explain how conformity is impacted by group membership.

6.3. Networks

- Distinguish between groups, social networks, and formal organizations.
- Analyze the dynamics of dyads, triads, and larger social networks.

6.4. Formal Organizations

- Categorize the different types of formal organizations.
- Define the characteristics of bureaucracies.
- Analyze the opposing tendencies of bureaucracy toward efficiency and inefficiency.
- Identify the concepts of the McDonaldization of society and the McJob as aspects of the process of rationalization.
- Apply the sociological study of groups and bureaucracies to analyze the social conditions of the Holocaust.

Introduction to Groups and Organizations

The punk band NOFX is playing outside in Los Angeles. The music is loud, the crowd pumped up and excited. But neither the lyrics nor the people in the audience are quite what you might expect. Mixed in with the punks and young rebel students are members of local unions, from well-dressed teachers to more grizzled labour leaders. The lyrics are not published anywhere but are available on YouTube: “We’re here to represent/The 99 percent/Occupy, occupy, occupy.” The song: “Wouldn’t It Be Nice If Every Movement Had a Theme Song” (Cabrel, 2011).

The slogan, “We are the 99%,” emblematic of the Occupy movement that flourished in North America in 2011 and 2012, refers to the redistribution of wealth from the middle class to the upper class (the “one percenters”). Even during the severe economic crisis after 2008, the personal income, bonuses, and overall share of social wealth of the elite 1% increased. Occupiers observed that the very people responsible for the crisis and the massive loss of wealth in the economy were paying themselves bonuses for a job well done, even while they were receiving billions of dollars in bailouts from the government. This would seem to be a grievance worthy of a movement, but simply having a grievance does not explain the ways in which movements take form as groups.

In Victoria, B.C., a tent community sprang up in Centennial Square outside city hall, just like tent cities in other parts of the country. Through the “horizontal decision-making process” of daily general assemblies, the community decided to change its name from Occupy Victoria to the People’s Assembly of Victoria because of the negative colonial connotations of the word “occupy” for Aboriginal members of the group. Occupy Montreal

adopted the concept of stepping back or “progressive stack” in their meetings. Men and other dominant movement figures were encouraged to step back from monopolizing the conversation so that a diversity of opinions and experiences could be heard. As the tent cities of the Occupy movement began to be dismantled, forcibly in some cases, a separate movement, Idle No More, emerged to advocate for Aboriginal justice and organized itself according to Aboriginal principles of decentralized leadership. Horizontal decision making processes, progressive stack, and decentralized leadership refer to the different organizational structures these social movements experimented with in rethinking traditional hierarchical structures of organization.

Numerous groups made up the Occupy movement, yet there was no central movement leader. What makes a group something more than just a collection of people? How are leadership functions and styles established in a group dynamic? What unites the people protesting from New York City to Victoria, B.C.? Are homeless people truly aligned with law school students? Do Aboriginal people genuinely feel for the environmental protests against pipelines and fish farming? How does a non-hierarchical organization work? How is the social order of a diverse group maintained when there are no formal regulations in place? What are the implicit or tacit rules that such groups rely on? How do members come to share a common set of meanings concerning what the movement is about?

Figure 6.2. Slavoj Žižek addresses the crowd at Occupy Wall Street: "You don't need to be a genius to lead, anyone can be a leader." (Photo courtesy of Daniel Latorre/Flickr)

At one point during the occupation of Wall Street in New York, speakers like Slovenian social critic and philosopher Slavoj Žižek were obliged to abandon the use of microphones and amplification to comply with noise bylaws. They gave their speeches one line at a time and the people within earshot repeated the lines so that those further away could hear. How did this communicational format, despite its cumbersome nature, come to be an expression of the group's solidarity?

6.1. How is Society Possible?

One of the basic questions raised in sociology is: How is society possible? What holds society together? What gives society form and continuity? This was the classical

sociologist Georg Simmel's basic question. In his essay, "The Problem of Sociology," Simmel (1908/1971) begins by saying: "Society exists where a number of individuals enter into interaction." This interaction however is not random, as sustained, coherent interaction is only possible if it is patterned and it is these patterns that make up society. Importantly, for Simmel, these patterns are not fixed, like musicians in an improvisational Jazz group, everyone has some degree of original contribution, but this contribution is only possible because there is some agreement on basic chord structures and when each adds to the song.

In the following we will examine how groups and organizations both create and are created by the sustained, patterned interaction of individuals.

interaction brings forth patterns, it gives birth to society as a This would appear to be a truism. After all, what else could society be? However, a few pages later, he reaches the conclusion that:

> *There is no such thing as society "as such"*; that is, there is no society in the sense that it is the condition for the emergence of all these particular phenomena. For there is no such thing as interaction "as such" — there are only specific kinds of interaction. And it is with their emergence that society too emerges, for they are neither the cause nor the consequence of society but are, themselves, society. The fact that an extraordinary multitude and variety of interactions operate at any one moment has given a seemingly autonomous historical reality to the general concept of society (Simmel, 1908/1971, emphasis is the editor's).

What Simmel means here is not that society doesn't exist, but that there is no such thing as "society" outside of the interactions between the individuals that compose it. Society is the name we give to the "extraordinary multitude

and variety" of specific interactions between individuals that are occurring at any particular moment. Out of our ongoing interaction, we create the patterns we call society and it is the task of sociology to understand these patterns. While in the previous chapter we centred the micro level patterns of face-to face interaction, in this chapter we examine the meso-level patterns of groups and organizations and their effects on our behaviour.

Making Connections: Classical Sociologists

Georg Simmel and Formal Sociology

Figure 6.5. Georg Simmel. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Georg Simmel (1858–1918) was an early German sociologist and contemporary of Max Weber. He developed what he called **formal sociology**, or the sociology of social forms, in order to understand

how a collection of individuals driven by their own individualistic interests could coalesce into a group with common purposes that could persist and develop through time. When he said that "society exists where a number of individuals enter into interaction" (1908/1971), he meant that whenever people gather, something happens that would not have happened if the individuals had remained alone. They begin to "correlate their condition" with that of others. They influence others and are influenced in return. A "reciprocity of effects" or "reciprocal influence" occurs that Simmel calls "sociation." People *attune* themselves to one another in a way that is very similar to musicians tuning their instruments to one another. A pattern or *form* of interaction emerges that begins to guide or coordinate the behaviour of the individuals.

An example Simmel uses is of a cocktail party where a subtle set of instructions begins to emerge which defines what can and cannot be said. In a cocktail party where the conversation is light and witty, the effect would be jarring if someone suddenly tried to sell you an insurance policy or confided about the spousal abuse they had suffered. The person would be thought of as being crass or inappropriate. Similarly, in the pleasant pastime of flirtation, if one of the parties began to press the other to consummate the flirtation by having sex, the flirtation would be over. Flirtation is a form of interaction in which the answer to the question of having sex — yes or no — is perpetually suspended.

Figure 6.6. Cocktail parties as the play form of interaction. What are the rules for "gracious entertaining"? (Image courtesy of James Vaughan/ Flickr)

In both examples, Simmel argued that the social interaction had taken on a specific form**.** Both were examples of what he called the *play form* of social interaction, or **pure sociability**: the pleasure people experience from the mere fact of being together, regardless of the *content* of the interaction (Simmel, 1910/1971). If the cocktail party conversation suddenly turns to a business proposition or an overly personal confession, it is no longer *playful.* The underlying form of the interaction has been violated, even if the participants were not consciously aware that they had adopted a particular form of interaction. Simmel proposed that sociology would be the study of the social forms that recur in different contexts and with different social contents. The same *play form* governs the interaction in two different contexts with two different contents of interaction: one is the free-ranging content of polite conversation (the cocktail party form); the other is sexual desire (the flirtation form). Different contents or interests can be realized in different forms and vice versa with quite different consequences for the individuals involved. The same erotic impulse (content) can be expressed through the *forms* of a flirtation, a casual

sexual relationship, a dating relationship, a marriage, or a transaction with a prostitute. On the other hand, the same form of competition can organize the impulse to play hockey, to gain financially, to learn, or to dress stylishly. The emphasis on *forms* is why Simmel called his approach to the study of society "formal sociology."

6.2. Groups

Most of us feel comfortable using the word "group" without giving it much thought. But what does it mean to be part of a group? The concept of a group is central to much of how we think about society and human interaction. As Georg Simmel (1858–1915) put it, "[s]ociety exists where a number of individuals enter into interaction" (1908/1950). Society exists in groups. For Simmel, society did not exist otherwise. What fascinated him was the way in which people mutually attune to one another to create relatively enduring forms. In a group, individuals behave differently than they would if they were alone. They conform, they resist, they forge alliances, they cooperate, they betray, they organize, they defer gratification, they show respect, they expect obedience, they share, they manipulate, etc. At this meso-level of interaction, being in a group changes their behaviour and their abilities. This is one of the founding insights of sociology: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The group has properties over and above the properties of its individual members. It has a reality *sui generis*, of its

own kind. But how exactly does the whole come to be greater?

Defining a Group

How can we hone the meaning of the term **group** more precisely for sociological purposes? The term is an amorphous one and can refer to a wide variety of gatherings, from just two people (think about a "group project" in school when you partner with another student), a club, a regular gathering of friends, or people who work together or share a hobby. In short, the term refers to any collection of at least two people who interact with some frequency and who share a sense that their identity is somehow aligned with the group. Of course, every time people gather, they do not necessarily form a group. An audience assembled to watch a street performer is a one-time random gathering. Conservative-minded people who come together to vote in an election are not a group because the members do not necessarily interact with one another with some frequency. People who exist in the same place at the same time, but who do not interact or share a sense of identity — such as a bunch of people standing in line at Starbucks — are considered an **aggregate**, or a crowd. People who share similar characteristics but are not otherwise tied to one another in any way are considered a **category**.

An example of a category would be Millennials, the term given to all children born from approximately 1980 to 2000. Why are Millennials a category and not a group? Because while some of them may share a sense of identity, they do not, as a whole, interact frequently with each other.

Interestingly, people within an aggregate or category can become a group. During disasters, people in a

neighbourhood (an aggregate) who did not know each other might become friendly and depend on each other at the local shelter. After the disaster ends and the people go back to simply living near each other, the feeling of cohesiveness may last since they have all shared an experience. They might remain a group, practising emergency readiness, coordinating supplies for the next emergency, or taking turns caring for neighbours who need extra help. Similarly, there may be many groups within a single category. Consider teachers, for example. Within this category, groups may exist like teachers' unions, teachers who coach, or staff members who are involved with the school board.

Types of Groups

Sociologist Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929) suggested that groups can broadly be divided into two categories: **primary groups** and **secondary groups** (Cooley, 1909/1963). According to Cooley, primary groups play the most critical role in our lives. The primary group is usually fairly small and is made up of individuals who generally engage face-to-face in long-term, emotional ways. This group serves emotional needs: **expressive functions** rather than pragmatic ones. The primary group is usually made up of significant others — those individuals who have the most impact on our socialization. The best example of a primary group is the family.

Secondary groups are often larger and impersonal. They may also be task-focused and time-limited. These groups serve an **instrumental function** rather than an expressive one, meaning that their role is more goal- or task-oriented than emotional. A classroom or office can be an example of a secondary group. Neither primary nor secondary groups

are bound by strict definitions or set limits. In fact, people can move from one group to another. A graduate seminar, for example, can start as a secondary group focused on the class at hand, but as the students work together throughout their program, they may find common interests and strong ties that transform them into a primary group.

Peter Marsden (1987) refers to one's group of close social contacts as a **core discussion group**. These are individuals with whom you can discuss important personal matters or with whom you choose to spend your free time. Christakis and Fowler (2009) found that the average North American had four close, personal contacts. However, 12% of their sample had no close personal contacts of this sort, while 5% had more than eight close personal contacts. Half of the people listed in the core discussion group were characterized as friends, as might be expected, but the other half included family members, spouses, children, colleagues, and various professional consultants. Marsden's original research from the 1980s showed that the size of the core discussion group decreases as one ages, there was no difference in size between men and women, and those with a post-secondary degree had core discussion groups almost twice the size of those who had not completed high school.

Making Connections: Case Study

Best Friends She's Never Met

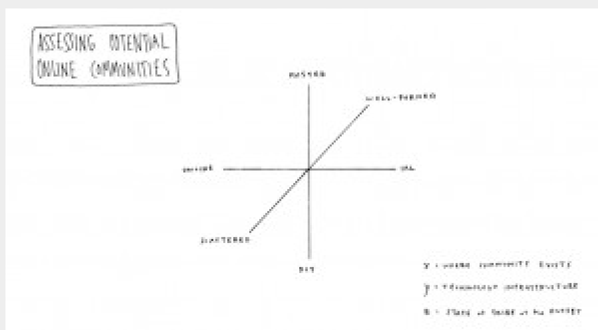

Figure 6.7. What are the parameters of online communities? [Long Description] (Image courtesy of 10ch/Flickr)

Writer Allison Levy worked alone. While she liked the freedom and flexibility of working from home, she sometimes missed having a community of coworkers, both for the practical purpose of brainstorming and the more social "water cooler" aspect. Levy did what many do in the internet age: she found a group of other writers online through a web forum. Over time, a group of approximately 20 writers, who all wrote for a similar audience, broke off from the larger forum and started a private invitation-only forum. While writers in general represent all genders, ages, and interests, it ended up being a collection of 20- and 30-something women who comprised the new forum — they all wrote fiction for children and young adults. At first, the

writers' forum was clearly a secondary group united by the members' professions and work situations. As Levy explained, "On the internet, you can be present or absent as often as you want. No one is expecting you to show up." It was a useful place to research information about different publishers, find out who had recently sold what, and track industry trends. But as time passed, Levy found it served a different purpose. Since the group shared other characteristics beyond their writing (such as age and gender), the online conversation naturally turned to matters such as childrearing, aging parents, health, and exercise. Levy found it was a sympathetic place to talk about any number of subjects, not just writing. Further, when people didn't post for several days, others expressed concern, asking whether anyone had heard from the missing writers. It reached a point where most members would tell the group if they were travelling or needed to be offline for a while. The group continued to share. One member on the site who was going through a difficult family illness wrote, "I don't know where I'd be without you women. It is so great to have a place to vent that I know isn't hurting anyone." Others shared similar sentiments. On the other hand, Zygmunt Bauman (2004) discusses the way electronically mediated groups like this online web forum tend to be frail communities, "easy to enter and easy to abandon." They do not substitute for the more tangible and solid "we" feeling of face to face forms of togetherness, which require commitment and risk. Virtual communities "create only an illusion of intimacy and a pretense of community.

They are not valid substitutes for ‘getting your knees under the table, seeing people’s faces, and having real conversation.'” They are a version of what Bauman calls **cloakroom communities**, places where one can hang one’s identity like a cloak for the duration of the “show”– i.e., one’s interest in the group’s theme and interactions — and then collect it again when it’s time to move on. So is this online writers’ forum a primary group? Most of these people have never met each other. They live in Hawaii, Australia, Minnesota, and across the world. They may never meet. Levy wrote recently to the group, saying, “Most of my ‘real-life’ friends and even my husband don’t really get the writing thing. I don’t know what I’d do without you.” Despite the distance and the lack of physical contact, the group clearly fills an expressive need. How are our needs for primary group intimacy altered in the age of electronic media?

Figure 6.8. Engineering and construction students gather around a job site. How do your academic interests define your in- and out-groups? (Photo courtesy of USACEpublicaffairs/flickr)

In-Groups and Out-Groups

One of the ways that groups can be powerful is through inclusion, and its inverse, exclusion. In-groups and out-groups are subcategories of primary and secondary groups that help identify this dynamic. Primary groups consist of both in-groups and out-groups, as do secondary groups. The feeling that one belongs in an elite or select group is a heady one, while the feeling of not being allowed in, or of being in competition with a group, can be motivating in a different way. Sociologist William Sumner (1840–1910) developed the concepts of **in-group** and **out-group** to explain this phenomenon (Sumner, 1906/1959). In short, an in-group is the group that an individual feels he or she belongs to, and believes it to be an integral part of who he or she is. An out-group, conversely, is a group someone doesn't belong to; often there may be a feeling of disdain

or competition in relation to an out-group. Sports teams, unions, and secret societies are examples of in-groups and out-groups; people may belong to, or be an outsider to, any of these.

While these affiliations can be neutral or even positive, such as the case of a team-sport competition, the concept of in-groups and out-groups can also explain some negative human behaviour, such as white supremacist movements like the Ku Klux Klan, or the bullying of gay or lesbian students. By defining others as “not like us” and inferior, in-groups can end up practicing ethnocentrism, racism, sexism, ageism, and heterosexism — manners of judging others negatively based on their culture, race, sex, age, or sexuality. Often, in-groups can form within a secondary group. For instance, a workplace can have cliques of people, from senior executives who play golf together, to engineers who write code together, to young singles who socialize after hours. While these in-groups might show favouritism and affinity for other in-group members, the overall organization may be unable or unwilling to acknowledge it. Therefore, it pays to be wary of the politics of in-groups, since members may exclude others as a form of gaining status within the group.

Making Connections: Social Policy and Debate

Bullying and Cyberbullying: How Technology Has Changed the Game

6.9. Cyberbullying is a 21st century problem. (Image courtesy of Brice Pinson/Flickr)

Most of us know that the old rhyme "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" is inaccurate. Words can hurt, and never is that more apparent than in instances of bullying. Bullying has always existed, often reaching extreme levels of cruelty in children and young adults. People at these stages of life are especially vulnerable to others' opinions of them, and they're deeply invested in their peer groups. Today, technology has ushered in a new era of this dynamic. Cyberbullying is the use of interactive media by one person to torment another, and it is on the rise. Cyberbullying can mean sending

threatening texts, harassing someone in a public forum (such as Facebook), hacking someone's account and pretending to be him or her, posting embarrassing images online, and so on. A study by the Cyberbullying Research Center found that 20% of middle-school students admitted to "seriously thinking about committing suicide" as a result of online bullying (Hinduja and Patchin, 2010). Whereas bullying face-to-face requires willingness to interact with your victim, cyberbullying allows bullies to harass others from the privacy of their homes without witnessing the damage firsthand. This form of bullying is particularly dangerous because it's widely accessible and therefore easier to accomplish. Cyberbullying, and bullying in general, made international headlines in 2012 when a 15-year-old girl, Amanda Todd, in Port Coquitlam, B.C., committed suicide after years of bullying by her peers, and internet sexual exploitation. A month before her suicide, she posted a YouTube video in which she recounted her story. It began in grade 7 when she had been lured to reveal her breasts in a webcam photo. A year later, when she refused to give an anonymous male "a show," the picture was circulated to her friends, family, and contacts on Facebook. Statistics Canada reported that 7% of internet users aged 18 and over have been cyberbullied, most commonly (73%) by receiving threatening or aggressive emails or text messages. Nine percent of adults who had a child at home aged 8 to 17 reported that at least one of their children had been cyberbullied. Two percent

reported that their child had been lured or sexually solicited online (Perreault, 2011).

In the aftermath of Amanda Todd's death, most provinces enacted strict guidelines and codes of conduct obliging schools to respond to cyberbullying and encouraging students to come forward to report victimization. In 2013, the federal government proposed Bill C-13 — the Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act — which would make it illegal to share an intimate image of a person without that person's consent. (Critics, however, note that the anti-cyberbullying provision in the bill is only a minor measure among many others that expand police powers to surveil all internet activity.) Will these measures change the behaviour of would-be cyberbullies? That remains to be seen. But hopefully communities can work to protect victims before they feel they must resort to extreme measures.

Reference Groups

Figure 6.10. Athletes are often viewed as a reference group for young people. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

A **reference group** is a group that people compare themselves to — it provides a standard of measurement. In Canadian society, peer groups are common reference groups. Children, teens, and adults pay attention to what their peers wear, what music they like, what they do with their free time — and they compare themselves to what they see. Most people have more than one reference group, so a middle-school boy might look not only at his classmates but also at his older brother's friends and see a different set of norms. And he might observe the antics of his favourite athletes for yet another set of behaviours.

Some other examples of reference groups can be one's church, synagogue, or mosque; one's cultural centre, workplace, or family gathering; and even one's parents. Often, reference groups convey competing messages. For instance, on television and in movies, young adults often

have wonderful apartments, cars, and lively social lives despite not holding a job. In music videos, young women might dance and sing in a sexually aggressive way that suggests experience beyond their years. At all ages, we use reference groups to help guide our behaviour and show us social norms. So how important is it to surround yourself with positive reference groups? You may never meet or know a particular reference group, but it may still impact and influence how you act. Identifying reference groups can help you understand the source of the social identities you aspire to or want to distance yourself from.

Making Connections: Sociology in the Real World

University: A World of In-Groups, Out-Groups, and Reference Groups

Figure 6.11. Aikido practice. Which university club would you fit into, if any? Campus club recruitment day offers students an opportunity to learn about these different groups. (Photo courtesy of Kesara Rathnayake/flickr)

For a student entering university, the sociological study of groups takes on an immediate and practical meaning. After all, when we arrive someplace new, most of us look around to see how well we fit in, or stand out, in the ways we want. This is a natural response to a reference group, and on a large campus, there can be many competing groups. Say you are a strong athlete who wants to play intramural sports, but your favourite musicians are a local punk band. You may find yourself engaged

with two very different reference groups.These reference groups can also become your in-groups or out-groups. For instance, different groups on campus might solicit you to join. Are there student-union-sponsored clubs at your school? Is there a Club Day when the student clubs set up tables and displays? The spelunking club, the Aikido club, the square dance club, the Conservative Party club, the Green Party club, the chess club, the jazz club, the kayak club, the tightrope walkers club, the peace and disarmament club, the French club, the young women in business club — enumerable clubs will try to convince students to join them.

While most clubs are pretty casual, along with a shared interest comes many subtle cues about what sorts of people will fit in and what sorts will not. While most campus groups refrain from insulting competing groups, there is a definite sense of an in-group versus an out-group. “Them?” a member might say, “They’re all right, but they are pretty geeky.” Or, “Only really straight people join that group.” This immediate categorization into in-groups and out-groups means that students must choose carefully, since whatever group they associate with will not just define their friends — it may also define types of people with whom they will not associate.

Figure 6.12. Cadets illustrate how strongly conformity can define groups. (Photo courtesy David Spender/flickr)

Large Groups

It is difficult to define exactly when a small group becomes a large group. One step might be when there are too many people to join in a simultaneous discussion. Another might be when a group joins with other groups as part of a movement that unites them. These larger groups may share a geographic space, such as Occupy Montreal or the People's Assembly of Victoria, or they might be spread out around the globe. The larger the group, the more attention it can garner, and the more pressure members can put toward whatever goal they wish to achieve. At the same time, the larger the group becomes, the more the risk grows for division and lack of cohesion.

One can think of three main social *forms* by which the *content* or activity of a group might be organized to prevent division and lack of cohesion: domination, cooperation, and competition. No matter what the organization is — a

hockey franchise, a workplace, or a social movement — the choice of one form of organization over the others has consequences in terms of the loyalty of members and the efficiency and effectiveness of the group in achieving its goals. In the form of **domination,** power is concentrated in the hands of leaders while the power of subordinates is severely restricted or constrained. In extreme versions of domination, like slavery, loyalty and efficiency are low because fear of coercion is the only motivation. In the form of **cooperation** on the other hand, power is distributed relatively equally and loyalty and efficiency are high because the group is based on mutual trust and high levels of commitment. In the form of **competition,** power is distributed unequally but there is latitude for movement based on the outcome of competition for prestige or money. Loyalty and efficiency are relatively high but only as long as the pay-offs are high.

In a Star Trek episode from the 1960s, "Patterns of Force," the crew of the Enterprise discover that a rogue historian has gone against the Prime Directive and reorganized a planet's culture on the basis of Nazi Germany. In order to address the planet's condition of chaos, he appealed to the "efficiency" of Nazism only to unleash a systematic persecution of one native group by the other. The ensuing drama in the episode reveals that the historian mistook domination for efficiency. As Spock puts it at the end of the episode, how could such a noted historian make the logical error of emulating the Nazis? Captain Kirk responds by saying that the failure was in putting so much power in the hands of a dictator, to which Dr. McCoy adds that power corrupts. In fact, as historians point out, Nazi Germany was startlingly *inefficient*, if only because all major decisions were filtered through Hitler himself who was notoriously unpredictable, hard to get

the attention of, and lacked any form of personal routine (Kershaw, 1998). The irony of the Star Trek episode is of course that the Starship Enterprise itself is organized on the formal basis of domination. It is only the *leadership style* that differs.

Group Leadership

Often, larger groups require some kind of leadership. In small, primary groups, leadership tends to be informal. After all, most families don't take a vote on who will rule the group, nor do most groups of friends. This is not to say that *de facto* leaders do not emerge, but formal leadership is rare.

In a series of small group studies at Harvard in the 1950s, Robert Bales (1970) studied the group processes that emerged around solving problems. No matter what the specific tasks were, he discovered that in all the *successful* groups — i.e., in the groups that were able to see their tasks through to the end without breaking up — three types of informal leader emerged: a task leader, an emotional leader, and a joker. The task leader was the person who stepped up to organize the group to solve the problem by setting goals and distributing tasks. The emotional leader was the person who helped the group resolve disagreements and frustrations when strong feelings emerged. The joker made fun and fooled around but also had the knack for releasing group tension by making jokes. These leadership roles emerged spontaneously in the small groups without planning or awareness that they were needed. They appear to simply be properties of task-oriented, face-to-face groups.

Making Connections: Case Study

Women Leaders and the Glass Ceiling

Figure 6.13. Green Party leader Elizabeth May stands out for her gender and her leadership style among federal party leaders. (Photo courtesy Itzafineday/flickr)

Elizabeth May, leader of the Green Party, was voted best parliamentarian of the year in 2012 and hardest-working parliamentarian in 2013. She stands out among the party leaders as both the only female and the only leader focused on changing leadership style. Among her proposals for changing leadership are reducing centralization and hierarchical control of party leaders, allowing MPs to vote freely, decreasing narrow political partisanship, engaging in cross-partisan collaboration, and restoring respect and decorum to House of Commons debates. The focus on a collaborative, non-conflictual approach to politics is

a component of her expressive leadership style, typically associated with female leadership qualities.However, as a female leader Elizabeth May is obliged to walk a tight line that does not generally apply to male politicians. According to some political analysts, women candidates face a paradox: they must be as tough as their male opponents on issues, such as foreign or economic policy, or risk appearing weak (Weeks, 2011). However, the stereotypical expectation of women as expressive leaders is still prevalent. Consider that Hillary Clinton’s popularity surged in her 2008 campaign for the U.S. Democratic presidential nomination after she cried on the campaign trail. It was enough for the *New York Times* to publish an editorial, “Can Hillary Cry Her Way Back to the White House?” (Dowd, 2008). Harsh, but her approval ratings soared afterwards. In fact, many compared it to how politically likable she was in the aftermath of President Clinton’s Monica Lewinsky scandal.

In the case of Elizabeth May, many pundits believed that she won the 2008 election leaders debate by being firm in her criticism of government policy, and being both intelligent and clear in her statements. (Notably, she was prevented from participating in the 2011 election leaders’ debate — perhaps for the same reasons.) She was able to articulate the rationale behind a national carbon tax to reduce greenhouse gases, whereas then Liberal leader Stéphane Dion seemed to struggle to explain his “Green Shift” policy. “We tax the pollution, and we take the taxes off families,” she said (Foot, 2008). The idea of

winning debates and defeating opponents in a hostile environment is regarded as a masculine virtue. At the same time, May is subject to criticisms that have to do with her femininity, in a way that male politicians are not subject to similar criticisms about their masculinity. Media tycoon Conrad Black called her "a frumpy, noisy, ill-favoured, half-deranged windbag" to which, May quipped, "He's right on one point: I certainly am frumpy. I don't have anything like Barbara Amiel's [Black's well-known journalist wife] sense of style. But on the whole, I figure being attacked by Conrad Black is in its own way an accolade in this country" (Allemang, 2009).

Despite the cleverness of May's retort, the pitfalls of her situation as a female leader reflect broader issues women confront in assuming leadership roles. Whereas women have been closing the gap with men in terms of workforce participation and educational attainment over the last decades, their average income has remained at approximately 70% of men's, and their representation in leadership roles (legislators, senior officials, and managers) has remained at 50% of men's (i.e., men are twice as likely as women to attain leadership roles in these professions than women). In terms of the representation of women in Parliament, cabinet, and political leadership, the figures are much lower at 15% (despite the fact that several provinces have had women as premiers) (McInturff, 2013).

One concept for describing the situation facing women's access to leadership positions is the **glass**

ceiling. Whereas most of the explicit barriers to women's achievement have been removed through legislative action, norms of gender equality, and affirmative action policies, women often get stuck at the level of middle management. There is a glass ceiling or invisible barrier that prevents them from achieving positions of leadership (Tannen, 1994). This is also reflected in gender inequality in income over time. Early in their careers men's and women's incomes are more or less equal but at mid-career, the gap increases significantly (McInturff, 2013).

Tannen argues that this barrier exists in part because of the different work styles of men and women, in particular conversational-style differences. Whereas men are very aggressive in their conversational style and their self-promotion, women are typically consensus builders who seek to avoid appearing bossy and arrogant. As a linguistic strategy of office politics, it is common for men to say "I" and claim personal credit in situations where women would be more likely to use "we" and emphasize teamwork. As it is men who are often in the positions to make promotion decisions, they interpret women's style of communication "as showing indecisiveness, inability to assume authority, and even incompetence" (Tannen, 1994).

Because of the inherent qualities in women's expressive leadership, which in many cases is more effective, their skills, merits, and achievements go unrecognized. In terms of political leadership, one political analyst said bluntly, "women don't succeed in politics — or other professions — unless they act

like men. The standard for running for national office remains distinctly male" (Weeks, 2011).

In secondary groups, leadership is usually more overt. There are often clearly outlined roles and responsibilities, with a chain of command to follow. Some secondary groups, like the army, have highly structured and clearly understood chains of command, and many lives depend on those. After all, how well could soldiers function in a battle if they had no idea whom to listen to or if different people were calling out orders? Other secondary groups, like a workplace or a classroom, also have formal leaders, but the styles and functions of leadership can vary significantly.

Leadership function refers to the main focus or goal of the leader. An **instrumental leader** is one who is goal-oriented and largely concerned with accomplishing set tasks. The stereotypical army general, barking orders and expecting immediate compliance would be an instrumental leader. In contrast, **expressive leaders** are more concerned with promoting emotional strength and health, and ensuring that people are supported. Social and religious leaders — rabbis, priests, imams, and directors of youth homes and social service programs — are often perceived as expressive leaders. There is a longstanding stereotype that men are more instrumental leaders and women are more expressive leaders. Although gender roles have changed, even today, many women and men who exhibit the opposite-gender manner can be seen as deviants and can encounter resistance. Former U.S. Secretary of State and presidential candidate Hillary Clinton provides an

example of how society reacts to a high-profile woman who is an instrumental leader. Despite the stereotype, Boatwright and Forrest (2000) have found that both men and women prefer leaders who use a combination of expressive and instrumental leadership.

Figure 6.14. This gag gift demonstrates how female leaders may be viewed if they violate social norms. [Long Description] *(Photo courtesy of istolethetv/ flickr)*

In addition to these leadership functions, there are three different **leadership styles. Democratic leaders** encourage group participation in all decision making. The

group is essentially cooperative. These leaders work hard to build consensus before choosing a course of action and moving forward. This type of leader is particularly common, for example, in a club where the members vote on which activities or projects to pursue. These leaders can be well-liked, but there is often a challenge that the work will proceed slowly since consensus building is time-consuming. A further risk is that group members might pick sides and entrench themselves into opposing factions rather than reaching a solution.

In contrast, a **laissez-faire leader** (French for “leave it alone”) is hands-off, allowing group members to self-manage and make their own decisions. An example of this kind of leader might be an art teacher who opens the art cupboard, leaves materials on the shelves, and tells students to help themselves and make some art. While this style can work well with highly motivated and mature participants who have clear goals and guidelines, it risks group dissolution and a lack of progress.

As the name suggests, **authoritarian leaders** issue orders and assigns tasks. These leaders are clear instrumental leaders with a strong focus on meeting goals. Often, entrepreneurs fall into this mould, like Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. Not surprisingly, this type of leader risks alienating the workers. There are times, however, when this style of leadership can be required. In different circumstances, each of these leadership styles can be effective and successful. Consider what leadership style you prefer. Why? Do you like the same style in different areas of your life, such as a classroom, a workplace, and a sports team?

Conformity

We all like to fit in to some degree. Likewise, when we want to stand out, we want to choose how we stand out and for what reasons. For example, a woman who loves cutting-edge fashion and wants to dress in thought-provoking new styles likely wants to be noticed within a framework of high fashion. She would not want people to think she was too poor to find proper clothes. **Conformity** is the extent to which an individual complies with group norms or expectations. As you might recall, we use reference groups to assess and understand how we should act, dress, and behave. Not surprisingly, young people are particularly aware of who conforms and who does not. A high school boy whose mother makes him wear ironed, button-down shirts might protest that he will look stupid — that everyone else wears T-shirts. Another high school boy might like wearing those shirts as a way of standing out. Recall Georg Simmel's analysis of the contradictory dynamics of fashion: it represents both the need to conform and the need to stand out. How much do you enjoy being noticed? Do you consciously prefer to conform to group norms so as not to be singled out? Are there people in your class or peer group who immediately come to mind when you think about those who do, and do not, want to conform?

A number of famous experiments in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s tested the propensity of individuals to conform to authority. We have already examined the Stanford Prison experiment in Chapter 2. Within days of beginning the simulated prison experiment, the random sample of university students proved themselves capable of conforming to the roles of prison guards and prisoners to

an extreme degree, even though the conditions were highly artificial (Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo, 1973).

Stanley Milgram conducted experiments in the 1960s to determine how structures of authority rendered individuals obedient (Milgram, 1963). This was shortly after the Adolf Eichmann war crime trial in which Eichmann claimed that he was just a bureaucrat following orders when he helped to organize the Holocaust. Milgram had experimental subjects administer, what they were led to believe were, electric shocks to a subject when the subject gave a wrong answer to a question. Each time a wrong answer was given, the experimental subject was told to increase the intensity of the shock. The experiment was supposed to be testing the relationship between punishment and learning, but the subject receiving the shocks was an actor. As the experimental subjects increased the amount of voltage, the actor began to show distress, eventually begging to be released. When the subjects became reluctant to administer more shocks, Milgram (wearing a white lab coat to underline his authority as a scientist) assured them that the actor would be fine and that the results of the experiment would be compromised if the subject did not continue. Seventy-one percent of the experimental subjects were willing to continue administering shocks, even beyond 285 volts, despite the actor crying out in pain, and the voltage dial labelled with warnings like “Danger: Severe shock.”

Making Connections: Sociological Research

Groupthink: Conforming to Expectations

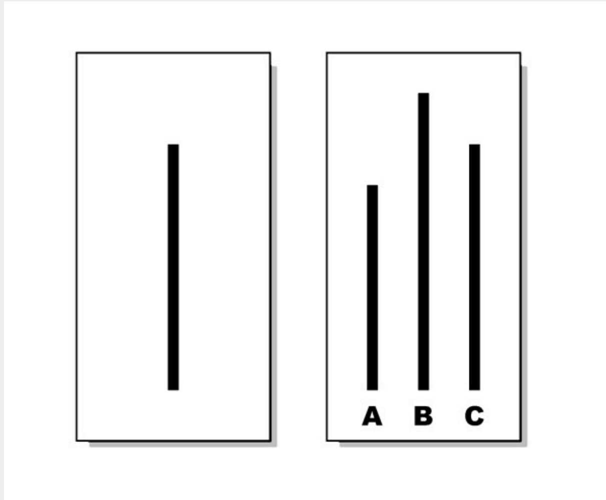

Figure 6.15. In the Asch conformity experiments, a subject had to determine which of the three lines on the left matched the length of the line on the right. (Photo courtesy of Nyenyec/Wikimedia Commons). http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asch_experiment.png

Psychologist Solomon Asch (1907–1996) conducted experiments that illustrated how great the pressure to conform is, specifically within a small group (1956). In 1951, he sat a small group of eight people around a table. Only one of the people sitting there was the true experimental subject; the rest were actors or associates of the experimenter.

However, the subject was led to believe that the others were all, like him, people brought in for an experiment in visual judgments. The group was shown two cards, the first card with a single vertical line, and the second card with three vertical lines differing in length. The experimenter polled the group, asking each participant, one at a time, which line on the second card matched up with the line on the first card.However, this was not really a test of visual judgment. Rather, it was Asch's study on the pressures of conformity. He was curious to see what the effect of multiple wrong answers would be on the subject, who presumably was able to tell which lines matched. In order to test this, Asch had each planted respondent answer in a specific way. The subject was seated in such a way that he had to hear almost everyone else's answers before it was his turn. Sometimes the non-subject members would unanimously choose an answer that was clearly wrong.

So what was the conclusion? Asch found that 37 out of 50 test subjects responded with an "obviously erroneous" answer at least once. When faced by a unanimous wrong answer from the rest of the group, the subject conformed to a mean of four of the staged answers. Asch revised the study and repeated it, wherein the subject still heard the staged wrong answers, but was allowed to write down his answer rather than speak it aloud. In this version, the number of examples of conformity — giving an incorrect answer so as not to contradict the group — fell by two-thirds. He also found that group size had

an impact on how much pressure the subject felt to conform.

The results showed that speaking up when only one other person gave an erroneous answer was far more common than when five or six people defended the incorrect position. Finally, Asch discovered that people were far more likely to give the correct answer in the face of near-unanimous consent if they had a single ally. If even one person in the group also dissented, the subject conformed only a quarter as often. Clearly, it was easier to be a minority of two than a minority of one.

Asch concluded that there are two main causes for conformity: people want to be liked by the group or they believe the group is better informed than they are. He found his study results disturbing. To him, they revealed that intelligent, well-educated people would, with very little coaxing, go along with an untruth. This phenomenon is known as **groupthink**, the tendency to conform to the attitudes and beliefs of the group despite individual misgivings. He believed this result highlighted real problems with the education system and values in our society (Asch, 1956).

What would you do in Asch's experiment? Would you speak up? What would help you speak up and what would discourage you?

6.3. Networks

Dyads, Triads, and Social Networks

Figure 6.16. A visual representation of network connections formed through Facebook showing dense nodes of tightly interconnected friends and outliers. (Image courtesy of David Jones/Flickr)

A small group is typically one where the collection of people is small enough that all members of the group know each other and share simultaneous interaction, such as a nuclear family, a dyad, or a triad. Georg Simmel wrote extensively about the difference between a **dyad**, or two-member group, and a **triad**, a three-member group (Simmel, 1908/1950). No matter what the content of the groups is — business, friendship, family, teamwork, etc. — the dynamic or *formal* qualities of the groups differ simply by virtue of the number of individuals involved. The *forms of sociation* available to individuals differ significantly for dyads and triads, no matter the specific reason (*content*) for the sociation (e.g., friendship, love, business, leisure, etc.). The social dynamic inheres in the number of individuals,

no matter who they are or their specific interests. This insight forms the basis of the analysis of networks, which are another of the major meso-level social phenomena examined in sociology.

In a dyad, if one person withdraws, the group can no longer exist. Examples include a divorce, which effectively ends the "group" of the married couple, or two best friends never speaking again. Neither of the two members can hide what he or she has done behind the group, nor hold the group responsible for what he or she has failed to do.

In a triad, however, the dynamic is quite different. If one person withdraws, the group lives on. A triad has a different set of relationships. If there are three in the group, two-against-one dynamics can develop and the potential exists for a majority opinion on any issue. At the same time, the relationships in a triad cannot be as close as in a dyad because a third person always intrudes. Where a group of two is both closer and more unstable than a group of three, because it rests on the immediate, ongoing reciprocity of the two members, a group of three is able to attain a sense of super-personal life, independent of the members.

The difference between a dyad and a triad is an example of network analysis. A **social network** is a collection of people who exchange resources (emotional, informational, financial, etc.) tied together by a specific configuration of connections. They can be characterized by the number of people involved, as in the dyad and triad, but also in terms of their *structures* (who is connected to whom) and *functions* (what resources flow across ties). The particular configurations of the connections determine how networks are able to do more things and different things than individuals acting on their own could. Networks have this

effect, regardless of the content of the connections or persons involved.

For example, if one person phones 50 people one after the other to see who could come out to play ball hockey on Wednesday night, it would take a long time to work through the phone list. The *structure* of the network would be one in which the telephone caller has an individual connection with each of the 50 players, but the players themselves do not necessarily have any connections with each other. There is only one node in the network. On the other hand, if the telephone caller phones five key (or nodal) individuals, who would then call five individuals, and so on, then the telephone calling would be accomplished much more quickly. A telephone tree like this has a different network structure than the single telephone caller model does and can therefore accomplish the task much more efficiently and quickly. Of course the responsibility is also shared so there are more opportunities for the communication network to break down.

Network analysis is interesting because much of social life can be understood as operating outside of either formal organizations or traditional group structures. Social media like Twitter or Facebook connect people through networks. One's posts are seen by friends, but also by friends of friends. The revolution in Tunisia in 2010–2011 was aided by social media networks, which were able to disseminate an accurate, or alternate, account of the events as they unfolded, even while the official media characterized the unrest as vandalism and terrorism (Zuckerman, 2011). On the other hand, military counterinsurgency strategies trace cell phone connections to model the networks of insurgents in asymmetrical or guerilla warfare. Increased densities of network connections indicate the centrality of key insurgents and the ability of insurgents to mount

coordinated attacks (Department of the Army, 2006). The amorphous nature of global capital and the formation of a global capitalist class consciousness can also be analyzed by mapping interlocking directorates; namely, the way institutionalized social networks are established between banks and corporations in different parts of the world through shared board members. Network analysis reveals the break up of national-based corporate elite networks, and the establishment of a unified and coordinated transatlantic capitalist class (Carroll, 2010).

Christakis and Fowler (2009) argue that social networks are influential in a wide range of social aspects of life, including political opinions, weight gain, and happiness. They develop Stanley Milgram's claim that there is only six degrees of separation between any two individuals on Earth by adding that in a network, it can be demonstrated that there are also three degrees of influence. That is, one is not only influenced by one's immediate friends and social contacts, but by their friends, and their friends' friends. For example, an individual's chance of becoming obese increases 57% if a friend becomes obese; it increases by 20% if it is a friend's friend who becomes obese; and it increases 10% if it is a friend's friend's friend who becomes obese. Beyond the third degree of separation, there is no measurable influence.

6.4. Formal Organizations

A complaint of modern life is that society is dominated by large and impersonal secondary organizations. From schools to businesses to health care to government, these organizations are referred to as **formal organizations**. A formal organization is a large secondary group deliberately organized to achieve its goals efficiently. Typically, formal

organizations are highly bureaucratized. The term **bureaucracy** refers to what Max Weber termed "an ideal type" of formal organization (1922/1946). In its sociological usage, "ideal" does not mean "best"; it refers to a general model that describes a collection of characteristics, or a type that could describe most examples of the item under discussion. For example, if your professor were to tell the class to picture a car in their minds, most students will picture a car that shares a set of characteristics: four wheels, a windshield, and so on. Everyone's car will be somewhat different, however. Some might picture a two-door sports car while others might picture an SUV. It is possible for a car to have three wheels instead of four. However, the general idea of the car that everyone shares is the ideal type. Bureaucracies are similar. While each bureaucracy has its own idiosyncratic features, the way each is deliberately organized to achieve its goals efficiently shares a certain consistency. We will discuss bureaucracies as an ideal type of organization.

Types of Formal Organizations

Figure 6.17. Cub and Guide troops and correctional facilities are both formal organizations. (Photo (a) courtesy of Paul Hourigan/ Hamilton Spectator, 1983; Photo (b) courtesy of CxOxS/flickr)

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1975) posited that formal organizations fall into three categories. **Normative organizations**, also called **voluntary organizations**, are based on shared interests. As the name suggests, joining them is voluntary and typically people join because they find membership rewarding in an intangible way. Compliance to the group is maintained through moral control. The Audubon Society or a ski club are examples of normative organizations. **Coercive organizations** are groups that one must be coerced, or pushed, to join. These may include prison, the military, or a rehabilitation centre. Compliance is maintained through force and coercion. Goffman (1961) states that most coercive organizations are **total institutions**. A total institution is one in which inmates live a controlled life apart from the rest of society, and in which total resocialization takes place. The third type are **utilitarian organizations**, which, as the name suggests, are joined because of the need for a specific

material reward. High school or a workplace would fall into this category — one joined in pursuit of a diploma, the other in order to make money. Compliance is maintained through remuneration and rewards.

Table 6.1. Etzioni's Three Types of Formal Organizations (Source: Etzioni, 1975)

	Normative or Voluntary	**Coercive**	**Utilitarian**
Benefit of Membership	Non-material benefit	Corrective or disciplinary benefit	Material benefit
Type of Membership	Volunteer basis	Obligatory basis	Contractual basis
Feeling of Connectedness	Shared affinity	Coerced affinity	Pragmatic affinity

Bureaucracies

Bureaucracies can be described as an **ideal type** of formal organization. This does not mean that they are ideal in an ethical sense but that the logic of their components can be laid out according to an idealized model. Not all formal organizations or bureaucracies will necessarily conform to the ideal type. Pioneer sociologist Max Weber (1922/1946) popularly characterized bureaucracy through an ideal type description as having a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labour, explicit rules, and impersonality. Bureaucracies were the basic form of rational efficient organization, yet people often complain about bureaucracies, declaring them slow, rule-bound, difficult to navigate, and unfriendly. Let us take a look at terms that

define bureaucracy as an ideal type of formal organization to understand what they mean.

Hierarchy of authority refers to the aspect of bureaucracy that places one individual or office in charge of another, who in turn must answer to her own superiors. For example, if you are an employee at Walmart, your shift manager assigns you tasks. Your shift manager answers to the store manager, who must answer to the regional manager, and so on in a chain of command up to the CEO, who must answer to the board members, who in turn answer to the stockholders. There is a clear chain of authority that enables each person to know who he or she is answerable to or responsible for, which is necessary for the organization to make and comply with decisions.

A **clear division of labour** refers to the fact that within a bureaucracy, each individual has a specialized task to perform. For example, psychology professors teach psychology, but they do not attempt to provide students with financial aid forms. In this case, it is a clear and commonsensical division. But what about in a restaurant where food is backed up in the kitchen and a hostess is standing nearby texting on her phone? Her job is to seat customers, not to deliver food. Is this a smart division of labour?

The existence of **explicit rules** refers to the way in which rules are outlined, written down, and standardized. There is a continuous organization of official functions bound by rules. For example, at your college or university, student guidelines are contained within the student handbook. As technology changes and campuses encounter new concerns like cyberbullying, identity theft, and other issues, organizations are scrambling to ensure their explicit rules cover these emerging topics.

Bureaucracies are also characterized by **impersonality**,

which takes personal feelings out of professional situations. Each office or position exists independently of its incumbent, and clients and workers receive equal treatment. This characteristic grew, to some extent, out of a desire to eliminate the potential for nepotism, backroom deals, and other types of “irrational” favouritism, simultaneously protecting customers and others served by the organization. Impersonality is an attempt by large formal organizations to protect their members. However, the result is often that personal experience is disregarded. For example, you may be late for work because your car broke down, but the manager at Pizza Hut doesn’t care why you are late, only that you are late.

Finally, bureaucracies are, in theory at least, **meritocracies**, meaning that hiring and promotion are based on proven and documented skills, rather than on nepotism or random choice. In order to get into graduate school, you need to have an impressive transcript. In order to become a lawyer and represent clients, you must graduate from law school and pass the provincial bar exam. Of course, there is a popular image of bureaucracies that they reward conformity and sycophancy rather than skill or merit. How well do you think established meritocracies identify talent? Wealthy families hire tutors, interview coaches, test-prep services, and consultants to help their children get into the best schools. This starts as early as kindergarten in New York City, where competition for the most highly regarded schools is especially fierce. Are these schools, many of which have copious scholarship funds that are intended to make the school more democratic, really offering all applicants a fair shake?

Max Weber (1922/1946) summarizes:

> Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction

> of friction and of material and personal costs — these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration … Bureaucratization offers above all the optimum possibility for carrying through the principle of specializing administrative functions according to purely objective considerations . . . The 'objective' discharge of business primarily means a discharge of business according to calculable rules and 'without regard for persons.'

There are several positive aspects of bureaucracies. They are intended to improve efficiency, ensure equal opportunities, and increase efficiency. There are times when rigid hierarchies are needed. However, there is also a clear component of *irrationality* within the rational organization of bureaucracies. Firstly, bureaucracies create conditions of bureaucratic alienation in which workers cannot find meaning in the repetitive, standardized nature of the tasks they are obliged to perform. As Max Weber put it, the "individual bureaucrat cannot squirm out of the apparatus in which he is harnessed… He is only a single cog in an ever-moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march" (1922/1946). Secondly, bureaucracies can lead to bureaucratic inefficiency and ritualism (red tape). They can focus on rules and regulations to the point of undermining the organization's goals and purpose. Thirdly, bureaucracies have a tendency toward inertia. You may have heard the expression "trying to turn a tanker around mid-ocean," which refers to the difficulties of changing direction with something large and set in its ways. Inertia means bureaucracies focus on perpetuating themselves rather than effectively accomplishing or re-evaluating the tasks they were designed to achieve. Finally, as Robert Michels (1911/1949) suggested, bureaucracies are characterized by the **iron law of oligarchy** in which the organization is ruled

by a few elites. The organization serves to promote the self-interest of oligarchs and insulate them from the needs of the public or clients.

Remember that many of our bureaucracies grew large at the same time that our school model was developed — during the Industrial Revolution. Young workers were trained and organizations were built for mass production, assembly-line work, and factory jobs. In these scenarios, a clear chain of command was critical. Now, in the information age, this kind of rigid training and adherence to protocol can actually decrease both productivity and efficiency. Today's workplace requires a faster pace, more problem solving, and a flexible approach to work. Smaller organizations are often more innovative and competitive because they have flatter hierarchies and more democratic decision making, which invites more communication, greater networking, and increased individual participation of members. Too much adherence to explicit rules and a division of labour can leave an organization behind. Unfortunately, once established, bureaucracies can take on a life of their own. As Max Weber said, "Once it is established, bureaucracy is among those social structures which are the hardest to destroy" (1922/1946).

Figure 6.18. This McDonald's storefront in Egypt shows the McDonaldization of society. (Photo courtesy of s_w_ellis/flickr)

The McDonaldization of Society

The **McDonaldization** of society (Ritzer, 1994) refers to the increasing presence of the fast-food business model in common social institutions. This business model includes efficiency (the division of labour), predictability, calculability, and control (monitoring). For example, in your average chain grocery store, people at the cash register check out customers while stockers keep the shelves full of goods, and deli workers slice meats and cheese to order (efficiency). Whenever you enter a store within that grocery chain, you receive the same type of goods, see the same store organization, and find the same brands at the same prices (predictability). You will find that goods are sold by the kilogram, so that you can weigh your fruit and vegetable purchases rather than simply guessing at the price for that bag of onions, while the employees use a time card to calculate their hours and receive overtime pay (calculability). Finally, you will notice that all store employees are wearing a uniform (and usually a name tag) so that they can be easily identified. There are security

cameras to monitor the store, and some parts of the store, such as the stockroom, are generally considered off-limits to customers (control).

While McDonaldization has resulted in improved profits and an increased availability of various goods and services to more people worldwide, it has also reduced the variety of goods available in the marketplace while rendering available products uniform, generic, and bland. Think of the difference between a mass-produced shoe and one made by a local cobbler, between a chicken from a family-owned farm versus a corporate grower, or a cup of coffee from the local roaster instead of one from a coffee-shop chain. Ritzer also notes that the rational systems, as efficient as they are, are irrational in that they become more important than the people working within them, or the clients being served by them. "Most specifically, irrationality means that rational systems are unreasonable systems. By that I mean that they deny the basic humanity, the human reason, of the people who work within or are served by them." (Ritzer, 1994)

Making Connections: Sociological Research

Secrets of the McJob

We often talk about bureaucracies disparagingly, and no organizations have taken more heat than fast-food restaurants. The book and movie *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* by Eric Schossler (2001) paints an ugly

picture of what goes in, what goes on, and what comes out of fast-food chains. From their environmental impact to their role in the U.S. obesity epidemic, fast-food chains are connected to numerous societal ills. Furthermore, working at a fast-food restaurant is often disparaged, and even referred to dismissively, as a McJob rather than a real job.

But business school professor Jerry Newman (2007) went undercover and worked behind the counter at seven fast-food restaurants to discover what really goes on there. His book, *My Secret Life on the McJob*, documents his experience. Newman found, unlike Schossler, that these restaurants have much good alongside the bad. Specifically, he asserted that the employees were honest and hard-working, the management was often impressive, and the jobs required a lot more skill and effort than most people imagined. In the book, Newman cites a pharmaceutical executive who states that a fast-food service job on an applicant's résumé is a plus because it indicates the employee is reliable and can handle pressure.

In an earlier work, *Making Fast Food: From the Frying Pan into the Fryer,* Canadian Sociologist Ester Reiter (1991), acknowledges the hard work and worker's need to match the speed-ups and pressures of the fast food environment, however, she also traces how this is much like other long-standing forms of factory work. Most damningly, she centres the way that fast-food companies care little about turnover rates or the well-being of their

employees, ruthlessly opposing unionization. The effects of this organizational model are felt well into the larger labour market as wages are driven down, families and communities.

So what do you think? Are these McJobs and the organizations that offer them still serving a role in the economy and people's careers? Or are they dead-end jobs that typify all that is negative about large bureaucracies? Have you ever worked in one? Would you?

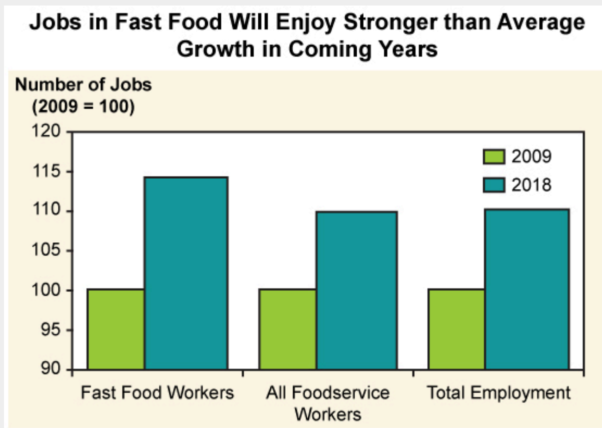

Figure 6.19. Fast-food jobs are expected to grow more quickly than most industries. (Graph courtesy of U.S. Department of Labor)

Summary

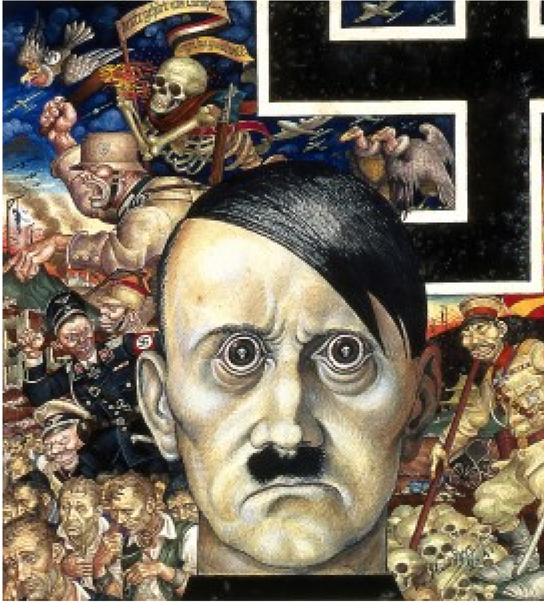

Figure 6.20. Polish-Jewish artist Arthur Szyk (1894-1951). Anti-Christ (1942). (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons).

We end this chapter with a sociological analysis of the Holocaust to indicate the significance of some of the sociological dynamics of group behaviour. In sociology the group is always more than the sum of its parts. We have examined this with regard to how individuals change their behaviour when they are around others under various circumstances. In chapter 1 we noted how being in a crowd affected people very differently during the exuberance of the 2010 Vancouver Olympics and the riots of the 2011 Stanley Cup final. In this chapter we have seen how being a member of a **social group** influences people to conform or to choose in-group and out-group attachments. Depending on where one is located in a **social network**, individuals

are enabled, to a lesser or greater degree, to share and receive resources of various sorts from friends, friends of friends, and friends of friends of friends, in ways which are also deeply influential. Formal organizations structure the relationships between individuals to be able to achieve organizational goals that individuals could not achieve on their own. How does the insight that the group is more than the sum of the parts help us to understand how the Holocaust was possible?

The Holocaust (literally "whole burnt") refers to the the systematic program of extermination of European Jews and Gypsies (Roma) by Nazis between 1941 and 1945. During this period, it is estimated that 6,000,000 Jews and Gypsies were killed by the Nazis. How was it possible? It is difficult to imagine how this event could merely be the product of isolated individuals entering into interaction. It needs to be understood at the level of group behaviour.

Clearly, a significant minority of the population of Germany in the 1930s were anti-Semitic, but even among these individuals the concept of the Final Solution would have been unthinkable. Often, the explanation that has been put forward is that the Nazi era in 20th century Germany was a temporary aberration, a period of mass irrationality and social breakdown; an imposition of racism, hatred, and violence on the population by a megalomaniacal madman — Adolf Hitler — devoted to world domination. This explanation has an element of truth in that the combination of war reparations imposed on Germany after the First World War, the hyper-inflation of the 1920s, and the onset of a global capitalist crisis in the 1930s (the Great Depression) created conditions of instability and widespread desperation. Desperate people do not think clearly.

However, the sociological analysis of the rise of the

Nazis and the implementation of the Holocaust is far more discomforting. The Nazis were democratically elected into power not once but twice (in 1932 and 1933); the suspension of the Weimar constitution and the institution of emergency rule were enacted through legal, constitutional means; the imposition of totalitarian rule and the internment of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, the disabled, and political opponents were enabled by the voluntary contributions of ordinary citizens; and perhaps most perplexingly, all of this was accomplished in one of the most modern, cultured, technologically advanced, and rational societies of Europe. Explanations of the behaviour of the perpetrators that relies on the idea that they were sadists, criminals, or madmen have been discredited for lack of evidence. While there were clearly a few individuals in the camps known for their sadistic cruelty, "by conventional clinical criteria no more than 10 per cent of the SS could be considered 'abnormal'" (Kren and Rappoport, quoted in Bauman, 1989).

As Zygmunt Bauman (1989) has argued, the Holocaust could not have occurred without the existence of modern, rational forms of social organization:

> The Holocaust was not an irrational outflow of the not-yet-fully-eradicated residues of pre-modern barbarity. It was a legitimate resident in the house of modernity; indeed, one who would not be at home in any other house (Bauman, 1989).

Bauman argues in particular that it was the rational, efficient organization of the Nazi bureaucracy which, once the problem of a *Judenfrei* Germany was posed by Hitler — a Germany "free" of Jews — enabled a series of solutions to be examined and rejected before the Final Solution was settled on. Bureaucracy also provided the

three conditions which made overcoming individual emotional and moral aversion to the mass killing possible. Firstly, the violence was *authorized* according to correct bureaucratic procedures and hierarchical channels of command. Secondly, the violence was *routinized* by the rule-bound practices and clear division of labour of bureaucratic organization. Thirdly, the victims of the violence were *dehumanized* through, not only ideological propaganda and media spin, but also the impersonality inherent in bureaucracy (Bauman, 1989).

The point is that the Holocaust was the product of the same ordinary sociological phenomena that operate in society today, including the formation of in-groups and out-groups, conformity to structures of authority, groupthink, and the 'rational' structure of bureaucratic organizational forms. Therefore, an answer to the question about how the Holocaust was possible must begin with a study of Simmel's *forms* of collective behaviour. Why do individuals conform to the will of collectivities even when this means overcoming strong personal moral convictions or rational thinking? An answer to this problem is difficult to get at if we begin simply from a micro-level perspective of interpersonal interactions. We need to examine the properties of groups at meso- and macro-levels to understand how the effect of the whole is more than the sum of the individual parts.

Key Terms

aggregate: A collection of people who exist in the same place at the same time, but who don't interact or share a sense of identity.

authoritarian leader: A leader who issues orders and assigns tasks.

bureaucracy: A formal organization characterized by a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labour, explicit rules, and impersonality.

category: People who share similar characteristics but who are not connected in any way.

clear division of labour: The structuring of work in a bureaucracy such that each individual has a specialized task to perform.

coercive organization: Organization that people do not voluntarily join, such as prison or a mental hospital.

conformity: The extent to which an individual complies with group or societal norms.

contents: The specific drives, needs, purposes, or interests of individuals that motivate them to interact with others.

core discussion group: The group of close, personal contacts with whom one confides on personal matters and with whom one chooses to spend free time.

democratic leader: A leader who encourages group participation and consensus-building before acting.

dyad: A two-member group.

explicit rules: The types of rules in a bureaucracy; rules that are outlined, recorded, and standardized.

expressive function: A group function that serves an emotional need.

expressive leader: A leader who is concerned with process and with ensuring everyone's emotional well-being.

formal organizations: Large, impersonal organizations.

formal sociology: The study of how specific social contents are organized into regular, coordinated social forms.

forms: The patterns of behaviour that guide individuals' actions in different social settings.

glass ceiling: An invisible barrier that prevents women from achieving positions of leadership.

group: Refers to any collection of at least two people who interact with some frequency and who share a sense that their identity is somehow aligned with the group.

groupthink: The tendency to conform to the attitudes and beliefs of the group despite individual misgivings.

hierarchy of authority: A clear chain of command found in a bureaucracy.

ideal type: An abstract model of a recurring social phenomenon that describes the form and logical relation of components.

impersonality: The absence of personal feelings from a professional situation.

in-group: A group a person belongs to and feels is an integral part of his or her identity.

instrumental function: Orientation toward a task or goal.

instrumental leader: A leader who is goal oriented with a primary focus on accomplishing tasks.

iron law of oligarchy: The theory that an organization is ruled by a few elites rather than through collaboration.

laissez-faire leader: A hands-off leader who allows members of the group to make their own decisions.

leadership function: The main focus or goal of a leader.

leadership style: The style a leader uses to achieve goals or elicit action from group members.

McDonaldization: The increasing presence of the fast-food business model in common social institutions.

macro-level of analysis: A research focus on the properties of large scale, society-wide, social interactions.

meso-level of analysis: A research focus on the characteristics of networks, groups, and organizations.

micro-level of analysis: A research focus on the social dynamics of small groups and face-to-face interaction.

meritocracy: A bureaucracy where membership and advancement are based on merit as shown through proven and documented skills.

normative or voluntary organizations: Organizations that people join to pursue shared interests or because they provide intangible rewards.

out-group: A group that an individual is not a member of and may compete with.

primary groups: Small, informal groups of people who are closest to us.

pure sociability: The residual qualities like pleasure that people experience from the mere fact of being together, regardless of the *content* of the interaction.

reference groups: Groups to which an individual compares herself or himself.

secondary groups: Larger and more impersonal groups that are task-focused and time-limited.

social network: A collection of people tied together by a specific configuration of connections.

total institution: An organization in which participants

live a controlled life and in which total resocialization occurs.

tragedy of culture: The tendency for cultural creations to detach themselves from lived experience and become increasingly complex, specialized, alienating, or oppressive.

triad: A three-member group.

utilitarian organization: An organization that people join to fill a specific material need.

Section Summary

6.1. How is society possible?

Georg Simmel argues that "there is no such thing as society as such" because "society" is nothing except for the ongoing interactions between individuals at any particular moment. Nevertheless the *forms* of interaction can be analyzed independently of the *contents* of interaction. Whether at a micro, meso, or macro level of analysis, the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

6.2. Groups

Groups largely define how we think of ourselves. There are two main types of groups: primary and secondary. As the names suggest, the primary group is the long-term, complex one. People use groups as standards of comparison to define themselves—as both who they are and who they are not. Sometimes groups can be used to exclude people or as a tool that strengthens prejudice.

The size and dynamic of a group greatly affects how members act. Primary groups rarely have formal leaders, although there can be informal leadership. Groups

generally are considered large when there are too many members for a simultaneous discussion.

In secondary groups, there are two types of leadership functions, with expressive leaders focused on emotional health and wellness, and instrumental leaders more focused on results. Further, there are different leadership styles: democratic leaders, authoritarian leaders, and laissez-faire leaders.

Within a group, conformity is the extent to which people want to go along with the norm. A number of experiments have illustrated how strong the drive to conform can be. It is worth considering real-life examples of how conformity and obedience can lead people to ethically and morally suspect acts.

6.3. Networks

Social networks are collections of people tied together by a specific configuration of connections. The structure and function of the connections determine what the network is capable of and how it influences its members.

6.4. Formal Organizations

Large organizations fall into three main categories: normative/voluntary, coercive, and utilitarian. We live in a time of contradiction: while the pace of change and technology are requiring people to be more nimble and less bureaucratic in their thinking, large bureaucracies like hospitals, schools, and governments are more hampered than ever by their organizational format. At the same time, the past few decades have seen the development of a trend to bureaucratize and conventionalize local institutions. Increasingly, Main Streets across the country resemble each other; instead of a Bob's Coffee Shop and Jane's Hair Salon there is a Dunkin Donuts and a Supercuts. This trend has been referred to as the McDonaldization of society.

Section Quiz

[6.1. How is society possible?]

1. Which of the following is an example of a social phenomenon that would be best understood at the meso-level of analysis?

1. The gender differences in facial expressions of couples on first dates.
2. The impact of social class on voter preference.
3. The informal networks that form within bureaucratic structures.
4. The transition effect of new technologies on knowledge transfer between First World and Third World nations.

2. An example of a social *form* would be:

1. An employment application.
2. Sexual desire.
3. A hockey player.
4. Cooperation.

[6.2. Groups]

3. What role do secondary groups play in society?

1. They are transactional, task-based, and short-term, filling practical needs.
2. They provide a social network that allows people to compare themselves to others.
3. The members give and receive emotional support.

4. They allow individuals to challenge their beliefs and prejudices.

4. When a high school student gets teased by her basketball team for receiving an academic award, she is dealing with competing _______________.

1. Primary groups
2. Out-groups
3. Reference groups
4. Secondary groups

5. Which of the following is NOT an example of an in-group?

1. The Ku Klux Klan
2. A university club
3. A synagogue
4. A high school

6. What is a group whose values, norms, and beliefs come to serve as a standard for one's own behaviour?

1. Secondary group
2. Formal organization
3. Reference group
4. Primary group

7. A parent who is worrying over her teenager's dangerous and self-destructive behaviour and low self-esteem may wish to look at her child's _______________.

1. Reference group

2. In-group
3. Out-group
4. All of the above

8. Who is more likely to be an expressive leader?

1. The sales manager of a fast-growing cosmetics company
2. A high school teacher at a youth correctional facility
3. The director of a summer camp for chronically ill children
4. A manager at a fast-food restaurant

9. Which of the following is NOT an appropriate group for democratic leadership?

1. A fire station
2. A college classroom
3. A high school prom committee
4. A homeless shelter

10. In Asch's study on conformity, what contributed to the ability of subjects to resist conforming?

1. A very small group of witnesses
2. The presence of an ally
3. The ability to keep one's answer private
4. All of the above

11. Which type of group leadership has a communication pattern that flows from the top down?

1. Authoritarian
2. Democratic
3. Laissez-faire
4. Expressive

6.3. Networks

12. Two people who have just had a baby have turned from a ________ to a __________.

1. Primary group; secondary group
2. Dyad; triad
3. Couple; family
4. De facto group; nuclear family

6.4. Formal Organizations

13. Which is NOT an example of a normative organization?

1. A book club
2. A church youth group
3. A People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) protest group
4. A study hall

14. Which of these is an example of a total institution?

1. Jail
2. High school
3. Political party
4. A gym

15. Why do people join utilitarian organizations?

1. Because they feel an affinity with others there
2. Because they receive a tangible benefit from joining
3. Because they have no choice
4. Because they feel pressured to do so

16. Which of the following is NOT a characteristic of bureaucracies?

1. Coercion to join
2. Hierarchy of authority
3. Explicit rules
4. Division of labour

17. What are some of the intended positive aspects of bureaucracies?

1. Increased productivity
2. Increased efficiency
3. Equal treatment for all
4. All of the above

18. What is an advantage of the McDonaldization of society?

1. There is more variety of goods.
2. There is less theft.
3. There is more worldwide availability of goods.
4. There is more opportunity for businesses.

19. What is a disadvantage of the McDonaldization of society?

1. There is less variety of goods.
2. There is an increased need for employees with postgraduate degrees.
3. There is less competition so prices are higher.
4. There are fewer jobs so unemployment increases.

[Quiz answers at end of chapter]

Short Answer

6.1. How is society possible?

1. Choose an example of a social activity like hockey. How would this activity be approached at a micro, meso, and macro level of analysis?
2. Think of a recent social encounter in which you interacted with one or more people. What purely individual drives, needs, purposes, or interests (i.e., *contents*) drew you together? Can you describe the characteristics of the *form* of the interaction (e.g., cooperation, competition, division of labour, polite, informal, etc.)? Were there a set of implicit rules that structured the encounter? Can you list them?

6.2 Groups

1. How has technology changed your primary

groups and secondary groups? Do you have more (and separate) primary groups due to online connectivity? Do you believe that someone, like Levy, can have a true primary group made up of people she has never met? Why or why not?

2. Compare and contrast two different political groups or organizations, such as the Occupy (Canada) and Tea Party movements (in the United States) or one of the Arab Spring uprisings. How do the groups differ in terms of leadership, membership, and activities? How do the group's goals influence participants? Are any of them in-groups (and have they created out-groups)? Explain your answer.
3. The concept of hate crimes has been linked to in-groups and out-groups. Can you think of an example where people have been excluded or tormented due to this kind of group dynamic?
4. Think of a scenario where an authoritarian leadership style would be beneficial. Explain. What are the reasons it would work well? What are the risks?
5. Describe a time you were led by a leader using, in your opinion, a leadership style that didn't suit the situation. When and where was it? What could she or he have done better?
6. Imagine you are in Asch's study. Would you find it difficult to give the correct answer in that scenario? Why or why not? How would you change the study now to improve it?

7. What kind of leader do you tend to be? Do you embrace different leadership styles and functions as the situation changes? Give an example of a time you were in a position of leadership. What function and style did you express?

6.3. Networks

1. From personal experience, describe how the group dynamics between two people changes when a third person joins the group (or vice versa, when one person leaves a group of three). Do your observations corroborate Simmel's analysis of dyads and triads?
2. How often do you get valuable information from a friend? From a friend of a friend? How significant do network connections seem to be in your life, i.e., with regard to your political preferences, your body weight and dietary choices, your life style, etc.?
3. How many friends would you call "close"? How many friends would your parents and grand parents call close? Does this correspond with Marsden's research that the size of one's "core discussion group" decreases as one ages?

6.4 Formal Organizations

1. What do you think about the spotlight on fast-food restaurants? Do you think they contribute to society's ills? Do you believe they provide a needed service? Have you ever worked in a fast-food restaurant? What did you learn?

2. Do you consider today's large companies like General Motors, Amazon, or Facebook to be bureaucracies? Why or why not? Which of the main characteristics of bureaucracies do you see in them? Which are absent?
3. Where do you prefer to shop, eat out, or grab a cup of coffee? Large chains like Walmart or smaller retailers? Starbucks or a local restaurant? What do you base your decisions on? Does this section change how you think about these choices? Why or why not?

Further Research

6.2. Groups

Information about cyberbullying causes and statistics: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2014001/article/14093-eng.htm#a7.

Take the What is your leadership style? quiz: http://psychology.about.com/qz/Whats-Your-Leadership-Style.

Explore other experiments on conformity: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Stanford-Prison.

6.3. Networks

If you have a Facebook account, you might be interested in downloading the networking software "Touchgraph" from Christakis and Fowler's website www.Connectedthebook.com to see a visual representation of your own network connections (http://connectedthebook.com/pages/touchgraph.html)

6.4 Formal Organizations

As mentioned above, the concept of McDonaldization is

a growing one. The following link discusses this phenomenon further: http://sociology.about.com/od/Works/a/McDonaldization-of-Society.htm.

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Solutions to Section Quiz

1 C, | 2 D, | 3 A, | 4 C, | 5 D, | 6 C, | 7 D, | 8 C, | 9 A, | 10 D, | 11 A, | 12 B, | 13 D, | 14 A, | 15 B, | 16 A, | 17 D, | 18 C, | 19 A, [Return to quiz]

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Figure 6.10. Hayley Wickenheiser celebrates her first CIS goal with her teammates by Canada Hky (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:HayleyWickenheiserCgyGoal.jpg) used under CC BY SA 3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en)

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Figure 6.17. (a) Brownie and Cub compare badges by Girl Guides of Canada (https://www.flickr.com/photos/girlguidesofcan/8488348265/in/photolist-dW61da) used under CC BY 2.0 license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

Long Descriptions

Figure 6.7 Long Description: A graph with the x axis representing where a community exists ('online' or 'in real life') and the y axis representing the technology infrastructure ('Do it yourself' or 'hosted'). The Z axis describes the state of tribe at outset ('Scattered' or 'well

formed’). Do it yourself online communities start out “scattered”. Hosted communities in real life start out “well formed.” [Return to Figure 6.7].

Figure 6.14 Long Description: A Hillary Nutcracker: The box says, “Is America ready for this nutcracker?” and “Stainless steel thighs crack the toughest nuts!” [Return to Figure 6.14].

Chapter 11. The Sociology of the Body: Health and Medicine

Figure 19.1. Vaccinations can slow or halt the spread of disease, but some families refuse them. (Photo courtesy of USACE Europe District/flickr)

Learning Objectives

[19.1. The Sociology of the Body and Health]

- Examine the relationship between the body and society.
- Understand the term biopolitics as a relationship between the body and modern

forms of power.

- Understand how medical sociology describes illness and health as social and cultural constructions.

19.2. Global Health

- Define the field of social epidemiology.
- Understand how health issues are affected by the global distribution of wealth.

19.3. Health in Canada

- Understand how social epidemiology can be applied to the distribution of health outcomes in Canada.
- Explain disparities of health based on gender, socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity.
- Give an overview of mental health and disability issues in Canada.
- Explain the terms stigma and medicalization.

19.4. Theoretical Perspectives on Health and Medicine

- Apply functionalist, critical, and symbolic interactionist perspectives to health issues.

Introduction to Health and Medicine

In 2012, a pertussis (whooping cough) outbreak in B.C., Alberta, Ontario, and New Brunswick sickened 2,000 people and resulted in an infant death in Lethbridge.

In the United States, where there were 18,000 cases and nine deaths, it was the worst outbreak in 65 years (Picard, 2012). Researchers, suspecting that the primary cause of the outbreak was the waning strength of pertussis vaccines in older children, recommended a booster vaccination for 11–12-year-olds and pregnant women (Zacharyczuk, 2011). Pertussis is most serious for babies; one in five must be hospitalized, and since they are too young for the vaccine themselves, it is crucial that people around them be immunized (Centers for Disease Control 2011). In response to the outbreak, health authorities in various parts of Canada offered free vaccination clinics for parents with infants under one. Typically Canadian children are vaccinated for whooping cough, diphtheria, and tetanus (a combined vaccine known as DTaP) at ages 2, 4, 6, and 18 months, and then again at ages 4 to 6 years and 14 to 16 years (Picard, 2012).

But what of people who do not want their children to have this vaccine, or any other? That question is at the heart of a debate that has been simmering for years. Vaccines are biological preparations that improve immunity against a certain disease. Vaccines have contributed to the eradication and weakening of numerous infectious diseases in human populations, including smallpox, polio, mumps, chicken pox, and meningitis.

However, many people express concern about potential negative side effects from vaccines. These concerns range from fears about overloading the child's immune system to controversial reports about devastating side effects of the vaccines. One misapprehension is that the vaccine itself might cause the disease it is supposed to be immunizing. Another commonly circulated concern is that vaccinations, specifically the MMR vaccine (MMR stands for measles, mumps, and rubella), are linked to autism.

The autism connection has been particularly controversial. In 1998, two British physicians, Andrew Wakefield and John Walker-Smith, published a study in Great Britain's *Lancet* magazine that linked the MMR vaccine to bowel disease and autism. The report received a lot of media attention, resulting in British immunization rates decreasing from 91 percent in 1997 to almost 80 percent by 2003, accompanied by a subsequent rise in measles cases (Devlin, 2008). A prolonged investigation by the *British Medical Journal* proved that not only was the link in the study nonexistent, but that Dr. Wakefield had falsified data in order to support his claims (CNN, 2011). Both Dr. Wakefield and Dr. Walker-Smith were discredited and stripped of their licenses, but the doubt still lingers in many parents' minds. A subsequent ruling in 2012 by the British High Court stated that the British General Medical Council's charges of misconduct against the two physicians were without basis and that they had never claimed that vaccines caused autism (Aston 2012).

In Canada, many parents still believe in the now-discredited MMR-autism link and refuse to vaccinate their children. Autism is a complex condition of unclear origin, yet the symptoms of its onset occur roughly at the same time as MMR vaccinations. In the absence of clear biomedical explanations for the condition, parents draw their own conclusions or seek alternative explanations. They feel forced to make a risk assessment between the dangers of measles, mumps and rubella on one side and autism on the other.

Other parents choose not to vaccinate for various reasons like religious or health beliefs. In the United States, a boy whose parents opted not to vaccinate returned home after a trip abroad; no one yet knew he was infected with measles. The boy exposed 839 people to the disease and caused

11 additional cases of measles, all in other unvaccinated children, including one infant who had to be hospitalized. According to a study published in *Pediatrics*, the outbreak cost the public sector $10,376 per diagnosed case. The study further showed that the intentional non-vaccination of those infected occurred in students from private schools, public charter schools, and public schools in upper-socioeconomic areas (Sugerman et al., 2010).

Should parents be forced to immunize their children? What might sociologists make of the fact that most of the families who chose not to vaccinate were of a higher socioeconomic group? How does this story of vaccines in a high-income region compare to that in a low-income region, like sub-Saharan Africa, where populations are often eagerly seeking vaccines rather than refusing them?

19.1 The Sociology of Health

Figure 19.2. What are the limits of the human body? (Image courtesy of Donald Jusa/Flickr)

Whereas human bodies have not changed radically since the evolution of Homo sapiens sapiens 200,000 years ago, our relationship to our bodies has. Due to the change in the relationship to our bodies over the last 150 years — in the forms of bio-medical knowledge, nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation, etc. — on average, we are healthier, taller, and live longer than our ancestors lived. In turn, these changes have had direct consequences for social organization.

For example, we saw in Chapter 13 (Aging and the Elderly) how the phenomenon of the aging population has obliged governments, institutions, and individuals to rethink everything from pension plans, health care

provisions, and mandatory retirement ages, to the bias towards youth in popular culture and marketing. As a political constituency, seniors are both significant in numbers and more engaged than young people are. They also are healthier and live longer on average than previous generations of seniors. They are therefore in a position to press government to shift resources away from young people's concerns to meet their own interests: for example, away from funding education to investing in medical research.

In his science fiction novel *Holy Fire* (1996), Bruce Sterling extrapolates from this phenomenon to imagine a future gerontocracy where seniors hold all the wealth and power, as well as the resources to invest in radical medical procedures, which extend their lives and health indefinitely. Young people are excluded from meaningful participation in society, and their youth culture is no longer celebrated but seen as reckless and irresponsible. The primary virtue of the gerontocrats is their continued health, so their lifestyle involves a strict regimen of exercise, diet, avoidance of intoxicants, and aversion to risk. Sterling raises the question of a future epoch of *post-humanity*, i.e., a period in which the mortality that defined the human condition for millennia has effectively been eliminated through the technologies of life preservation.

Is this our future? How malleable is the human body? To what degree can it be redesigned to suit our purposes? In what way is the human body a sociological phenomenon as well as a physiological phenomenon?

The Social Construction of Health

The sociology of health encompasses social epidemiology, disease, mental health, disability, and medicalization. The

principle insight of sociology is that health and illness cannot be simply regarded as biological or medical phenomena. They are perceived, organized, and acted on in a political, economic, cultural, and institutional context. Moreover, the way that we relate to them is in constant evolution. As we learn to control existing diseases, new diseases develop. As our society evolves to be more global, the way that diseases spread evolves with it.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), **health** "is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 2014). What does "health" mean to you? How does the WHO definition relate to contemporary issues of health? Do you believe that there are too many people taking medications in Canadian society? Are you skeptical about people claiming they are "addicted" to gambling or "addicted" to sex? Can you think of anything that was historically considered a disease, but is now considered within a range of normality? Or anything that has recently become known as a disease, whereas before it was considered evidence of laziness or other character flaws? Do you believe all children should receive vaccinations? These are questions examined in the sociology of health.

Sociologists may also understand these issues more fully by considering them through one of the main theoretical perspectives of the discipline. The functionalist perspective is a macroanalytical perspective that looks at the big picture, focusing on the way that all aspects of society are integral to the continued health and viability of the whole. For those working within the functionalist perspective, the focus is on how healthy individuals have the most to contribute to the stability of society. Functionalists might study the most efficient way to restore "sick" individuals

to a healthy state. The critical perspective is another macroanalytical perspective that focuses on the creation and reproduction of inequality. Someone applying the critical perspective might focus on the relationship between the power of pharmaceutical companies and rates of drug prescription, or between medical knowledge and the way power is exercised through the increased medicalization of the body. Someone applying the interactionist perspective to health might focus on how people understand their health, how their relationship to their bodies is mediated by social concepts of health and illness, and how their health affects their relationships with the people in their lives.

Medical Sociology and the Social Construction of Health

If sociology is the systematic study of human behaviour in society, **medical sociology** is the systematic study of how humans manage issues of health and illness, disease and disorders, and health care for both the sick and the healthy. Medical sociologists study the physical, mental, and social components of health and illness. Major topics for medical sociologists include the doctor-patient relationship, the structure and socioeconomics of health care, and how culture impacts attitudes toward disease and wellness.

The social construction of health is a major research topic within medical sociology. At first glance, the concept of a social construction of health does not seem to make sense. After all, if disease is a measurable, physiological problem, then there can be no question of socially constructing disease, right? Well, it's not that simple. The idea of the social construction of health emphasizes the socio-cultural aspects of the discipline's approach to physical, objectively definable phenomena. Sociologists

Conrad and Barker (2010) offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the major findings of the last 50 years of development in this concept. Their summary categorizes the findings in the field under three subheadings: the cultural meaning of illness, the social construction of the illness experience, and the social construction of medical knowledge.

The Cultural Meaning of Illness

Many medical sociologists contend that illnesses have both a biological and an experiential component, and that these components exist independently of each other. Our culture, not our biology, dictates which illnesses are stigmatized and which are not, which are considered disabilities and which are not, and which are deemed contestable (meaning some medical professionals may find the existence of this ailment questionable) as opposed to definitive (illnesses that are unquestionably recognized in the medical profession) (Conrad and Barker, 2010).

For instance, sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) described how social stigmas hinder individuals from fully integrating into society. A **stigma** in general is defined by a “mark” of difference (e.g. a physiological “deformity,” personality “defect,” or status category like race, nationality, or religion) that defines a socially undesirable characteristic. Goffman elaborates:

> an individual who might have been received easily in ordinary social intercourse possesses a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn those of us whom he meets away from him, breaking the claim that his other attributes have on us (Goffman, 1963).

In other words, stigma operates to define a person by a

single attribute that makes them seem less than fully human and therefore subject to discriminatory practices, often unthinkingly. In encountering a stigmatized person, we construct a *stigma theory* that explains his or her inferiority and provides an account of the threat or danger they represent.

The **stigmatization of illness** often has the greatest effect on the patient and the kind of care he or she receives. Many contend that our society and even our health care institutions discriminate against certain diseases — like mental disorders, AIDS, venereal diseases, and skin disorders (Sartorius, 2007). Facilities for these diseases may be sub-par; they may be segregated from other health care areas or relegated to a poorer environment. The stigma may keep people from seeking help for their illness, making it worse than it needs to be.

Contested illnesses are those that are questioned or questionable by some medical professionals. Disorders like fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome may be either true illnesses or only in the patients' heads, depending on the opinion of the medical professional. This dynamic can affect how a patient seeks treatment and what kind of treatment he or she receives.

The Social Construction of the Illness Experience

The idea of the social construction of the illness experience is based on the concept of reality as a social construction. In other words, there is no objective reality independent of our own perceptions of it. The social construction of the illness experience deals with such issues as the way some patients control the manner in which they reveal their disease and the lifestyle adaptations patients develop to cope with their illnesses.

In terms of constructing the illness experience, culture and individual personality both play a significant role. For some people, a long-term illness can have the effect of making their world smaller, more defined by the illness than anything else. For others, illness can be a chance for discovery, for re-imaging a new self (Conrad and Barker, 2010). Culture plays a huge role in how an individual experiences illness. Widespread diseases like AIDS or breast cancer have specific cultural markers that have changed over the years and that govern how individuals — and society — view them.

Today, many institutions of wellness acknowledge the degree to which individual perceptions shape the nature of health and illness. Regarding physical activity, for instance, the Public Health Agency of Canada recommends that individuals use a standard level of exertion to assess their physical activity. This rating of perceived exertion (RPE) gives a more complete view of an individual's actual exertion level, since heart rate or pulse measurements may be affected by medication or other issues (CSEP, N.d.). Similarly, many medical professionals use a comparable scale for perceived pain to help determine pain management strategies.

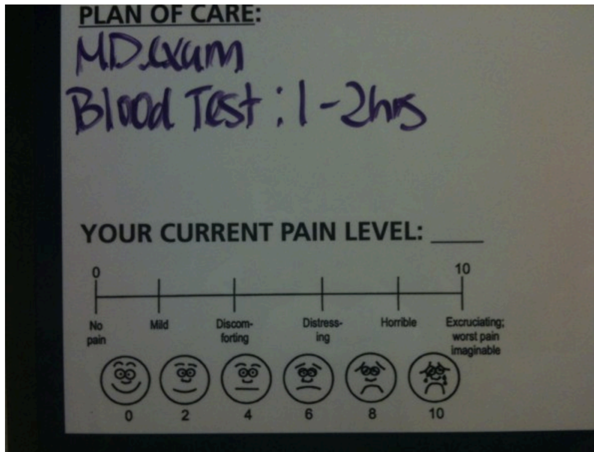

Figure 19.4. The Mosby pain rating scale helps health care providers assess an individual's level of pain. What might a symbolic interactionist observe about this method? [Long Description] (Photo courtesy of wrestlingentropy/flickr)

The Social Construction of Medical Knowledge

Conrad and Barker show how medical knowledge is socially constructed; that is, it can both reflect and reproduce inequalities in gender, class, race, and ethnicity. Conrad and Barker (2010) use the example of the social construction of women's health and how medical knowledge has changed significantly in the course of a few generations. For instance, in the early 20th century, pregnant women were discouraged from driving or dancing for fear of harming the unborn child, much as they are discouraged from smoking or drinking alcohol today.

Making Connections: Big Picture

Has Breast Cancer Awareness Gone Too Far?

Figure 19.5. Pink ribbons are a ubiquitous reminder of breast cancer. But do pink ribbon chocolates do anything to eradicate the disease? (Photo courtesy of wishuponacupcake/Wikimedia Commons)

Every October, the world turns pink. Football and baseball players wear pink accessories. Skyscrapers and large public buildings are lit with pink lights at night. From retailers, shoppers can choose from a huge array of pink products. In 2011, people wanting to support the fight against breast cancer could purchase any of the following pink products: KitchenAid mixers, Master Lock padlocks and bike chains, Wilson tennis rackets, Fiat cars, and Smith & Wesson handguns. You read that correctly. The

goal of all these pink products is to raise awareness and money for breast cancer. However, the relentless creep of pink has many people wondering if the pink marketing juggernaut has gone too far.Pink has been associated with breast cancer since 1991, when the Susan G. Komen Foundation handed out pink ribbons at its 1991 Race for the Cure event. Since then, the pink ribbon has appeared on countless products, and then by extension, the colour pink has come to represent support for a cure of the disease. No one can argue about the Susan G. Komen Foundation's mission — find a cure for breast cancer — or the fact that the group has raised millions of dollars for research and care. However, some people question if, or how much, all these products really help in the fight against breast cancer (Begos, 2011).

The advocacy group Breast Cancer Action (BCA) position themselves as watchdogs of other agencies fighting breast cancer. They accept no funding from entities, like those in the pharmaceutical industry, with potential profit connections to this health industry. They have developed a trademarked "Think Before You Pink" campaign to provoke consumer questioning of the end contributions made to breast cancer by companies hawking pink wares. They do not advise against "pink" purchases; they just want consumers to be informed about how much money is involved, where it comes from, and where it will go. For instance, what percentage of each purchase goes to breast cancer causes? BCA does not judge how much is enough, but it informs customers and then encourages them to consider

whether they feel the amount is enough (Think Before You Pink, 2012).

BCA also suggests that consumers make sure that the product they are buying does not actually *contribute* to breast cancer, a phenomenon they call "pinkwashing." This issue made national headlines in 2010, when the Susan G. Komen Foundation partnered with Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) on a promotion called "Buckets for the Cure." For every bucket of grilled or regular fried chicken, KFC would donate 50 cents to the Komen Foundation, with the goal of reaching $8 million: the largest single donation received by the foundation. However, some critics saw the partnership as an unholy alliance. Higher body fat and eating fatty foods has been linked to increased cancer risks, and detractors, including BCA, called the Komen Foundation out on this apparent contradiction of goals. Komen's response was that the program did a great deal to raise awareness in low-income communities, where Komen previously had little outreach (Hutchison, 2010).

What do you think? Are fundraising and awareness important enough to trump issues of health? What other examples of "pinkwashing" can you think of?

19.2. Global Health

Social epidemiology is the study of the causes and distribution of diseases. Social epidemiology can reveal

how social problems are connected to the health of different populations. These epidemiological studies show that the health problems of high-income nations differ greatly from those of low-income nations. Some diseases, like cancer, are universal. But others, like obesity, heart disease, respiratory disease, and diabetes are much more common in high-income countries, and are a direct result of a sedentary lifestyle combined with poor diet. High-income nations also have a higher incidence of depression (Bromet et al., 2011). In contrast, low-income nations suffer significantly from malaria and tuberculosis.

How does health differ around the world? Some theorists differentiate among three types of countries: core nations, semi-peripheral nations, and peripheral nations. Core nations are those that we think of as highly developed or industrialized, semi-peripheral nations are those that are often called developing or newly industrialized, and peripheral nations are those that are relatively undeveloped. While the most pervasive issue in the Canadian care system is timely access to health care, other core countries have different issues, and semi-peripheral and peripheral nations are faced with a host of additional concerns. Reviewing the status of global health offers insight into the various ways that politics and wealth shape access to health care, and it shows which populations are most affected by health disparities.

One clear trend that has emerged in the social epidemiological literature is the shift in the type of diseases and health issues that affect populations as societies modernize. The **epidemiologic transition** or “health transition” refers to the long-term change in a population’s dominant health problems or profile from acute infectious diseases to chronic, degenerative diseases as societies go through the process of industrialization (Omram, 1971;

Young, 1988). **Infectious diseases**, like measles, influenza, chronic diarrhea, tuberculosis, plague, etc., refer to diseases caused by micro-organisms such as bacteria or viruses and are often communicable, leading to epidemic outbreaks. These are diseases common to sedentary societies exposed to water-borne pathogens, human waste, the diseases of domesticated animals, nutritional deficits, and periodic famine. **Chronic diseases**, like cancer, heart disease, diabetes, hypertension and obesity, are non-communicable and characterized by the slow onset of symptoms and that are persistent or long lasting in their effects. They are more characteristic of the causes of death in societies that have higher standards of living, better access to a regular supply of nutritious food, public sanitation measures, and immunization programs to control infectious diseases. They have often been referred to therefore as "diseases of modernization" or "Western diseases" because they are symptomatic of effects of modernization on longevity and lifestyle.

Health in High-Income Nations

Obesity, which is on the rise in high-income nations, has been linked to many diseases, including cardiovascular problems, musculoskeletal problems, diabetes, and respiratory issues. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2013), obesity rates are rising in all countries, with the greatest gains being made in the highest-income countries. The United States has the highest obesity rate for adults, while Canada rated fifth. Wallace Huffman and his fellow researchers (2006) contend that several factors are contributing to the rise in obesity in developed countries:

1. Improvements in technology and reduced family size have led to a reduction of work to be done in household production.
2. Unhealthy market goods, including processed foods, sweetened drinks, and sweet and salty snacks are replacing home-produced goods.
3. Leisure activities are growing more sedentary; for example, computer games, web surfing, and television viewing.
4. More workers are shifting from active work (agriculture and manufacturing) to service industries.
5. Increased access to passive transportation has led to more driving and less walking.

Obesity and weight issues have significant societal costs, including lower life expectancies and higher shared health care costs. High-income countries also have higher rates of depression than less affluent nations. A recent study (Bromet et al., 2011) shows that the average lifetime prevalence of major depressive episodes in the 10 highest-income countries in the study was 14.6 percent; this compared to 11.1 percent in the eight low- and middle-income countries. The researchers speculate that the higher rate of depression may be linked to the greater income inequality that exists in the highest-income nations.

Health in Low-Income Nations

Figure 19.6. In low-income countries, malnutrition and lack of access to clean water contribute to a high child mortality rate. (Photo courtesy of Steve Evans/flickr)

In peripheral nations with low per capita income, it is not the cost of health care that is the most pressing concern; rather, low-income countries must manage such problems as infectious disease, high infant mortality rates, scarce medical personnel, and inadequate water and sewer systems. Such issues, which high-income countries rarely even think about, are central to the lives of most people in low-income nations. Due to such health concerns, low-income nations have higher rates of infant mortality and lower average life spans.

One of the biggest contributors to medical issues in low-income countries is the lack of access to clean water and basic sanitation resources. According to a 2011 UNICEF report, almost half of the developing world's population lacks improved sanitation facilities. The World Health

Organization (WHO) tracks health-related data for 193 countries. In their 2011 World Health Statistics report, they document the following statistics:

1. Globally, the rate of mortality for children under five was 60 per 1,000 live births. In low-income countries, however, that rate is almost double at 117 per 1,000 live births. In high-income countries, that rate is significantly lower than 7 per 1,000 live births.
2. The most frequent causes of death for children under five were pneumonia and diarrheal diseases, accounting for 18 percent and 15 percent, respectively. These deaths could easily be avoidable with cleaner water and more coverage of available medical care.
3. The availability of doctors and nurses in low-income countries is one-tenth that of nations with a high income. Challenges in access to medical education and access to patients exacerbate this issue for would-be medical professionals in low-income countries (World Health Organization, 2011).

19.3. Health in Canada

Health in Canada is a complex and often contradictory issue. On the one hand, as one of the wealthiest nations, Canada fares well in health outcomes with respect to the rest of the world. The publicly funded health care system in Canada also compares well to the noted issues of the private for-profit system in the United States (especially in terms of overall cost and who gets access to medical

care). On the other hand, it is also behind many European countries in terms of key health care indicators such as access to family doctors and wait times for critical procedures. The following sections look at different social aspects of health in Canada.

Health by Race and Ethnicity

Unlike the United States, where strong health disparities exist along racial lines, in Canada differences in health between non-aboriginal visible minorities and Canadians of European origin disappear once socioeconomic status and lifestyle are taken into account. Moreover, new and recent immigrants from non-European countries tend, in fact, to have better health than the average native-born Canadian does (Kobayashi, Prus, and Lin, 2008).

Aboriginal Canadians unfortunately continue to suffer from serious health problems. It is estimated that in the 1500s, prior to contact, there were 500,000 aboriginal people living in Canada. Through epidemics of contagious Euro-Asian diseases such as smallpox, measles, influenza, and tuberculosis, aboriginal populations suffered an estimated 93 percent decline (O'Donnell, 2008). Conditions in the late 19th century to the mid-20th century did not improve markedly after aboriginal people were moved to reserves. Often lacking adequate drinking water, sanitation facilities, and hygienic conditions, these were ideal settings for the spread of communicable diseases. Death rates from tuberculosis (TB), for example, remained very high for First Nations peoples into the 1950s, long after the use of antibiotics brought TB under control in the rest of Canada. In 2005, the TB rate was still 27 active cases per 100,000 population for aboriginal people, while it was only five active cases per 100, 000 for the rest of

the population. Part of the problem is that the percentage of aboriginal people living in overcrowded housing on reserves and in the north is five to six times higher than for the general population (Statistics Canada, 2011). Recent crises in Attawapiskat, Ontario, and other First Nations communities with respect to housing, drinking water, and lack of proper water purification systems indicate that these issues have not been resolved (Stastna, 2011).

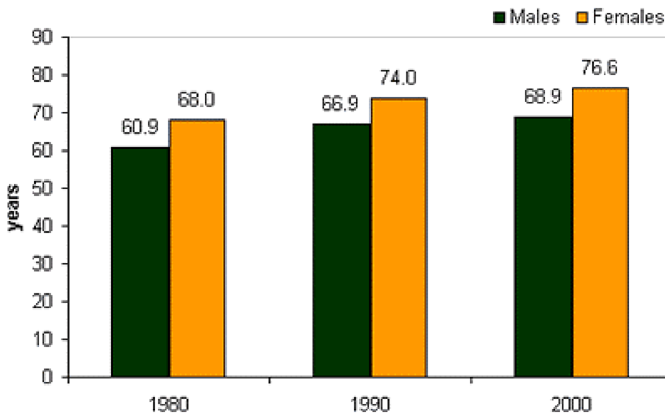

Figure 19.7. Life expectancy of Aboriginal men and women in Canada has improved but remains significantly lower than for the rest of the population [Long Description] (Graph courtesy of Health Canada, 2005).

Figure 19.7 shows that life expectancy for Aboriginal people (registered Indians) has improved. However, it remains significantly lower than for the average population: Aboriginal men and women could expect to live 8.1 and 5.5 fewer years respectively than the average Canadian man and woman (Health Canada, 2005). While infectious diseases are largely regarded now as being under control in aboriginal populations (albeit at higher rates than

the Canadian population), Aboriginal people suffer disproportionately from chronic health problems like diabetes, heart disease, obesity, respiratory problems, and HIV (Statistics Canada, 2011). The health conditions of off-reserve Aboriginal people are also significantly worse than for the average population. While nearly 59 percent of non-Aboriginal people in Canada over the age of 20 rated their health as “excellent or very good” in 2006–2007, only 51 percent of First Nations, 57 percent of Métis, and 49 percent of Inuit living off-reserve did so. Similarly 74 percent of non-Aboriginal Canadians reported that they had no physical limitations due to ill health, while only 58, 59, and 64 percent of off-reserve First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, respectively, did so (Garner, Carrière, and Sanmartin, 2010). While some of the difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health conditions can be explained by financial, educational, and individual lifestyle variables, even when these were taken into account statistically disparities in health remained. The authors of the study on off-reserve aboriginal health report that “[s]uch findings point to the existence of other factors contributing to the greater burden of morbidity among First Nations, Métis and Inuit people” (Garner, Carrière, and Sanmartin, 2010, p. iii).

Health by Socioeconomic Status

Ximena de la Barra, senior urban advisor to UNICEF, wrote in 1998 that “being poor is in itself a health hazard; worse, however, is being urban and poor” (de la Barra, 1998, p. 46). The context of her statement was global urban poverty, but her conclusions apply to the relationship between poverty and health in Canada as well. Residents of poorer urban areas in Canada have significantly higher

hospitalization rates and lower self-reported quality of health than residents of average or wealthy urban areas (see Figures 19.6 and 19.7). Living and growing up in poverty is linked to lower life expectancy, and chronic illnesses such as diabetes, mental illness, stroke, cardiovascular disease, central nervous system disease, and injury (Canadian Population Health Initiative, 2008). In fact actual medical care accounts for only about a quarter of health outcomes, while one-half of a person's ability to recover from illness is determined by socioeconomic factors, including income, education, and living conditions (CBC, 2014). In an interesting study of 17, 350 British civil servants, it was found that differences in even relatively small disparities of wealth and power between civil service employment grades led to significantly better health outcomes for the privileged. The more authority one has, the healthier one is (Marmot, Shipley, and Rose, 1984). These social determinants of health led the Canadian Medical Association to argue that providing adequate financial resources might be the best medical treatment that can be provided to poor patients. Inner city doctor, Gary Bloch stated, "Treating people at low income with a higher income will have at least as big an impact on their health as any other drugs that I could prescribe them…. I do see poverty as a disease" (CBC, 2013).

It is important to remember that economics are only part of the socioeconomic status (SES) picture; research suggests that education also plays an important role. Phelan and Link (2003) note that many behaviour-influenced diseases like lung cancer (from smoking), coronary artery disease (from poor eating and exercise habits), and AIDS initially were widespread across SES groups. However, once information linking habits to disease was disseminated, these diseases decreased in high SES groups

and increased in low SES groups. This illustrates the important role of education initiatives regarding a given disease, as well as possible inequalities in how those initiatives effectively reach different SES groups.

Health by Gender

Women continue to live longer than men do on average, but women have higher rates of disability and disease. In each age group, men have higher rates of fatal disease, whereas women have higher rates of non-fatal chronic disease. "Women get sicker but men die quicker" might be a way of summing this up (Lorber, 2000). For example, while 4 percent of Canadian men suffer from chronic illnesses, these illnesses affect 11 percent of Canadian women, particularly conditions such as multiple sclerosis, lupus, migraines, hypothyroidism, and chronic pain (Spitzer, 2005). While men's lower life expectancy is often attributed to three factors — their tendency to engage in riskier behaviour or riskier work than women, their lower use of the health care system (which prevents symptoms from being diagnosed earlier), and their innate biological disposition to higher mortality at every stage of life — it is not as clear why chronic disease affects women in higher proportions. Spitzer notes that gender roles and relations lead to different responses and exposures to stressors, different access to resources, different responsibilities with regard to domestic work and caregiving, and different levels of exposure to domestic violence, all of which affect chronic health issues in women disproportionately.

Women are also affected adversely by institutionalized sexism in health care provision. We can see an example of institutionalized sexism in the way that women are more likely to be diagnosed with certain kinds of mental

disorders than men are. Psychologist Dana Becker notes that 75 percent of all diagnoses of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) are for women according to the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. This diagnosis is characterized by instability of identity, of mood, and of behaviour, and Becker argues that it has been used as a catch-all diagnosis for too many women. She further decries the pejorative connotation of the diagnosis, saying that it predisposes many people, both within and outside of the profession of psychotherapy, against women who have been so diagnosed (Becker, N.d.).

Many critics also point to the medicalization of women's issues as an example of institutionalized sexism. **Medicalization** refers to the process by which previously normal aspects of life are redefined as deviant and needing medical attention to remedy. Historically and contemporaneously, many aspects of women's lives have been medicalized, including menstruation, pre-menstrual syndrome, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause. The medicalization of pregnancy and childbirth has been particularly contentious in recent decades, with many women opting against the medical process and choosing a more natural childbirth. Fox and Worts (1999) find that all women experience pain and anxiety during the birth process, but that social support relieves both as effectively as medical support. In other words, medical interventions are no more effective than social ones at helping with the difficulties of pain and childbirth. Fox and Worts further found that women with supportive partners ended up with less medical intervention and fewer cases of postpartum depression. Of course, access to quality birth care outside of the standard medical models may not be readily available to women of all social classes.

Making Connections: Sociology in the Real World

Medicalization of Sleeplessness

Figure 19.8. Many people fail to get enough sleep. But is insomnia a disease that should be cured with medication? (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

How is your “sleep hygiene?” Sleep hygiene refers to the lifestyle and sleep habits that contribute to sleeplessness or insomnia. Bad habits that can lead to sleeplessness include inconsistent bedtimes, lack of exercise, late-night employment, napping during the day, and sleep environments that include noise, lights, or screen time (National Institutes of Health, 2011a).According to the Toronto-based University Health Network, examining sleep

hygiene is the first step in trying to solve a problem with sleeplessness (Bernstein and Durkee, 2008).

For many North Americans, however, making changes in sleep hygiene does not seem to be enough. According to a 2006 report, sleeplessness is an underrecognized public health problem affecting up to 70 million people. It is interesting to note that in the months (or years) after this report was released, advertising by the pharmaceutical companies behind Ambien, Lunesta, and Rozerem (three sleep aids) averaged $188 million weekly promoting these drugs (Gellene, 2009).

According to Moloney, Konrad, and Zimmer (2011), prescriptions for sleep medications increased dramatically from 1993 to 2007. While complaints of sleeplessness during doctor's office visits more than doubled during this time, insomnia diagnoses increased more than sevenfold, from about 840,000 to 6.1 million. The authors of the study conclude that sleeplessness has been medicalized as insomnia, and that "insomnia may be a public health concern, but potential overtreatment with marginally effective, expensive medications with nontrivial side effects raises definite population health concerns" (Moloney, Konrad, and Zimmer, 2011). Indeed, a study published in 2004 in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* shows that cognitive behavioural therapy, not medication, was the most effective sleep intervention (Jacobs, Pace-Schott, Stickgold, and Otto, 2004).

A century ago, people who couldn't sleep were told to count sheep. Now, they pop a pill, and all

those pills add up to a very lucrative market for the pharmaceutical industry. Is this industry behind the medicalization of sleeplessness, or are they just responding to a need?

Mental Health and Disability

The treatment received by those defined as mentally ill or disabled varies greatly from country to country. In post-millennial Canada, those of us who have never experienced such a disadvantage take for granted the rights our society guarantees for each citizen. However, access to things like education, housing, or transportation that most people take for granted, are often experienced very differently by people with disabilities.

Mental Health

People with mental disorders (a condition that makes it more difficult to cope with everyday life) and people with mental illness (a severe, lasting mental disorder that requires long-term treatment) experience a wide range of effects.

According to the 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey, the most common mental disorders in Canada are **mood disorders** (major depression, bipolar disorder). Over 11 percent of Canadians reported experiencing major episodes of depression in their lifetime (4.7 percent in the previous year), while 2.6 percent reported bipolar disorder in their lifetime (1.5 percent in the previous year) (Pearson, Janz, and Ali, 2013). Major mood disorders are depression,

bipolar disorder, and dysthymic disorder. Depression might seem like something that everyone experiences at some point, and it is true that most people feel sad or "blue" at times in their lives. A true depressive episode, however, is more than just feeling sad for a short period; it is a long-term, debilitating illness that usually needs treatment to cure. Bipolar disorder is characterized by dramatic shifts in energy and mood, often affecting the individual's ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. Bipolar disorder used to be called manic depression because of the way that people would swing between manic and depressive episodes.

The second most common mental disorders in Canada are anxiety disorders. Almost 9 percent of Canadians reported experiencing generalized anxiety disorder in their lifetime (2.6 percent in the previous year) (Pearson, Janz, and Ali, 2013). Similar to depression, it is important to distinguish between occasional feelings of anxiety and a true anxiety disorder. Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress that we all feel at some point, but **anxiety disorders** are feelings of worry and fearfulness that last for months at a time. Anxiety disorders include obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and both social and specific phobias.

Figure 19.10. Medication is a common option for children with ADHD. (Photo courtesy of Deviation56/Wikimedia Commons)

Another fairly commonly diagnosed mental disorder is attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which American statistics suggest affects 9 percent of children and 8 percent of adults on a lifetime basis (National Institute of Mental Health, 2005). The *New York Times* reported American Centers for Disease Control data showing that the diagnosis of children with ADHD had increased by 53 percent over the last decade, raising issues of overdiagnosis and overmedication (Schwarz and Cohen, 2013). Recent data from Canada confirm the increasing rate of prescribed medications and ADHD diagnosis in Canada, although the rates are much lower than those reported in the United States (3 percent for all children aged three to nine, but 4 percent for boys and 5 percent for school-aged children in this age range) (Brault and Lacourse, 2012). ADHD is one of the most common childhood disorders, and it is marked by difficulty paying attention, difficulty controlling behaviour, and

hyperactivity. The significant increase in diagnosis and the use of medications such as Ritalin have prompted social debate over whether such drugs are being overprescribed (American Psychological Association, N.d.). In fact, some critics question whether this disorder is really as widespread as it seems, or if it is a case of overdiagnosis.

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) have also gained a lot of attention in recent years. The term ASD encompasses a group of developmental brain disorders that are characterized by "deficits in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, and engagement in repetitive behaviours or interests" (National Institute of Mental Health, 2011b). A report from the American Centers for Disease Control (CDC) suggests that 1 in every 68 children is born with ASD (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). This diagnosis is up by 30 percent from the previous estimate that 1 in 88 children is born with ASD. In Canada, a national tracking system is being set up, but a report from the National Epidemiologic Database for the Study of Autism in Canada found increases in diagnosis in Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and southeastern Ontario ranging from 39 to 204 percent, depending on the region. As an example of social construction of disorders, much of the increase in diagnosis is believed to be due to increased awareness of the disorder rather than actual prevalence, with doctors diagnosing autism more frequently and with children with less severe problems (NEDSAC, 2012).

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) distinguishes between serious mental illness and other disorders. The key feature of serious mental illness is that it results in "serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities" (National Institute of Mental Health, 2005).

Thus, the characterization of “serious” refers to the effect of the illness (functional impairment), not the illness itself.

Although the view is not widely held, some researchers argue that mental illness is a myth. For example, to Thomas Scheff (1963), residual deviance — a violation of social norms not covered by any specific behavioural expectation — is what actually results in people being labelled mentally ill. In *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct* (1961), Thomas Szasz asks if there is such a thing as mental illness, and then argues that there is not. Rather, mental illness is a deviation from what others view as normal, with no basis in biological disease. Szasz calls for greater personal responsibility and less reliance on institutions.

In August of 2018, Greta Thunberg started her Skolstrejk för klimatet (School Strike for the Climate) and soon became one of the most

recognizable environmental activists on the planet. From a very early age, Thunberg was increasingly distraught that adults did not seem to be doing enough about the environmental issues she was learning about in school. After winning a climate change essay competition at the age of fifteen she decided to do more than worry and write, she made a homemade sign, skipped school, and sat alone outside the Swedish parliament. Within a year these climate strikes had spread around the globe and Greta was speaking to, and scolding world leaders about their failure to take effective action.

While this all seems like a fairy-tale, Greta's life is much more complicated. As described in her family's memoir, *Our House Is on Fire*, since the age of eleven, Thunberg struggled with depression, anxiety and an eating disorder, the latter for which she was almost hospitalized (Mitchell 2020). Eventually she was diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder, selective mutism and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD, previously known as Asperger's).

ASD has been considered a mental disorder and thought of in terms of disability, however, Thunberg has argued that, though this condition has made some things more difficult, it is her "superpower", allowing her to see things others cannot and allowing her to ask tough questions without worrying about social niceties. This is an argument taken up by others who argue that ASD is just one of many forms of ***neural diversity*** that should be seen as differences not disabilities.

Understood from this perspective the ‘problem’ is not with neural diverse individuals such as Ms. Thunberg but with societies, including their schools and workplaces, that don’t allow for and celebrate this diversity. Rather than medicalize this condition and ‘fix’ the individuals, it is argued that we need to fix our societies.

This raises the question, what if there was a magic pill that would ‘fix’ Ms. Thunberg, making her closer to the neurological norm? It just might be that the struggle to address one of the most pressing environmental, and health, issues of our time would be set back immeasurably.

Disability

Figure 19.11. The handicapped accessible sign indicates that people with disabilities can access the facility. The Canadian Human Rights Act includes a "duty to accommodate" access for persons with disabilities. (Photo courtesy of Ltljltlj/Wikimedia Commons)

Disability refers to a reduction in one's ability to perform everyday tasks. The World Health Organization makes a distinction between the various terms used to describe handicaps that are important to the sociological perspective. They use the term **impairment** to describe the physical limitations, while reserving the term *disability* to refer to the social limitation. In 2012, 3.8 million Canadians, or 13.7 percent of Canadians aged 15 and over, reported having a disability — a long-term condition or health-related problem — that limited their ability to

perform daily tasks. Twenty-six percent of these disabled Canadians had a disability classified as “very severe” (Statistics Canada, 2013).

Lyn Jongbloed (2003) notes that conceptions of disability have gone through several shifts in Canada since the 19th century, leading to significant shifts in public policy on disabilities. In the early 19th century, persons with intellectual impairments were often jailed alongside criminals, suggesting that the distinction was not significant from the point of view of public policy. Then between 1860 and 1890, the asylum model of care was developed specifically for the disabled, in large part to protect them or others from harm. People with physical disabilities were not regarded as disruptive so they were not institutionalized. This *law and order* approach was gradually replaced by *medical and economic* models that conceptualized disability as a biological reality that called for practices such as **rehabilitation**. Rehabilitation focused on interventions to treat or cure disabilities so that disabled persons could earn a livelihood and reintegrate into “normal” society. As Jongbloed suggests, “Helping people become economically independent is consistent with the North American ideology of individualism. The economic model of disability is predicated on an individual’s inability to participate in the paid labour force” (2003). Finally, since the 1970s, the medical and economic model has been gradually supplanted, or supplemented, by a sociopolitical model that argues that disability results from a failure of the social environment rather than individual impairment. This led to rights-based challenges of barriers to the disabled and a deinstutionalization movement that saw the closing of the asylum system and its replacement with a community model of care.

Before the passage of the Canadian Charter of Rights

and Freedoms in 1982, which specifically designated individuals with disabilities as one of four disadvantaged groups protected by the Charter, Canadians with disabilities were often routinely excluded from opportunities and social institutions that many able-bodied persons take for granted. This occurred not only through employment and other kinds of discrimination, but through casual acceptance by most Canadians of a world designed for the convenience of the able-bodied. Imagine being in a wheelchair and trying to use a sidewalk without the benefit of wheelchair-accessible curbs. Imagine as a blind person trying to access information without the widespread availability of Braille. Imagine having limited motor control and being faced with a difficult-to-grasp round door handle. **Ableism** refers to both direct discrimination against persons with disabilities and the unintended neglect of their needs. It is not the physiological, mental, or medical nature of impairment that disables so much as the way the social world has been constructed to enable some, while disabling others.

Ableism is linked to the enduring legacy of stigmatizing persons with disabilities. People with disabilities are stigmatized by the perception that they are, in some manner, ill. **Stigmatization** means that their identity is spoiled; they are labelled as different, discriminated against, and sometimes even shunned. They are labelled (as an interactionist might point out) and ascribed a master status (as a functionalist might note), becoming "the blind girl" or "the boy in the wheelchair" instead of someone afforded a full identity by society. This can be especially true for people who are disabled due to mental illness or disorders. In response, many disabled groups have begun to assert that they are not disabled, but *differently enabled.* Their condition is not a form of deviance from the norm,

but a different form of normality. As Rod Michalko argues, blindness for example is only seen as a problem or disability from the point of view of sightedness and a world organized for the sighted (Michalko, 1998).

As discussed in the section on mental health, many mental health disorders can be debilitating, affecting a person's ability to cope with everyday life. This can affect social status, housing, and especially employment. According to the a Canadian Human Rights Commission's *Report on Equity Rights of People with Disabilities* (2012), people with a disability had a higher rate of unemployment than people without a disability: 8.6 percent to 6.3 percent (2006 data). Disabled men and women are also 8.6 percent and 6.5 percent more likely to be *underemployed* than men and women without disabilities (respectively). The disabled were also only half as likely to complete a university education as the non-disabled (20.2 per cent versus 40.7 per cent, respectively) are and earned significantly less than they do ($9,557 less per year for men and $8,853 less for women).

Making Connections: Sociology in the Real World

Obesity: The Last Acceptable Prejudice

Figure 19.12. Obesity is considered the last acceptable social stigma. (Photo courtesy of Kyle May/flickr)

What is your reaction to the picture in Figure 19.9? Compassion? Fear? Disgust? Many people will look at this picture and make negative assumptions about the man based on his weight. According to a study from the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, large people are the object of "widespread negative stereotypes that overweight and obese persons are lazy, unmotivated, lacking in self-discipline, less competent, noncompliant, and sloppy" (Puhl and Heuer, 2009).Historically, in both Canada and elsewhere, it was considered acceptable

to discriminate against people based on prejudiced opinions. Even after colonization formally ended with the formation of the Canadian state in 1867, the next 100 years of Canadian history saw institutionalized racism and prejudice against aboriginal people. In an example of **stereotype interchangeability**, the same insults that are flung today at the overweight and obese population (lazy, for instance), have been flung at various racial and ethnic groups in earlier history. Of course, no one gives voice to these kinds of views in public now, except when talking about obese people.

Why is it considered acceptable to feel prejudice toward — even to hate — obese people? Puhl and Heuer suggest that these feelings stem from the perception that obesity is preventable through self-control, better diet, and more exercise. Highlighting this contention is the fact that studies have shown that people's perceptions of obesity are more positive when they think the obesity was caused by non-controllable factors like biology (a thyroid condition, for instance) or genetics.

Even with some understanding of non-controllable factors that might affect obesity, obese people are still subject to stigmatization. Puhl and Heuer's study is one of many that document discrimination at work, in the media, and even in the medical profession. Obese people are less likely to get into college than thinner people, and they are less likely to succeed at work.

Stigmatization of obese people comes in many forms, from the seemingly benign to the potentially

illegal. In movies and television shows, overweight people are often portrayed negatively, or as stock characters who are the butt of jokes. One study found that in children's movies "obesity was equated with negative traits (evil, unattractive, unfriendly, cruel) in 64 percent of the most popular children's videos. In 72 percent of the videos, characters with thin bodies had desirable traits, such as kindness or happiness" (Hines and Thompson, 2007). In movies and television for adults, the negative portrayal is often meant to be funny. "Fat suits" —inflatable suits that make people look obese — are commonly used in a way that perpetuates negative stereotypes. Think about the way you have seen obese people portrayed in movies and on television; now think of any other subordinate group being openly denigrated in such a way. It is difficult to find a parallel example.

19.4. Theoretical Perspectives on Health and Medicine

Each of the three major theoretical perspectives approaches the topics of health, illness, and medicine differently.

Functionalism

According to the functionalist perspective, health is vital to the stability of the society, and therefore sickness is a sanctioned form of deviance. Talcott Parsons (1951) was the first to discuss this in terms of the **sick role**: patterns of

expectations that define appropriate behaviour for the sick and for those who take care of them.

According to Parsons, the sick person has a specific role with both rights and responsibilities. To start with, in the context of modern norms of individualism and individual responsibility, a person has not chosen to be sick and should not be treated as responsible for his or her condition. The sick person also has the right of being exempt from normal social roles; the person is not required to fulfill the obligation of a well person and can avoid normal responsibilities without censure. However, this exemption is temporary and relative to the severity of the illness. The exemption also requires **legitimation** by a physician; that is, a physician must certify that the illness is genuine.

The responsibility of the sick person is twofold: to try to get well and to seek technically competent help from a physician. If the sick person stays ill longer than is appropriate (malingers), he or she may be stigmatized.

Parsons argues that since the sick are unable to fulfill their normal societal roles, their sickness weakens the society. Therefore, it is sometimes necessary for various forms of social control to bring the behaviour of a sick person back in line with normal expectations. In this model of health, doctors serve as gatekeepers, deciding who is healthy and who is sick — a relationship in which the doctor has all the power. But is it appropriate to allow doctors so much power over deciding who is sick? And what about people who are sick, but are unwilling to leave their positions for any number of reasons (personal/social obligations, financial need, or lack of insurance, for instance).

Critical Sociology

Theorists using the critical perspective suggest that many issues with the health care system, as with most other social problems, are rooted in capitalist society. A World Health Organization report studying the social determinants of health stated,

> Poor and unequal living conditions are, in their turn, the consequence of deeper structural conditions that together fashion the way societies are organized – poor social policies and programmes, unfair economic arrangements, and bad politics. These 'structural drivers' operate within countries under the authority of governments, but also, increasingly over the last century and a half, between countries under the effects of globalization. This toxic combination of bad policies, economics, and politics is, in large measure, responsible for the fact that a majority of people in the world do not enjoy the good health that is biologically possible (W.H.O., 1988).

The reports' authors noted that the crucial variable affecting health was not so much the overall wealth of a society, but of the equability of the distribution of wealth within societies. Alongside the health disparities created by class inequalities, there are a number of health disparities created by racism, sexism, ageism, and heterosexism. The poor and socially excluded are more likely to experience illness caused by poor diet, physiological and psychological stress, living and working in unhealthy environments, and are less likely to challenge the system. In Canada for example, aboriginal people have been disproportionately marginalized from economic power, so they bear a great deal of the burden of poor health.

According to critical sociology, capitalism and the pursuit of profit also lead to the problematic

commodification of health: the changing of something not generally thought of as a commodity into something that can be bought and sold in a marketplace. In this view, corporations, private insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies and investors have a disproportionate influence over how the health care system is run and funded, which type of diseases are researched, whether cheaper generic versions of patented drugs can be sold, the nature of the health care delivered, and even how the physiology of the human body is understood.

One outcome of this is that corporate interests also influence the terms in which debates about **public health care** are discussed. Corporate think tanks like the Fraser Institute and the CD Howe Institute have long advocated free-market, profit-driven, American-style models rather than publicly funded models to deliver health care in Canada (Carroll and Shaw, 2001). The language with which they approach health care emphasizes "taxpayer rights," alarming statements about the financial unsustainability of public health care, and the role of "vested interests" in promoting an "outdated" 1960s-era system. Despite the fact that Canadians persistently state that public, **universal health care** is their central priority, corporate and neoliberal messaging on health care has become increasingly influential over the last three decades.

Another critical approach to health and illness focuses on the emergence of **biopolitics** in the 18th and 19th centuries (Foucault, 1980). Biopolitics refers to the relationships of power that emerge when the task of fostering and administering the "life" of the population becomes central to government (in the broad sense of the term: see Chapter 17 "Government and Politics"). In a variety of different levels and sites in society — from implementing society-wide public health programs and

population controls to various forms of discipline exercised over the bodies of patients, soldiers, children, students, and prisoners — modern scientific knowledge on the functioning of the body establishes new power relations between experts (e.g., doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists, social workers) and subjects. As a result, increasingly numerous forms of discipline and regulation emerge that seek to act upon the living body and the living population to maximize their potential for health, productivity, efficiency, and docility.

Modern **biomedicine**, for example, is a system of medical practice that defines health and illness in terms of the mechanics of the physical, biological systems of the human body. It works on the basis of a mind/body division that leads the individual to "inhabit" his or her body and its problems in a certain way and to submit, voluntarily or involuntarily, to the expertise of doctors when bodily function deviates from biological norms. It is on the basis of doctors' claim to biomedical knowledge that individuals submit to more or less mortifying exercises of power and discipline: from dieting and exercise regimes to pharmaceutical drug treatments to caesarian births to chemotherapy and gene therapy.

It is interesting in this respect to note the various ways in which the knowledge and authority of doctors and the medical establishment are being challenged in contemporary society. People are increasingly researching and becoming more knowledgeable about their health concerns in a manner that permits them to engage with doctors and medical authorities on a more equal basis. They are also engaging with an expanding range of alternatives to conventional biomedicine: health practices and knowledge such as yoga, fitness regimes, dieting, acupuncture, traditional Chinese medicine, chi gong,

naturopathy, homeopathy, chiropractic, and indigenous healing practices. This turn to a model of individualized **care for the self** — i.e., ways of acting upon the self to transform the self to attain a certain mode of being such as “health” (Foucault, 1997) — has a number of competing implications, however. On the one hand, it enables practices of autonomy and self-formation freed from the power relations of the medical establishment. On the other hand, it can feed into intensified concerns and anxieties with the body that deepen rather than loosen submission to authorities and authoritative knowledge — dieting fads, esoteric knowledge and practices, and nontraditional healers, etc. As Zygmunt Bauman notes, when individuals take on the responsibility for knowledge about their own bodies and health in a pluralistic medical culture in which there are numerous competing and contradicting claims about treatment, the outcome for the individual can be paralyzing rather than liberating (Bauman, 2005).

Symbolic Interactionism

According to theorists working in this perspective, health and illness are both socially constructed. As we discussed in the beginning of the chapter, interactionists focus on the specific meanings and causes people attribute to illness. The term **medicalization of deviance** refers to the process that changes “bad” behaviour into “sick” behaviour. A related process is **demedicalization**, in which “sick” behaviour is normalized again. Medicalization and demedicalization affect who responds to the patient, how people respond to the patient, and how people view the personal responsibility of the patient (Conrad and Schneider, 1992).

Figure 19.13. In this engraving from the 19th century, "King Alcohol" is shown with a skeleton on a barrel of alcohol. The words "poverty," "misery," "crime," and "death" hang in the air behind him. (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress/ Wikimedia Commons)

An example of medicalization is illustrated by the history of how our society views alcohol and alcoholism. During the 19th century, people who drank too much were considered bad, lazy people. They were called drunks, and it was not uncommon for them to be arrested or run out of a town. Drunks were not treated in a sympathetic way because, at that time, it was thought that it was their own fault that they could not stop drinking. By the late 19th

century however, excessive drinking became regarded as a "disease of the will" — a paradoxical illness that required the patient to actively engage in his or her own treatment, even though the nature of the disease was defined by a defect in the will that undermined his or her ability to do so (Valverde, 1997). In the 20th century, people who drank too much were increasingly defined as alcoholics: people with a psychological dependence, physiological disease, or a genetic predisposition to addiction who were not responsible for their drinking. With alcoholism defined as a disease and not a personal choice, alcoholics came to be viewed with more compassion and understanding, although the paradox of recovery therapies for alcoholics remained. Thus, "badness" was transformed into "sickness."

There are numerous examples of demedicalization in history as well. During the Civil War era, slaves who frequently ran away from their owners were diagnosed with a mental disorder called *drapetomania*. This has since been reinterpreted as a completely appropriate response to being enslaved. A more recent example is homosexuality, which was labelled a mental disorder or a sexual orientation disturbance by the American Psychological Association until 1973.

While interactionism does acknowledge the subjective nature of diagnosis, it is important to remember who most benefits when a behaviour becomes defined as illness. Pharmaceutical companies make billions treating illnesses such as fatigue, insomnia, and hyperactivity that may not actually be illnesses in need of treatment, but opportunities for companies to make more money.

Key Terms

ableism: Discrimination against persons with disabilities or the unintended neglect of their needs.

anxiety disorders: Feelings of worry and fearfulness that last for months at a time.

biomedicine: A system of medical practice that defines health and illness in terms of the mechanics of the physical, biological systems of the human body

biopolitics: The relationships of power that emerge when the task of fostering and administering the life of the population becomes central to government.

care for the self: Ways of acting upon the self to transform the self to attain a certain mode of being (e.g., "health").

chronic diseases: Non-communicable diseases like cancer, heart disease, diabetes, hypertension and obesity, characterized by the slow onset of symptoms.

commodification: The changing of something not generally thought of as a commodity into something that can be bought and sold in a marketplace.

contested illnesses: Illnesses that are questioned or considered questionable by some medical professionals.

demedicalization: The social process that normalizes "sick" behavior.

disability: A reduction in one's ability to perform everyday tasks; the World Health Organization notes that this is a social limitation.

epidemiologic transition: The long term change in a population's dominant health problems or profile from

acute infectious diseases to chronic, degenerative diseases as societies go through the process of industrialization.

health: A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

impairment: The physical limitations a less-able person faces.

infectious diseases: Communicable diseases caused by micro-organisms such as bacteria or viruses.

legitimation: When a physician certifies that an illness is genuine.

medical pluralism: A situation in which no one model of health practice can successfully claim to provide the definitive truth for how to attain health.

medical sociology: The systematic study of how humans manage issues of health and illness, disease and disorders, and health care for both the sick and the healthy.

medicalization: The process by which aspects of life that were considered bad or deviant are redefined as sickness and needing medical attention to remedy.

medicalization of deviance: The process that changes “bad” behaviour into “sick” behavior.

mood disorders: Long-term, debilitating illnesses like depression and bipolar disorder.

norm: A socially defined standard measure which allows us to distinguish between what conforms to a rule and what does not.

personality disorders: Disorders that cause people to behave in ways that are seen as abnormal to society but seem normal to them.

public health care: Health insurance that is funded or provided by the government.

sick role: The pattern of expectations that define appropriate behaviour for the sick and for those who take care of them.

rehabilitation: Interventions to treat or cure disabilities in order to reintegrate disabled persons into "normal" society.

social epidemiology: The study of the causes and distribution of diseases.

stereotype interchangeability: When stereotypes don't change, they get recycled for application to a new subordinate group.

stigma: A "mark" of difference that defines a socially undesirable characteristic.

stigmatization: When someone's identity is spoiled; they are labelled as different, discriminated against, and sometimes even shunned due to an illness or disability.

stigmatization of illness: When people are discriminated against because of illnesses and sufferers are looked down upon or even shunned by society.

universal health care: A system that guarantees health care coverage for everyone.

Section Summary

19.1. The Social Construction of Health

Medical sociology is the systematic study of how humans manage issues of health and illness, disease and disorders, and health care for both the sick and the healthy. The social

construction of health explains how society shapes, and is shaped by, medical ideas.

19.2. Global Health

Social epidemiology is the study of the causes and distribution of diseases. From a global perspective, the health issues of high-income nations tend toward diseases like cancer as well as those that are linked to obesity, like heart disease, diabetes, and musculoskeletal disorders. Low-income nations are more likely to contend with infectious disease, high infant mortality rates, scarce medical personnel, and inadequate water and sanitation systems.

19.3. Health in Canada

Despite the Canadian population having generally good health compared with less-developed countries, Canada is still facing challenging issues such as a prevalence of obesity and diabetes. Moreover, Canadians of historically disadvantaged aboriginal groups, socioeconomic status, and gender experience higher levels of chronic health issues. Mental health and disability are health issues that are significantly impacted by medical definitions of normalcy.

19.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Health and Medicine

While the functionalist perspective looks at how health and illness define specific roles in society, the critical perspective is concerned with how health and illness fit into the structures of power in society. The interactionist perspective is concerned with how social interactions construct ideas of health and illness.

Section Quiz

19.1. The Social Construction of Health

1. Who determines which illnesses are stigmatized?

    1. Therapists
    2. The patients themselves
    3. Society
    4. All of the above

2. Chronic fatigue syndrome is an example of ________________.

    1. A stigmatized disease
    2. A contested illness
    3. A disability
    4. Demedicalization

3. The Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) is an example of ________________.

    1. The social construction of health
    2. Medicalization
    3. Disability accommodations
    4. A contested illness

19.2. Global Health

4. What is social epidemiology?

    1. The study of why some diseases are stigmatized and others are not
    2. The study of why diseases spread

3. The study of the mental health of a society
4. The study of the causes and distribution of diseases

5. Core nations are also known as ____________________.

1. High-income nations
2. Newly industrialized nations
3. Low-income nations
4. Developing nations

6. Many deaths in high-income nations are linked to ____________________.

1. Lung cancer
2. Obesity
3. Mental illness
4. Lack of clean water

7. According to the World Health Organization, what was the most frequent cause of death for children under five in low-income countries?

1. Starvation
2. Thirst
3. Pneumonia and diarrheal diseases
4. All of the above

19.3. Health in Canada

8. Which of the following statements is not true?

1. The life expectancy of aboriginal males in the Canada is approximately eight years shorter

than for non-aboriginal males.

2. The rate of tuberculosis for aboriginal Canadians is more than five times higher (per 100,000) than it is for non-aboriginal Canadians.
3. Aboriginal people have lower rates of chronic disease than non-aboriginal people have.
4. Recent visible minority immigrants have lower levels of health than native-born Canadians have.

9. The process by which aspects of life that were considered bad or deviant are redefined as sickness and needing medical attention to remedy is called ____________.

1. Deviance
2. Medicalization
3. Demedicalization
4. Intersection theory

10. What are the most commonly diagnosed mental disorders in Canada?

1. ADHD
2. Anxiety disorders
3. Autism spectrum disorders
4. Mood disorders

11. Sidewalk ramps and Braille signs are examples of ________________.

1. Disabilities
2. Accommodations required by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
3. Forms of accessibility for people with disabilities
4. Both b and c

12. The high unemployment rate among the disabled may be a result of ____________.

1. Medicalization
2. Obesity
3. Stigmatization
4. All of the above

19.4. Theoretical Perspectives on Health and Medicine

13. Which of the following is not part of the rights and responsibilities of a sick person under the functionalist perspective?

1. The sick person is not responsible for his or her condition.
2. The sick person must try to get better.
3. The sick person can take as long as he or she wants to get better.
4. The sick person is exempt from the normal duties of society.

14. The class, race, and gender inequalities in our healthcare system support the _____________ perspective.

1. Critical

2. Interactionist
3. Functionalist
4. All of the above

15. The removal of homosexuality from the DSM is an example of ____________.

1. Medicalization
2. Deviance
3. Interactionist theory
4. Demedicalization

[Quiz answers at end of chapter]

Short Answer

19.1. The Social Construction of Health

1. Pick a common illness and describe which parts of it are medically constructed, and which parts are socially constructed.
2. What diseases are the most stigmatized? Which are the least? Is this different in different cultures or social classes?

19.2. Global Health

1. If social epidemiologists studied Canada in the colonial period, what differences would they find between now and then?
2. What do you think are some of the

contributing factors to obesity-related diseases in Canada?

19.3. Health in Canada

1. What factors contribute to the disparities in health among ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender groups in Canada?
2. Do you know anyone with a mental disorder? How does it affect his or her life?

19.4. Theoretical Perspectives on Health and Medicine

1. Which theoretical perspective do you think best explains the sociology of health? Why?
2. What examples of medicalization and demedicalization can you think of?

Further Research

19.1. The Social Construction of Health
Spend some time on the two websites below. How do they present differing views of the vaccination controversy?
Vaccination: Defending Your Right to Know and Freedom to Choose: http://www.nvic.org/nvic-vaccine-news/november-2014/vaccination–defending-your-right-to-know-and-free.aspx
Shot by Shot: Story Gallery: http://www.shotbyshot.org/story-gallery/.
19.2. Global Health
Study this 2000-2015 W.H.O. map on global life expectancies. What trends do you

notice?: http://gamapserver.who.int/gho/interactive_charts/mbd/life_expectancy/atlas.html.

19.3. Health in Canada

Is ADHD a valid diagnosis and disease? Some think it is not. This article discusses ADHD in children and youth [PDF]: http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/sites/default/files/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-in-children-and-youth.pdf.

19.4. Theoretical Perspectives on Health and Medicine

Should alcoholism and other addictions be medicalized? Read and watch a dissenting view: http://abcnews.go.com/Health/MindMoodNews/addiction-treatment-medicalization-wrong-approach/story?id=13642451.

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Solutions to Section Quiz

1 C, | 2 B, | 3 A, | 4 D, | 5 A, | 6 B, | 7 C, | 8 C, | 9 B, | 10 D, | 11 D, | 12 C, | 13 C, | 14 A, | 15 D [Return to Quiz]

Image Attributions

Figure 19.1. (Photo courtesy of USACE Europe District/ flickr)

Figure 19.2. (Image courtesy of Donald Jusa/Flickr)

Figure 19.3. Nicolas Andry, Orthopedics or the art of preventing and correcting deformities of the body in children, 1741. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Figure 19.7. Life expectancy of Aboriginal men and women in Canada has improved but remains significantly lower than for the rest of the population (Graph courtesy of Health Canada, 2005).This reproduction is a copy of the version available at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/diseases-maladies/2005-01_health-sante_indicat-eng.php#life_expect . The Government of Canada allows reproduction of this graph in whole or in part for non-commercial purposes, without charge or further permission, (http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/home-accueil/important-eng.php#a7).

Long Desciptions

Figure 19.4 long description: The Mosby pain rating scale goes from 0 to 10. 0 is no pain, 2 is mild, 4 is discomforting, 6 is distressing, 8 is horrible and 10 is excruciating or the worst pain imaginable. The scale also used cartoon faces to illustrate the different levels of pain. 0 is smiling, 2 is a small smile, 4 is a straight face, 6 is a slightly sad face, 8 is a big sad face, 10 is a bigger sad face that is crying. [Return to Figure 19.4]

Figure 19.7 long description: Life expectancy, Registered Indians, Canada, 1980, 1990, and 2000

Date	Males life expectancy	Female life expectancy
1980	60.9 years	68.0 years
1990	66.9 years	74.0 years
2000	68.9 years	76.6 years

[Return to Figure 19.7]