Foundations in Sociology I

FOUNDATIONS IN SOCIOLOGY I

Social Construction of Everyday Life

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Overview

Foundations in Sociology: Social Construction of Everyday Life, by Dr. Susan Robertson (Sessional Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan), has been adapted for use from [Introduction to Sociology – 2nd Canadian Edition](#) by William Little. Chapters and sections from the source material have been rearranged for use in first year sociology classes. The source material has been divided over two new resources, the companion to this version being *[Foundations in Sociology: Society Structure Process](#)*.

Version History

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PART II

PART I - INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

[The Introduction to Sociology could be done as a video clip or trailer. This would allow for a description of what Sociology is, its levels of analysis, the emphasis that comprises the two approaches to the discipline, etc. The information copied below from chapter one of the NBB could be used as a guide for developing what needs to be communicated in the video clip, text or both.]

What Is Sociology?

Figure 0.1. Sociologists learn about society as a whole while studying one-to-one and group interactions. ([Agoraphobia](#) by Robert S. Donovan [CC-BY-NC 2.0](#))

A dictionary defines **sociology** as the systematic study of society and social interaction. The word "sociology" is derived from the Latin word *socius* (companion) and the Greek word *logos* (speech or reason), which together mean "reasoned speech or discourse about companionship". How can the experience of companionship or togetherness be put into words or explained? While this is a starting point for the discipline, sociology is actually much more complex. It uses many different theories and methods to study a wide range of subject matter, and applies these studies to the real world. The qualities of the real world that sociologists study is elaborated more fully in Module One.

Society and Culture: Micro, Meso, 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 video of people from different societies as they carry on everyday conversations to study the rules of polite conversation from different world cultures. Another sociologist might interview a representative sample of people to see how email and instant messaging have changed the way organizations are run. Yet another sociologist might study how migration determined the way in which language spread and changed over time. A fourth sociologist might study the history of international agencies like the United Nations or the International Monetary Fund to examine how the globe became divided into a First World and a Third World after the end of the colonial era.

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. It is common to divide these levels of analysis into different gradations based on the scale of interaction involved: micro, meso, macro and global. In Sociology 112.3, students are introduced to a selection of theories, methods and research of those sociologists who focus on the micro and meso levels of analysis. In Sociology 111.3, emphasis is placed on the macro and global levels of analysis. however, it is assumed that the

macro and global levels of reality provide the broader context for the dynamics of the everyday reality that is being examined.

At the micro-level of analysis, the focus is on the social dynamics of face-to-face interaction: How are specific individuals in specific locations able to interact in a coherent and consistent manner? For example, how is a conversation possible? How do you know when it is your turn to speak or when someone has been speaking too long?

At the meso-level of analysis, the focus shifts to the characteristics of specific networks, groups, and organizations (i.e., collectivities). The meso-level refers to the connection, interaction and ongoing coordination of numerous different social roles simultaneously. When we speak of a school, for example, we need to move beyond the analysis of single face-to-face interactions–interactions in a single setting where participants are co-present–to examine the combined interactions and relationships between students, parents, teachers, and administrators. At this level, we ask, how do the properties of different types of social collectivity affect or alter the behaviour of individuals? Why does an individual's behaviour change when they are in a collectivity? How do collectivities constrain or enable their members to act in certain ways? What is it about collectivities that entice people to conform? In these meso-level examples we are still talking about specific, identifiable individuals–albeit not necessarily in direct face-to-face situations–but take into account the complex entwinement of their lives to account for their behaviour.

At the macro-level of analysis, the focus is on the

properties of large-scale, society-wide social interactions: the dynamics of institutions, classes, or whole societies. The macro therefore extends beyond the immediate milieu or direct experience of individuals. These large-scale social structures might be nothing more than the aggregations of specific interactions between individuals at any particular moment as Simmel argues. However, the properties of structures, institutions, and societies — described by statistical analysis, cross-cultural comparisons, or historical research — also have a reality that Emile Durkheim called *sui generis* (i.e., of their own kind). The properties that make society possible at a macro scale cannot be explained by, or reduced to, their components without missing their most important features.

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, the introduction of new technologies, the investment and disinvestment of capital, the images of popular culture, or the tensions of cross-cultural conflict, etc. increasingly involve our daily life in the affairs of the entire globe, by-passing traditional borders and, to some degree, distance itself. The example above of the way in which the world became divided into wealthy First World and impoverished Third World societies reflects social processes — the formation of international institutions such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and non-governmental organizations, for example — which are global in scale and global in their effects.

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 not only by their intimate relationships with the people around them, nor only by provincial and national based corporations and policies, etc., but by global markets that determine the price of oil and the global flows of capital investment. The *context* of these processes has to be analysed at a global scale of analysis.

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? The early German sociologist Georg Simmel pointed out that macro-level processes are in fact nothing more than the sum of all the unique interactions between specific individuals at any one time (1908/1971), yet they have properties of their own which would be missed if sociologists only focused on the interactions of specific individuals. Émile Durkheim's classic study of suicide (1897/1951) is a case in point. While suicide is one of the most personal, individual, and intimate acts imaginable, Durkheim demonstrated that rates of suicide differed between religious communities — Protestants, Catholics, and Jews — in a way that could not be explained by the individual factors involved in each specific case. The different rates of suicide had to be explained by macro-level variables associated with the different religious beliefs and practices of the faith communities; more specifically, the different degrees of *social integration* of these communities. We will return to this example in more detail later. On the other hand, macro-level phenomena like class structures, institutional organizations, legal

systems, gender stereotypes, population growth, and urban ways of life provide the shared context for everyday life but do not explain its specific nuances and micro-variations very well. 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.

Studying Patterns: How Sociologists View Society

All sociologists are interested in the experiences of individuals and how those experiences are shaped by interactions with social groups and society as a whole. 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 habitual or routinized at micro-levels of interaction, or institutionalized at macro or global levels of interaction, they are referred to as social **structures.**

As we noted above, understanding the relationship between the individual and society is one of the most difficult sociological problems. Partly this is because of the reified way these two terms are used in everyday speech. **Reification** refers to the way in which abstract concepts, complex processes, or mutable social relationships come to be thought of as "things." A prime

example of reification is when people say that "society" caused an individual to do something, or to turn out in a particular way. In writing essays, first-year sociology students sometimes refer to "society" as a cause of social behaviour or as an entity with independent agency. On the other hand, the "individual" is a being that seems solid, tangible, and independent of anything going on outside of the skin sack that contains its essence. This conventional distinction between society and the individual is a product of reification, as both society and the individual appear as independent objects. A *concept* of "the individual" and a *concept* of "society" have been given the status of real, substantial, independent objects. As we will see in the chapters to come, society and the individual are neither objects, nor are they independent of one another. An "individual" is inconceivable without the relationships to others that define their internal, subjective life and their external, socially-defined roles.

One problem for sociologists is that these concepts of the individual and society, and the relationship between them, are thought of in terms established by a very common *moral* framework in modern democratic societies — namely, that of individual responsibility and individual choice. The individual is morally responsible for their behaviours and decisions. Often in this framework, any suggestion that an individual's behaviour needs to be understood in terms of that person's social context is dismissed as "letting the individual off" for taking personal responsibility for their actions. Talking about society is akin to being morally soft or lenient.

Sociology, as a social science, remains neutral on these types of moral questions. For sociologists, the conceptualization of the individual and society is much

more complex than the moral framework suggests and needs to be examined through evidence-based, rather than morality-based, research. The sociological problem is to be able to see the individual as a thoroughly social being and, yet, as a being who has agency and free choice. Individuals are beings who *do* take on individual responsibilities in their everyday social roles, and risk social consequences when they fail to live up to them. However, the manner in which individuals take on responsibilities, and sometimes the compulsion to do so, are socially defined. The sociological problem is to be able to see society as: a dimension of experience characterized by regular and predictable patterns of behaviour that exist independently of any specific individual's desires or self-understanding. At the same time, a society is nothing *but* the ongoing social relationships and activities of specific individuals.

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).

Why Study Sociology?

Figure 0.2. 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. (Hon. T.C. Douglas, Premier of Saskatchewan, talking with Private P. Campbell of The Saskatoon Light Infantry (M.G.), Barneveld, Netherlands, 29 April 1945 by Lieut. G. Barry Gilroy is available from Library and Archives Canada / PA-138035 and is in the Public Domain.)

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.

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.

1

MODULE 1: DISCOVERING THE SOCIAL

Learning Objectives

- Explain why storytelling is important to both, society and sociology.
- Identify the social origins and social functions of language.
- Describe the importance of language, communication, and social interaction for discovering the social.
- Describe and compare different perspectives on the origins and possibility of the social.
- Compare ways of understanding the evolution of human societies.

• Describe the difference between pre-industrial, industrial, post-industrial and post-natural societies.

1.0 The Tales we Tell…

Then…

In 1900 a young anthropologist, John Swanton, transcribed a series of myths and tales — known as *qqaygaang* in the Haida language — told by the master Haida storyteller Ghandl. The tales tell stories of animal and human transformations, of heroes who marry birds, of birds who take off their skins and become women, of mussels who manifest the spirit form of whales, and of poles climbed to the sky.

> *After she'd offered him something to eat, Mouse Woman said to him, "When I was bringing a bit of cranberry back from my berry patch, you helped me. I intend to lend you something I wore for stalking prey when I was younger."*
>
> *She brought out a box. She pulled out four more boxes within boxes. In the innermost box was the skin of a mouse with small bent claws. She said to him, "Put this on."*
>
> *Small though it was, he got into it. It was easy. He went up the wall and onto the roof of the house. And Mouse Woman said to him, "You know what to do when you wear it. Be on your way"* (Ghandl, quoted in Bringhurst, 2011).

To the ear of contemporary Canadians, these types of tales often seem confusing. They lack the standard inner psychological characterization of protagonists and antagonists, the "realism" of natural settings and chronological time sequences, or the plot devices of man

against man, man against himself, and man against nature. However, as Robert Bringhurst (2011) argues, this is not because the tales are not great literature or have not completely "evolved." In his estimation, Ghandl should be recognized as one of the most brilliant storytellers who has ever lived in Canada. Rather, it is because the stories speak to, and from, a fundamentally different experience of the world: the experience of nomadic hunting and gathering people as compared to the sedentary people of modern capitalist societies. How does the way we tell stories reflect the organization and social structures of the societies we live in?

Ghandl's tales are told within an oral tradition rather than a written or literary tradition. They are meant to be listened to, not read, and as such the storytelling skill involves weaving in subtle repetitions and numerical patterns, and plays on Haida words and well-known mythological images rather than creating page-turning dramas of psychological or conflictual suspense. Bringhurst suggests that even compared to the Indo-European oral tradition going back to Homer or the Vedas, the Haida tales do not rely on the auditory conventions of verse. Whereas verse relies on acoustic devices like alliteration and rhyming, Haida mythic storytelling was a form of *noetic prosody*, relying on patterns of ideas and images. The Haida, as a preagricultural people, did not see a reason to add overt musical qualities to their use of language. "[V]erse in the strictly acoustic sense of the word does not play the same role in preagricultural societies. Humans, as a rule, do not begin to farm their language until they have begun to till the earth and to manipulate the growth of plants and animals." As Bringhurst puts it, "*myth is that form*

of language in which poetry and music have not as yet diverged"(Bringhurst, 2011, italics in original).
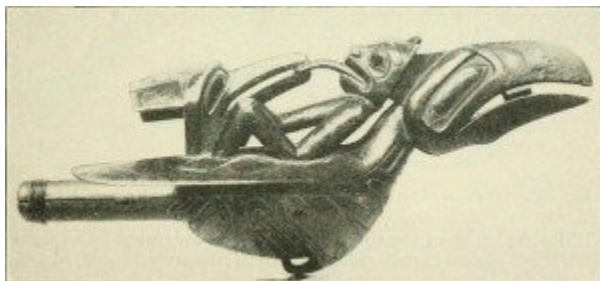
Figure 1.1. A Haida ceremonial rattle in the form of the mythical thunder bird.
(from the British Museum Handbook to the Ethnographical Collections (1910) by Internet Archive Book Images and is licensed under the rule that "no known copyright restrictions" exist.)

Perhaps more significantly for sociologists, the hunting and gathering lifestyle of the Haida also produces a very different relationship to the natural world and to the non-human creatures and plants with which they coexisted. This is manifest in the tales of animal-human-spirit transformations and in their moral lessons, which caution against treating the world with disrespect. With regard to understanding Haida storytelling, Bringhurst argues that:

> following the poetry they [hunting gathering peoples] make is more like moving through a forest or a canyon, or waiting in a blind, than moving through an orchard or field. The language is often highly ordered, rich, compact — but it is not arranged in neat, symmetrical rows (2011).

In other words, for the hunter who follows animal traces through the woods, or waits patiently for hours in a hunting blind or fishing spot for wild prey to appear, the relationship to the prey is much more akin to "putting

on their skins" or spiritually "becoming-animal" than to be a shepherd raising livestock. A successful hunting and gathering people would be inclined to study how animals think from the inside, rather than controlling or manipulating them from the outside. For the Haida, tales of animal transformations would not seem so fantastic or incomprehensible as they do to modern people who spend most of their life indoors. They would be part of their "acutely personal relations with the wild" (Bringhurst, 2011).

Similarly, the Haida ethics, embodied in their tales and myths, acknowledge a complex web of unwritten contracts between humans, animal species, and spirit-beings.

> The culture as Ghandl describes it depends — like every hunting culture — not on control of the land as such but on control of the human demands that are placed upon it (Bringhurst, 2011).

In the tales, humans continually confront a world of living beings and forces that are much more powerful and intelligent than they are, and who are quick to take offense at human stupidity and hubris.

What sociologists learn from the detailed studies of the Haida and their literature is how a fundamentally different social relationship to the environment affects the way people think and how they see their place in the world. Nevertheless, although the traditional Haida society of Haida Gwaii in the Pacific Northwest is very different from that of contemporary post-industrial Canada, both can be seen as different ways of expressing the human need to cooperate and live together in order to survive. For the sociologist, this is a lesson in how

the *type* of society one lives in — its scale and social structure — impacts one's experience of the world at a very fundamental perceptual level.

And Now…..

Originally published in 1985, and more recently popularized as a television series, Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* is classified as speculative fiction; a genre of literature that encourages readers to ask "what if" questions informed by their experiences of the organization and structure of society. The posing of "what if" questions in speculative fiction creates an opportunity for storytellers and their audiences to consciously reflect on the organization and social structure of lived experience as a means to imagine how relationships and experiences might be the same, or different in the future. The method of speculative fiction is not unlike the method of science. Like authors of speculative fiction, scientists systematically observe, measure and interpret their natural and social realities. In turn, they use their powers of imagination to generate "what if" questions about the factual conditions and forces that have coalesced to produce the observed conditions. As stipulated in Albert Einstein's (1931′ *On Cosmic Religion: With Other Opinions and Aphorisms,* p. 49) now famous quote: "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution. It is, strictly speaking a real factor in scientific research."

1.1 The Social: Real but not Natural

1.1.1 Language and Communication

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 experience is essentially meaningful, and culture is the source of the meanings that humans share. What are the consequences of this emphasis on the meaningfulness of human experience? What elements of social life become visible if we focus on the social processes whereby meanings are produced and circulated?

Culture is the term used to describe this dimension of meaningful collective existence. Culture refers to the shared symbols that people create to solve real-life problems. What this perspective entails is that human experience is essentially meaningful or cultural. 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. This mediated experience is the experience of culture. As the philosopher Martin Heidegger put it, humans live in an "openness" granted by language and by their ability to respond to the meaningfulness of things in a way that other living beings do not. 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.

What is the "meaning of meaning" in social life, therefore? Max Weber notes that it is possible to imagine situations in which human experience appears direct and unmediated; for example, someone taps your knee and your leg jerks forward, or you are riding your bike and get hit by a car (1968, pp. 94–96). In these situations, experience seems purely physical, unmediated. Yet when we assimilate these experiences into our lives, we do so by making them meaningful events. By tapping your knee, the doctor is looking for signs that indicate the functioning of your nervous system. She or he is literally reading the reactions as symbolic events and assigning them meaning within the context of an elaborate cultural map of meaning: the modern biomedical understanding of the body. 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 these events changes depending on the cultural context. A doctor of traditional Chinese medicine would read the knee reflex differently than a graduate of the UBC medical program. The story and meaning of the car accident changes if it is told to a friend as opposed to a policeman or an insurance adjuster.

The problem of meaning in sociological analysis, then, is to determine how events or things acquire meaning (e.g., through the reading of symptoms or the telling of

stories); how the true or right meanings are determined (e.g., through biomedically-based diagnoses or juridical procedures of determining responsibility); how meaning works in the organization of social life (e.g., through the medicalized relation to our bodies or the norms of traffic circulation); 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. Consequently, to discover the social in our everyday lived realities we begin by consciously reflecting on our capacity for language and communication.

Storytelling, is considered to be one of the oldest forms of human communication. Shared via different media (e.g., oral traditions, iconography, print, electronic, etc.) our stories allow us to imagine, transmit, reproduce, and transform, our normative and factual bodies of knowledge. Because storytelling, both fictional and non-fictional, is a central feature of social interaction and society, sociologists are attentive to linkages among language acquisition, systems of communication, and stories of human survival, social progress and social justice. In fact, it is within the symbolic codes that human beings create, learn and use to conduct their everyday activities that sociologists discover the origins of the social.

1.1.2 Social Interaction and the Social Construction of Reality

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 would appear to be a truism. After all, what else could society be? However, a few pages later, he reaches the conclusion that:

> With each formation of parties, with each joining for common tasks or in a common feeling or way of thinking, with each articulation of the distribution of positions of submission and domination, with each common meal, with each self-adornment for others — with every growth of new synthesizing phenomena such as these, the same group becomes "more society" than it was before. *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).

If society is nothing but these simultaneous interactions, Simmel's problem of sociology is clear. Sociology, as the "science of society," appears to be a discipline without an object! Society is not an object or a thing; it is a mirage, a name we have given to the multitude of ongoing, unfinished processes of interaction between individuals.

This means we have to ask the questions of sociology at a more basic level. How do these processes hold together and take shape? How are we able to recognize and talk about different social phenomena like the formation of parties, the joining together in common tasks, the creation of hierarchies, the wearing of jewellery, etc.? If society is nothing but a number of individuals who have entered into specific interactions, how do widespread norms of behaviour, structured relations of power, and predictable relationships between social variables form?
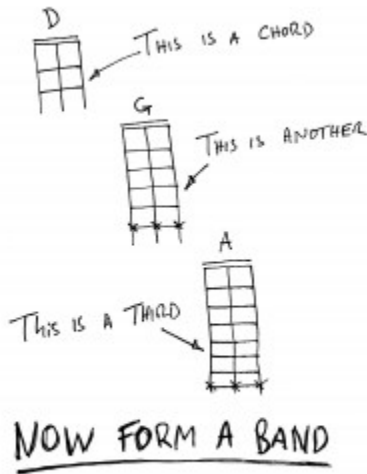
Figure 6.3. Punk rock's stripped down "do it yourself" manifesto was illustrated in a diagram from the punkzine *Sideburns* in 1977. The attitude of building music from nothing was central to the creation of punk as a new musical *form* or genre within rock and roll. (Image courtesy of Mark Cottle, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 UK: England & Wales License)

Punk rock in the 1970s saw itself returning to the roots of rock and roll. Part of this was to simplify the structure

of the music to renew rock and roll as a form of music. This is a good metaphor for how Simmel understands social interaction between individuals as both a mutual attunement and an act of creation. For a coherent interaction to take place, everyone tunes their instruments together (at least somewhat) and plays the same notes and chords. However, this attunement also enables everyone to introduce new elements into the interaction and to invent new musical or social forms (or renew old ones). Along with the new musical form of punk rock came new lyrical and thematic contents: anger, disillusionment, anarchy, class politics, etc.

Simmel's solution to the problem of how society is possible is based on the idea that the mutual influence of individuals on each other during interaction creates mutual attunements, not unlike a band tuning its instruments. This mutual influence in turn creates enduring social forms (hence the term *formal sociology* to describe Simmel's work). We will discuss Simmel's formal sociology later in Module Two. In general, however, the solution to the question — How is society possible? — differs depending on the level of analysis used to pose the question.

Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith (b. 1926) defines *the social* as the "ongoing concerting and coordinating of individuals' activities" (Smith, 1999). Sociology is the systematic study of all those aspects of life designated by the adjective "social." They concern relationships, and they concern what happens when more than one person is involved. These aspects of social life never simply occur; they are organized processes. They can be the briefest of micro-level everyday interactions — moving to the right to let someone pass on a busy sidewalk, for

example — or the largest and most enduring interactions — such as the billions of daily exchanges that constitute the circuits of global capitalism. If there are at least two people involved, even in the seclusion of one's mind, then there is a social interaction that entails the "ongoing concerting and coordinating of activities." Why does the person move to the right on the sidewalk? What collective processes lead to the decision that moving to the right rather than the left is normal? Think about the T-shirts in your chest of drawers at home. What are the sequences of linkages, exchanges, and social relationships that connect your T-shirts to the dangerous and hyper-exploitative garment factories in rural China or Bangladesh? These are the type of questions that point to the unique domain and puzzles of *the social* that sociology seeks to explore and understand.

Figure 1.2. 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 under a CC-BY 2.0 Generic License.)

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. Social Reality is constructed by an idea.

Figure 1.3. 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 from Wikimedia Commons in the Public Domain.)

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. 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. In contemporary society, however, 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, the sociological study of the micro-level processes of everyday life are also impacted by macro-level phenomena such as gender and class inequality as well as historical transformations.

1.2 Types of Societies and Models of Social Evolution

Figure 1.4. Maasai men are hunting with shepherd's staves and spears. How does technology influence a society's daily occupations? (Photo courtesy of Abir Anwar from Flickr under a CC-BY 2.0 Generic License)

While language, communication and social interaction are key elements to understanding the possibility and continuance of society, the question of precisely what society is in a particular context remains open. Haida, Maasai, modern Canadians — each is a society. But what does this mean? Exactly what is a society? In sociological terms, a *society* refers to a group of people who interact in a definable territory and share the same culture. In practical, everyday terms, societies consist of various types of institutional constraint and coordination exercised over our choices and actions. The *type of society* we live in determines the nature of these types of constraint and coordination. The nature of our social institutions, the type of work we do, the way we think

about ourselves and the structures of power and social inequality that order our life chances are all products of the type of society we live in and thus vary globally and historically.

The founder of sociology, August Comte (1798–1857), provided the first sociological theory of the evolution of human societies. His best known sociological theory was the **law of three stages**, which held that all human societies and all forms of human knowledge evolve through three distinct stages from primitive to advanced: the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive. The key variable in defining these stages was the way a people conceptualized *causation* or how they *understood* their place in the world.

In the **theological stage,** humans explain causes in terms of the will of anthropocentric gods (the gods cause things to happen). In the **metaphysical stage,** humans explain causes in terms of abstract, "speculative" ideas like nature, natural rights, social contracts, or "self-evident" truths. This was the basis of Comte's critique of the Enlightenment philosophers whose ideas about natural rights and freedoms had led to the French Revolution but also to the chaos of its aftermath. In his view, the "negative" or metaphysical knowledge of the philosophers was based on dogmatic ideas that could not be reconciled when they were in contradiction. This lead to inevitable conflict and moral anarchy. Finally, in the **positive stage,** humans explain causes in terms of positivist, scientific observations and laws (i.e., "positive" knowledge based on propositions limited to what can be empirically observed). Comte believed that this would be the final stage of human social evolution because positivist science could empirically determine how

society should be organized. Science could reconcile the division between political factions of order and progress by eliminating the basis for moral and intellectual anarchy. The application of positive philosophy would lead to the unification of society and of the sciences (Comte, 1830/1975).

Karl Marx offered another model for understanding the evolution of types of society. Marx argued that the evolution of societies from primitive to advanced was not a product of the way people *thought,* as Comte proposed, but of the power struggles in each epoch between different social classes over control of property. The key variable in his analysis was the different modes of production or "material bases" that characterized different forms of society: from hunting and gathering, to agriculture, to industrial production. This *historical materialist* approach to understanding society explains both social change and the development of human ideas in terms of underlying changes in the mode of production. In other words the type of society and its level of development is determined principally by *how* a people produces the material goods needed to meet its needs. Their world view, including the concepts of causality described by Comte, followed from the way of thinking involved in the society's mode of production.

On this basis, Marx categorized the historical types of society into primitive communism, agrarian/slave societies, feudalism, and capitalism. Primitive communists, for example, are hunter gatherers like the Haida whose social institutions and worldview develop in sync with their hunting and gathering relationship to the environment and its resources. They are defined by their hunter-gatherer mode of production.

Marx went on to argue that the *historical* transformations from one type of society to the next are generated by the society's capacity to generate economic surpluses and the conflicts and tensions that develop when one class monopolizes economic power or property: land owners over agricultural workers, slave owners over slaves, feudal lords over serfs, or capitalists over labourers. These class dynamics are inherently unstable and eventually lead to revolutionary transformations from one mode of production to the next.

To simplify Comte's and Marx's schemas, we might examine the way different types of society are structured around their relationship to nature. Sociologist Gerhard Lenski (1924-2015) defined societies in terms of their technological sophistication. With each advance in technology the relationship between humans and nature is altered. Societies with rudimentary technology are at the mercy of the fluctuations of their environment, while societies with industrial technology have more control over their environment, and thus develop different cultural and social features. On the other hand, societies with rudimentary technology make relatively little impact on their environment, while industrial societies transform it radically. The changes in the relationship between humans and their environment in fact goes beyond technology to encompass all aspects of social life, including its mental life (Comte) and material life (Marx). Distinctions based on the changing nature of this relationship enable sociologists to describe societies along a spectrum: from the foraging societies that characterized the first 90,000 years of human existence to the contemporary postnatural, anthropocene societies

in which human activity has made a substantial impact on the global ecosystem.

1.2.1 Preindustrial Societies

Before the Industrial Revolution and the widespread use of machines, societies were small, rural, and dependent largely on local resources. Economic production was limited to the amount of labour a human being could provide, and there were few specialized occupations. Production was (for the most part) for immediate consumption, although evidence of trade between groups also goes back the earliest archaeological records. The very first occupation was that of hunter-gatherer.

Hunter-Gatherer Societies

Figure 1.5. The Blackfoot or Siksika were traditionally nomadic hunter-gatherers who moved camp frequently during the summer months to follow the buffalo herds. (Image courtesy of Library and Archives Canada via Wikimedia Commons and in the Public Domain)

Of the various types of preindustrial societies, **Hunter-gatherer societies** demonstrate the strongest dependence on the environment. As the basic structure of all human society until about 10,000–12,000 years ago,

these groups were based around kinship or tribal affiliations. Hunter-gatherers relied on their surroundings for survival — they hunted wild animals and foraged for uncultivated plants for food. They survived on what nature provided and immediately consumed what they obtained. They produced no surpluses. When resources became scarce, the group moved to a new area to find sustenance, meaning they were nomadic. The plains Indians of North America, moved frequently to follow their main source of food. Some groups, like the Haida, lived off of abundant, non-depleting resources like fish, which enabled them to establish permanent villages where they could dwell for long periods of the year before dispersing to summer camps.

Most of the caloric intake of hunters and gatherers came from foraging for edible plants, fruits, nuts, berries, and roots. The largely meat-based diet of the Inuit is a notable exception. Richard Lee (1978) estimated that approximately 65% of the hunter-gatherer diet came from plant sources, which had implications for the gender egalitarianism of these societies. With the earliest economic division of labour being between male hunters and women gatherers, the fact that women accounted for the largest portion of the food consumed by the community ensured the importance of their status within the group. On the other hand, early reports of missionaries among the Algonquins of the north shore of Lake Superior observed women with their noses cut off and small parts of their scalp removed as punishment for adultery, suggesting that (at least among some groups) female subordination was common. Male Algonquins often had seven or eight wives (Kenton, 1954).

As a result of their unique relationship and dependence on the environment for sustenance, the ideal type or model that characterized hunter-gatherer societies includes several common features (Diamond, 1974):

1. The distribution of economic surplus is organized on a communalistic, shared basis in which there is little private property, work is cooperative, and gift giving is extensive. The use of resources was governed by the practice of usufruct, the distribution of resources according to need (Bookchin, 1982).

2. Power is dispersed either shared equally within the community, or shifting between individual members based on individual skills and talents.

3. Social control over the members of society is exercised through shared customs and sentiment rather than through the development of formal law or institutions of law enforcement.

4. Society is organized on the basis of kinship and kinship ties so there are few, if any, social functions or activities separate from family life.

5. There is little separation between the spheres of intimate private life and public life. Everything is a matter of collective concern.

6. The life of the community is all "personal" and emotionally charged. There is little division of labour so there is no social isolation.

7. Art, story telling, ethics, religious ritual and spirituality are all fused together in daily life and experience. They provide a common means of expressing imagination, inspiration, anxiety, need and purpose.

One interesting aspect of hunter-gatherer societies that runs counter to modern prejudices about "primitive" society, is how they developed mechanisms to prevent their evolution into more "advanced" sedentary, agricultural types of society. For example, in the "headman" structure, the authority of the headman or "titular chief" rests entirely on the ongoing support and confidence of community members rather than permanent institutional structures. This is a mechanism that actively wards off the formation of permanent institutionalized power (Clastres, 1987). The headman's main role is as a diplomatic peacemaker and dispute settler, and he held sway only so long as he maintained the confidence of the tribe. Beyond a headman's personal prestige, fairness in judgement and verbal ability, there was no social apparatus to enable a permanent institutional power or force to emerge.

Similarly the Northwest Pacific practice of the *potlatch,* in which goods, food, and other material wealth were regularly given away to neighboring bands, provided a means of redistributing wealth and preventing permanent inequality from developing. Evidence also shows that even when hunter-gatherers lived in close proximity with agriculturalists they were not motivated to adopt the agricultural mode of production because the diet of early agricultural societies was significantly poorer in nutrition (Stavrianos, 1990; Diamond, 1999). Recent evidence from archaeological sites in the British Isles suggests for example that early British hunter-gatherers traded for wheat with continental agriculturalists 2,000 years before agricultural economies were adopted in ancient Britain (Smith et. al., 2015; Larson, 2015). They had close contact with

agriculturalists but were not inclined to adopt their sedentary societal forms, presumably because there was nothing appealing about them.

These societies were common until several hundred years ago, but today only a few hundred remain in existence, such as indigenous Australian tribes sometimes referred to as "aborigines," or the Bambuti, a group of pygmy hunter-gatherers residing in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Still, in 2014, members of the Amazonian Mashco-Piro clan emerged out of their voluntary isolation at the border of Peru and Brasil to make "first contact" with the Brazilian government's Indigenous people's authority (Funai) in order to seek protection from suspected drug-traffickers (Carrington, 2014). Hunter-gatherer groups largely disappeared under the impact of colonization and European diseases, but it is estimated that another 75 uncontacted tribes still inhabit the Amazonian rainforest.

Figure 1.6. Teocinte (top) is the undomesticated ancestor of modern corn (bottom). Teocintes were the natural source of one of the most important food crops cultivated by the horticultural societies of Mesoamerica. (Image courtesy of John Doebley from Wikimedia Commons under a CC-BY 3.0 Unported license.)

Horticultural and Pastoral Societies

Around 10,200 BCE, another type of society developed in ancient Anatolia, (now part of Turkey), based on the newly developed capacity for people to grow and cultivate plants. Previously, the depletion of a region's crops or water supply forced hunter-gatherer societies to relocate in search of food sources. **Horticultural societies** formed in areas where rainfall and other conditions provided fertile soils to grow stable crops with simple hand tools. Their increasing degree of control over nature decreased their dependence on shifting environmental conditions for survival. They no longer had to abandon their location to follow resources and were able to find permanent settlements. The new horticultural technology created more stability and dependability, produced more material goods and provided the basis for the first revolution in human survival: the **neolithic revolution**.

Changing conditions and adaptations also led some societies to rely on the domestication of animals where circumstances permitted. Roughly 8,000 BCE, human societies began to recognize their ability to tame and breed animals. **Pastoral societies** rely on the domestication of animals as a resource for survival. Unlike earlier hunter-gatherers who depended entirely on existing resources to stay alive, pastoral groups were able to breed livestock for food, clothing, and transportation, creating a surplus of goods. Herding, or pastoral, societies remained nomadic because they were forced to follow their animals to fresh feeding grounds.

With the emergence of horticultural and pastoral societies during the neolithic revolution, stable agricultural surpluses began to be generated, population

densities increased, specialized occupations developed, and societies commenced sustained trading with other local groups. Feuding and warfare also grew with the accumulation of wealth. One of the key inventions of the neolithic revolution therefore was structured, social inequality: the development of a class structure based on the appropriation of surpluses. A **social class** can be defined as a group that has a distinct relationship to the means of production. In neolithic societies, based on horticulture or animal husbandry as their means of production, *control of land or livestock* became the first form of private property that enabled one relatively small group to take the surpluses while another much larger group produced them. For the first time in history, societies were divided between producing classes and owning classes. Moreover, as control of land was the source of power in neolithic societies, ways of organizing and defending it became a more central preoccupation. The development of permanent administrative and military structures, taxation, as well as the formation of specialized priestly classes to spiritually unite society originated on the basis of the horticultural and pastoral relationship to nature.

Agricultural Societies
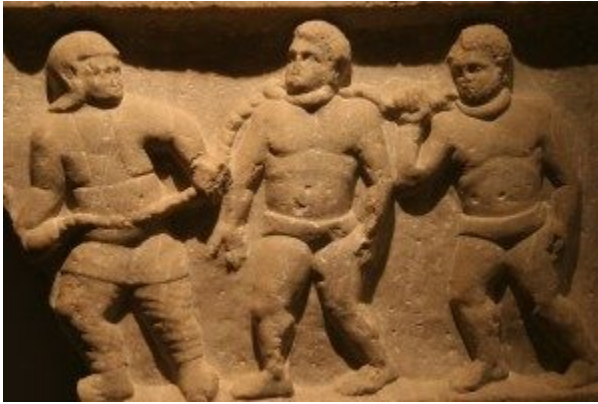
Figure 1.7. Roman collared slaves depicted in a marble relief from Smyrna (modern Turkey) in 200 CE. (Image courtesy of from the Collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England available at Wikimedia Commons under a CC-BY-SA 2.0 License.)

While pastoral and horticultural societies used small, temporary tools such as digging sticks or hoes, *agricultural societies* relied on permanent tools for survival. Around 3,000 BCE, an explosion of new technology known as the Agricultural Revolution made farming possible — and profitable. Farmers learned to rotate the types of crops grown on their fields and to reuse waste products such as fertilizer, which led to better harvests and bigger surpluses of food. New tools for digging and harvesting were made of metal, making them more effective and longer lasting. Human settlements grew into towns and cities, and particularly bountiful regions became centres of trade and commerce.

This era in which some classes of people had the time and comfort to engage in more contemplative and thoughtful activities, such as music, poetry, and philosophy, became referred to as the "dawn of civilization" by some because of the development of

leisure and arts. Craftspeople were able to support themselves through the production of creative, decorative, or thought-provoking aesthetic objects and writings.

As agricultural techniques made the production of surpluses possible, social classes and power structures became further entrenched. Kinship ties became secondary to other forms of social allegiance and power. Those with the power to appropriate the surpluses were able to dominate the society on a wider scale than ever before. Classes of nobility and religious elites developed. As cities expanded, ownership and protection of resources became an ever pressing concern and the militarization of society became more prominent. Difference in social standing between men and women, already initiated in neolithic societies, became more pronounced and institutionalized. **Slavery** — the ownership and control of humans as property — was also institutionalized as a large scale source of labour. In the agricultural empires of Greece and Rome, slavery was the dominant form of class exploitation. However, as slaves were largely acquired through military acquisition, ancient slavery as an institution was inherently unstable and inefficient.

Feudal Societies

In Europe, the 9th century gave rise to **feudal societies**. Feudal societies were still agriculturally based but organized according to a strict hierarchical system of power founded on land ownership, military protection, and duties or *mutual obligations* between the different classes. Feudalism is usually used in a restricted sense by historians to describe the societies of post-Roman

Europe, from roughly the 9th to the 15th centuries (the "middle ages"), although these societies bare striking resemblance to the hierarchical, agricultural-based societies of Japan, China, and pre-contact America (e.g., Aztec, Inca) of the same period.

Figure 1.8. Tapestry from the 1070s in which King Harold swears an oath to become the vassal of Duke William of Normandy. (Photo courtesy of Myrabella at Wikimedia Commons and is in the Public Domain.)

In Europe the class system of feudalism was organized around the parceling out of manors or estates by the aristocracy to vassals and knights in return for their military service. The nobility, known as lords, rewarded knights or vassals by granting them pieces of land. In return for the resources that the land provided, vassals promised to fight for their lords. These individual pieces of land, known as fiefdoms, were cultivated by the lower class of serfs. Serfs were not slaves, in that they were at least nominally free men and women, but they produced agricultural surpluses for lords primarily through forced agricultural service. In return for maintaining and working the land, serfs were guaranteed a place to live and military protection from outside enemies. They were able to produce food and goods for their own consumption on private land allotments, or on common allotments shared by the community. Power in feudal

society was handed down through family lines, with serf families serving lords for generations and generations.

In later forms of feudalism, the forced labour of the serfs was gradually replaced by a system of rents and taxation. Serfs worked their own plots of land but gave their lords a portion of what they produced. Gradually payment in the form of goods and agricultural surplus was replaced by payment in the form of money. This prompted the development of markets in which the exchange of goods through *bartering* was replaced by the exchange of goods for money. This was the origin of the money economy. In bartering, the buyer and the seller have to *need* each other's goods. In a market economy, goods are exchanged into a common medium of value — money — which can then be exchanged for goods of any nature. Markets therefore enabled goods and services to be bought and sold on a much larger scale and in a much more systematic and efficient way. Money also enabled land to be bought and sold instead of handed down through hereditary right. Money could be accumulated and financial debts could be incurred.

Ultimately, the social and economic system of feudalism was surpassed by the rise of capitalism and the technological advances of the industrial era, because money allowed economic transactions to be conceived and conducted in an entirely new way. In particular, the demise of feudalism was initiated by the increasing need to intensify labour and improve productivity as markets became more competitive and the economy less dependent on agriculture.

1.2.2 Industrial Societies

Figure 1.9. Wrapping bars of soap at the Colgate-Palmolive Canada plant, Toronto, 1919. (Image courtesy of the Toronto Public Library available at Wikimedia Commons and is in the Public Domain.)

In the 18th century, Europe experienced a dramatic rise in technological invention, ushering in an era known as the Industrial Revolution. What made this period remarkable was the number of new inventions that influenced people's daily lives. Within a generation, tasks that had until this point required months of labour became achievable in a matter of days. Before the Industrial Revolution, work was largely person- or animal-based, relying on human workers or horses to power mills and drive pumps. In 1782, James Watt and Matthew Boulton created a steam engine that could do the work of 12 horses by itself.

Steam power began appearing everywhere. Instead of paying artisans to painstakingly spin wool and weave it into cloth, people turned to textile mills that produced fabric quickly at a better price, and often with better quality. Rather than planting and harvesting fields by hand, farmers were able to purchase mechanical seeders and threshing machines that caused agricultural productivity to soar. Products such as paper and glass became available to the average person, and the quality and accessibility of education and health care soared. Gas lights allowed increased visibility in the dark, and towns and cities developed a nightlife.

One of the results of increased wealth, productivity, and technology was the rise of urban centres. Serfs and peasants, expelled from their ancestral lands, flocked to the cities in search of factory jobs, and the populations of cities became increasingly diverse. The new generation became less preoccupied with maintaining family land and traditions, and more focused on survival. Some were successful in acquiring wealth and achieving upward mobility for themselves and their family. Others lived in devastating poverty and squalor. Whereas the class system of feudalism had been rigid, and resources for all but the highest nobility and clergy were scarce, under capitalism social mobility (both upward and downward) became possible.

It was during the 18th and 19th centuries of the Industrial Revolution that sociology was born (the history of sociology is elaborated more fully in Module Two). Life was changing quickly and the long-established traditions of the agricultural eras did not apply to life in the larger cities. Masses of people were moving to new environments and often found themselves faced with

horrendous conditions of filth, overcrowding, and poverty. Social science emerged in response to the unprecedented scale of the social problems of modern society.

It was during this time that power moved from the hands of the aristocracy and "old money" to the new class of rising bourgeoisie who were able to amass fortunes in their lifetimes. In Canada, a new cadre of financiers and industrialists like Donald Smith (1st Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal) and George Stephen (1st Baron Mount Stephen) became the new power players, using their influence in business to control aspects of government as well. Eventually, concerns over the exploitation of workers led to the formation of labour unions and laws that set mandatory conditions for employees. Although the introduction of new "postindustrial" technologies (like computers) at the end of the 20th century ended the industrial age, much of our social structure and social ideas — such as the nuclear family, left-right political divisions, and time standardization — have a basis in industrial society.

Figure 1.10. George Stephen, one of the Montreal consortium who financed and built the Canadian Pacific Railway, grew up the son of a carpenter in Scotland. He was titled 1st Baron Mount Stephen in 1891. The Canadian Pacific Railway was a risky financial venture but as Canada's first transcontinental railroad, it played a fundamental role in the settlement and development of the West. (Photo courtesy of McCord Museum, File no. I-14179.1 available at Wikimedia Commons and is in the Public Domain.)

1.2.3 Postindustrial Societies

Figure 1.11. The ubiquitous e-work place of the 21st century. (image courtesy of Charlie Styr available at Flickr under a CC-BY-NC-ND 2.0 License.)

Information societies, sometimes known as postindustrial or digital societies, are a recent development. Unlike **industrial societies** that are rooted in the production of material goods, information societies are based on the production of information and services.

Digital technology is the steam engine of information societies, and high tech companies such as Apple, Microsoft and RIM are its version of railroad and steel manufacturing corporations. Since the economy of information societies is driven by knowledge and not material goods, power lies with those in charge of creating, storing, and distributing information. Members of a postindustrial society are likely to be employed as sellers of services — software programmers or business consultants, for example — instead of producers of goods. Social classes are divided by access to education, since without technical and communication skills, people in an information society lack the means for success.

Postnatural Society: The Anthropocene
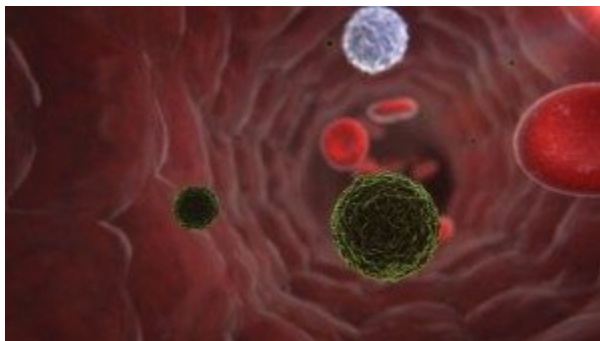
Figure 1.12. Advances in micro-biochemistry make it possible to manipulate the body at the molecular level. (image courtesy of Sanofi Pasteur available at [Flickr](#) under a [CC-BY-NC-ND 2.0 License](#).)

Recent scientific and technological developments transform the relationship to nature to a such a degree that it is possible to talk about a new **postnatural society**. Advances in computing, genetics, nano-technology and quantum mechanics create the conditions for society in which the limits imposed by nature are overcome by technological interventions at the molecular level of life and matter. Donna Haraway (1991) describes the new "cyborg" reality that becomes possible when the capacities of the body and mind are enhanced by various prosthetic devices like artificial organs or body parts. When these artificial prosthetics do not simply replace defective anatomy but improve upon it, one can argue that the conditions of life have become *postnatural.* In his science fiction novel *Holy Fire* (1996), Bruce Sterling extrapolates from recent developments in medical knowledge to imagine a future epoch of *posthumanity*, 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.

Through genetic engineering, scientists have been able to create new life forms since the early 1970s. This research is fueled by the prospect of using genetic technologies to solve problems, like disease and aging, at the level of the DNA molecule that contains the "blueprint" of life. Food crops can be designed that are pest-resistant, drought-resistant or more productive. These technologies are therefore theoretically capable of solving environmentally imposed restrictions on our collective ability to feed the hungry. Similarly, nanotechnologies, which allow the physical properties of materials to be engineered at the atomic and subatomic level, pose the possibility of an infinitely manipulable universe. The futurologist Ray Kurzweil (2009) suggests that on the basis of nanotechnology "we'll be able to create just about anything we need in the physical world from information files with very inexpensive input materials." Others caution that the complexity of risks posed by the introduction of these molecular technologies into the environment makes their use decidedly dangerous and their consequences incalculable. This is a very postnatural dilemma; one that would not have occurred to people in earlier types of society.

What are the effects of postnatural technologies on the structure and forms of social life and society? At present, these technologies are extremely capital-intensive to develop, which suggests that they will have implications for social inequality — both within societies and globally. Wealthy nations and wealthy individuals will be the most likely beneficiaries. Moreover, as the development of postnatural technologies do not impact the basic structures of capitalism, for the forseeable future

decisions on which avenues of research are to be pursued will be decided solely on the basis of profitable returns. Many competing questions concerning the global risks of the technologies and the ethics of their implementation are secondary to the profit motives of the corporations that own the knowledge.

In terms of the emergent *life technologies* like genetic engineering or micro-biochemical research, Nikolas Rose (2007) suggests that we are already experiencing five distinct lines of social transformation:

1. The "molecularization" of our perspective on the human body, or life in general, implies that we now visualize the body and intervene in its processes at the molecular level. We are "no longer constrained by the normativity of a given order." From growing skin in a petri dish to the repurposing of viruses, the body can be reconstructed in new, as yet unknown forms because of the pliability of life at the molecular level.

2. The technologies shift our attention to the *optimization* of the body's capacities rather than simply curing illness. It becomes possible to address our risk and *susceptibility* to future illnesses or aging processes, just as it becomes feasible to *enhance* the body's existing capacities (e.g., strength, cognitive ability, beauty, etc.).

3. The relationship between bodies and political life changes to create new forms of biological citizenship. We increasingly construct our identities according to the specific genetic markers that define us, (e.g., "we are the people with Leber's Amaurosis"), and on this basis

advocate for policy changes, accommodations, resources, and research funding, etc.

4. The complexity of the knowledge in this field increasingly forces us to submit ourselves to the authority of the new somatic specialists and authorities, from neurologists to genetics counselors.

5. As the flows of capital investment in biotechnology and biomedicine shift towards the creation of a new "bioeconomy," the fundamental processes of life are turned into potential sources of profit and "biovalue."

Some have described the postnatural period that we are currently living in as the **Anthropocene**. The anthropocene is defined as the geological epoch following the Pleistocene and Holocene in which human activities have significantly impacted the global ecosystem (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000). Climate change is the primary example of anthropocenic effect, but it includes a number of other well-known examples from soil erosion and species extinction to the acidification of the oceans. Of course this impact began at least as early as the 19th century with the effects on the environment caused by the industrial revolution. Arguably, however, it is the recently established knowledge and scientific evidence of these effects which constitutes the current era as the anthropocene. In the anthropocene we become aware of the global nature of the catastrophic risks that human activities pose to the environment. It is also this knowledge that enables the possibility of institutional, economic, and political change to address these issues. Current developments like the use of cap and trade or carbon pricing to factor in the cost the environmental

impact into economic calculations, the shift to "green" technologies like solar and wind power, or even curbside recycling have both global implications and direct repercussions for the organization of daily life.

1.3 Summary

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 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?

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 Module Two we take up this fascination with the biological over the cultural and explore the history of sociology in light of its intellectual and social foundations as well as classical exemplars.

Key Terms

Myths: a folklore genre, comprised of stories or narratives usually of unknown origin that serve to reveal a dimension of the world view of a group, or to explain a practice or belief.

Language: any comprehensive system of words or symbols representing concepts. It does not necessarily have to be spoken, as the hundreds of different sign languages in use around the world suggest.

Communication: The act of transmitting meaning from one source to another using signs, symbols and rules.

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).

Institutionalization: the act of implanting a convention or norm into society. Bear in mind that the institution, while socially constructed, is still quite real.

Thomas Theorem: 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.

Self-fullfilling Prophecy: Robert K. Merton that even a false idea can become true if it is acted on.

Social Interaction: the process of reciprocal influence exercised by individuals over one another during social encounters.

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.

Theological Stage: humans explain causes in terms of the will of anthropocentric gods (the gods cause things to happen).

Metaphysical Stage: humans explain causes in terms of abstract, "speculative" ideas like nature, natural rights, social contracts, or "self-evident" truths.

Positive Stage: humans explain causes in terms of positivist, scientific observations and laws (i.e., "positive" knowledge based on propositions limited to what can be empirically observed).

Ethnosphere: the entirety of all cultures' "ways of thinking, ways of being, and ways of orienting oneself on the Earth" (Davis, 2007).

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2

MODULE 2: INTRODUCING THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Learning Objectives

- Describe the common objective of practitioners of academic disciplines.
- Explain why it is important to learn to change perspectives
- Distinguish between biological, cultural and social accounts of

human behaviour
- Compare and contrast the central features of Positivist, Interpretive and Critical perspectives within sociology

2.0 The Social Construction of Reality

Ted Talk *Math is the hidden secret to understanding the world,* https://www.ted.com/talks/roger_antonsen_math_is_the_hidden_secret_to_understanding_the_world#t-1011207

A TED element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc112/?p=973

2.1 Studying Patterns: How Sociologists View Society

All sociologists are interested in the experiences of individuals and how those experiences are shaped by interactions with social groups and society as a whole. 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 habitual or routinized at micro-levels of interaction, or institutionalized at macro or global levels of interaction, they are referred to as social **structures.**

The relationship between the individual and society is one of the most difficult sociological problems. Partly this is because of the reified way these two terms are used in everyday speech. **Reification** refers to the way in which abstract concepts, complex processes, or mutable social relationships come to be thought of as "things." A prime example of reification is when people say that "society" caused an individual to do something, or to turn out in a particular way. In writing essays, first-year sociology students sometimes refer to "society" as a cause of social behaviour or as an entity with independent agency. On the other hand, the "individual" is a being that seems solid, tangible, and independent of anything going on outside of the skin sack that contains its essence. This conventional distinction between society and the individual is a product of reification, as both society and the individual appear as independent objects. A *concept* of "the individual" and a *concept* of "society" have been given the status of real, substantial, independent objects. As we will see in the chapters to come, society and the individual are neither objects, nor are they independent of one another. An "individual" is inconceivable without

the relationships to others that define their internal, subjective life and their external, socially-defined roles.

One problem for sociologists is that these concepts of the individual and society, and the relationship between them, are thought of in terms established by a very common *moral* framework in modern democratic societies — namely, that of individual responsibility and individual choice. The individual is morally responsible for their behaviours and decisions. Often in this framework, any suggestion that an individual's behaviour needs to be understood in terms of that person's social context is dismissed as "letting the individual off" for taking personal responsibility for their actions. Talking about society is akin to being morally soft or lenient.

For sociologists, the conceptualization of the individual and society is much more complex than the moral framework suggests and needs to be examined through evidence-based, rather than morality-based, research. The sociological problem is to be able to see the individual as a thoroughly social being and, yet, as a being who has agency and free choice. Individuals are beings who *do* take on individual responsibilities in their everyday social roles, and risk social consequences when they fail to live up to them. However, the manner in which individuals take on responsibilities, and sometimes the compulsion to do so, are socially defined. The sociological problem is to be able to see society as: a dimension of experience characterized by regular and predictable patterns of behaviour that exist independently of any specific individual's desires or self-understanding. At the same time, a society is nothing *but* the ongoing social relationships and activities of specific individuals.

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). Learning to see through the ideological frameworks that deny the reality of foundational interactions among culture, biology and society is an important first step in establishing a sociological perspective.

2.1.1 Culture, Biology and Society

A central assumption within sociology 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 in comparison to the conclusions drawn from them 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.

Sociobiological propositions are constructed in three steps (Lewontin, 1991). First they identify an aspect of human behaviour which appears to be universal, common to all people in all times and places. In all cultures the laws of sexual attraction — who is attracted to whom — are mysterious, for example. Second, they assume that this universal trait must be coded in the DNA of the species. There is a gene for detecting histo-compatibility that leads instinctively to mate selection. Third, they make an argument for why this behaviour or characteristic increases the chances of survival for individuals and, therefore, creates reproductive advantage. Mating with partners whose immune systems complement your own leads to healthier offspring who survive to reproduce your genes. The implication of the sociobiological analysis is that these traits and behaviours are fixed or "hard wired" into the biological structure of the species and are, therefore, very difficult to change. People will continue to be attracted to people who are not "right" for them in all the ways we would deem culturally appropriate — psychologically, emotionally, socially compatible, etc. — because they are biologically compatible.

Figure 2.1. Is male aggression innate? (Violence! (Explored) by Riccardo Cuppini
CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Despite the popularity of this sort of reason, it is misguided from a sociological perspective for a number of reasons. For example, Konrad Lorenz's (1903-1989) arguments that human males have an innate biological aggressive tendency to fight for scarce resources and protect territories were very popular in the 1960s (1966). The dilemma he posed was that males' innate tendency towards aggression as a response to external threats might be a useful trait on an evolutionary scale, but in a contemporary society that includes the development of weapons of mass destruction, it is a threat to human survival. Another implication of his argument was that if aggression is instinctual, then the idea that individuals, militant groups, or states could be held responsible for acts of violence or war loses its validity. (Note here that

Lorenz's basic claim about aggression runs counter to the stronger argument that, if anything, the tendency toward co-operation has been central to the survival of human social life from its origins to the present).

However, 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 association do vary extensively. It is difficult to account for the variability of social phenomena by using a universal biological mechanism to explain them. Even something like the aggressive tendency in males, which on the surface has an intuitive appeal, does not account for the multitude of different forms and practices of aggression, let alone the different social circumstances in which aggression is manifested or provoked. It does not account for why some men are aggressive sometimes and not at other times, or why some men are not aggressive at all. It does not account for women's aggression and the forms in which this typically manifests. If testosterone is the key mechanism of male aggression, it does not account for the fact that both men and women generate testosterone in more or less equal quantities. Nor does it explain the universal tendencies of all societies to develop sanctions and norms to curtail violence. To suggest that aggression is an innate biological characteristic means that it does not vary greatly throughout history, nor between cultures, and is impervious to the social rules that restrict it in all societies. Ultimately, this means that there is no point in trying to change it despite the evidence that aggression in individuals and societies can be changed.

Figure 2.2. The baby's smile: instinctive or learned? ([The Baby Smile](#) by Llee Wu [CC BY-ND 2.0](#))

The main consideration to make here is not that biology has no impact on human behaviour, but that the biological explanation is limited with respect to what it can explain about complex cultural behaviours and practices. For example, research has shown that newborns and fetuses as young as 26 weeks have a simple smile: "the face relaxes while the sides of the mouth stretch outward and up" (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). This observation about a seemingly straightforward biological behaviour suggests that smiling is inborn, a muscular reflex based on neurological connections. However, the smile of the newborn is not used to convey emotions. It occurs spontaneously during rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. Only when the baby matures and begins to interact with his or her environment and caretakers does the smile begin to represent a response to external stimuli. By age one, the baby's smile conveys a variety of meanings, depending on the social context, including flirting and mischief. Moreover, from the age of 6 months

to 2 years, the smile itself changes physically: Different muscle groups are used, and different facial expressions are blended with it (surprise, anger, excitement). The smile becomes more complex and individualized. The point here, as Anne Fausto-Sterling points out, is that "the child uses smiling as part of a complex system of communication" (2000). Not only is the meaning of the smile defined in interaction with the social context, but the physiological components of smiling (the nerves, muscles, and stimuli) also are modified and "socialized" according to culture.

Therefore, social scientists see explanations of human behaviour based on biological determinants as extremely limited in scope and value. The physiological "human package" — bipedalism, omnivorous diet, language ability, brain size, capacity for empathy, lack of an estrous cycle (Naiman, 2012) — 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 2.3. Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, was the founder of eugenics (Sir Francis Galton published in Karl Pearson's The Life, Letters, and Labors of Francis Galton is in the Public Domain).

More recently, social neuroscience has emerged as a new interdisciplinary field that explores reciprocal relationships among culture, society and biology. Within this emergent field of research there is a growing body of bio-medical evidence to support the foundational sociological perspective that the individual and society are inseparable.

The video, *Why do I need you? Part 5: The brain with David Eagleman [Video file]. (2015). Retrieved December 5, 2019, from https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=105077&xtid=114672*, accessible in the LMS, will highlight some of these key ideas.

Aside from the explanatory problems of biological determinism, and the more recent research developments in social neuroscience 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).

The interesting question that these biological explanations of complex human behaviour raise is: Why are they so popular? What is it about our culture that makes the biological explanation of behaviours or

experiences like sexual attraction, which we know from personal experience to be extremely complicated and nuanced, so appealing? As micro-biological technologies like genetic engineering, neuro-pharmaceuticals and social neuroscience advance, the very real prospect of altering the human body at a fundamental level to produce culturally desirable qualities (health, ability, intelligence, beauty, etc.) becomes possible, and, therefore, these questions become more urgent. These kinds of questions are not new, however, having occupied the interest of classical thinkers and founders of the discipline of sociology since its emergence in the 19th century.

2.2 The History of Sociology: Intellectual Foundations, Social Developments and Exemplary Thinkers

(a)   **(b)**   **(c)**   **(d)**
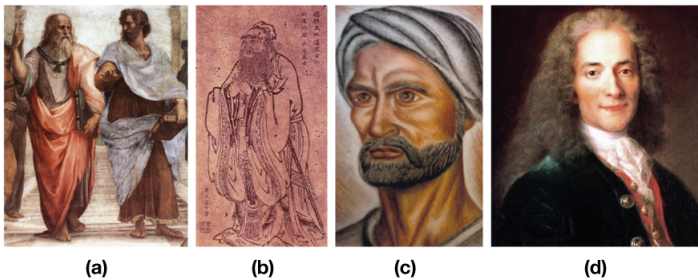
Figure 2.4. People have been thinking like sociologists long before sociology became a separate academic discipline: (a) Plato and Aristotle (Public domain), (b) Confucius (Public Domain), (c) Khaldun (CC BY-SA 3.0), and (d) Voltaire (Public Domain) all set the stage for modern sociology.

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). Whereas nature or *physis* for the Greeks was "what emerges from itself" without human intervention, *nomos* in the form of laws or customs, were human conventions designed to constrain human behaviour. 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. If human social life was the product of an invariable human or biological nature, all cultures would be the same. The concerns of the later Greek philosophers — Socrates (469–399 BCE), Plato (428–347 BCE), and Aristotle (384–322 BCE) — with the ideal form of human community (the *polis* or city-state) can be derived from the ethical dilemmas of this difference between human nature and human norms. The ideal community might be rational but it was not natural.

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. The next century saw the emergence of the historian some consider to be the world's first sociologist, the Berber scholar Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) of Tunisia. His *Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* is known for going beyond

descriptive history to an analysis of historical processes of change based on his insights into "the nature of things which are born of civilization" (Khaldun quoted in Becker and Barnes, 1961). Key to his analysis was the distinction between the sedentary life of cities and the nomadic life of pastoral peoples like the Bedouin and Berbers. The nomads, who exist independent of external authority, developed a social bond based on *blood lineage* and *"esprit de corps" ('Asabijja)*, which enabled them to mobilize quickly and act in a unified and concerted manner in response to the rugged circumstances of desert life. The sedentaries of the city entered into a different cycle in which esprit de corps is subsumed to institutional power and the intrigues of political factions. The need to be focused on subsistence is replaced by a trend toward increasing luxury, ease, and refinements of taste. The relationship between the two poles of existence, nomadism and sedentary life, was at the basis of the development and decay of civilizations (Becker and Barnes, 1961).

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 impetus for the ideas that culminated in sociology can be found in the three major transformations that defined modern society and the culture of modernity: the development of modern 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. Not only was the framework for sociological knowledge established in these events, but also the initial motivation for creating a science of

society. Early sociologists like Comte and Marx sought to formulate a rational, evidence-based response to the experience of massive social dislocation brought about by the transition from the European feudal era to capitalism. This was a period of unprecedented social problems, from the breakdown of local communities to the hyper-exploitation of industrial labourers. Whether the intention was to restore order to the chaotic disintegration of society, as in Comte's case, or to provide the basis for a revolutionary transformation in Marx's, a rational and scientifically comprehensive knowledge of society and its processes was required. It was in this context that "society" itself, in the modern sense of the word, became visible as a phenomenon to early investigators of the social condition.

Figure 2.5. *Newton*, William Blake, (1795). (Newton by William Blake is in the Public Domain.)

The development of modern science provided the model of knowledge needed for sociology to move beyond earlier moral, philosophical, and religious types of reflection on the human condition. Key to the development of science was the technological mindset that Max Weber termed the **disenchantment of the world**: "principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather one can, in principle, master all things by calculation" (1919). The focus of knowledge shifted from intuiting the intentions of spirits and gods to systematically observing and testing the world of things through science and technology. Modern science abandoned the medieval view of the world in which God, "the unmoved mover," defined the natural and social world as a changeless, cyclical creation ordered and given purpose by divine will. Instead modern science combined two philosophical traditions that had historically been at odds: Plato's **rationalism** and Aristotle's **empiricism** (Berman, 1981). Rationalism sought the laws that governed the truth of reason and ideas, and in the hands of early scientists like Galileo and Newton, found its highest form of expression in the logical formulations of mathematics. Empiricism sought to discover the laws of the operation of the world through the careful, methodical, and detailed observation of the world. The new scientific worldview therefore combined the clear and logically coherent, conceptual formulation of propositions from rationalism, with an empirical method of inquiry based on observation through the senses. Sociology adopted these core principles to emphasize that claims about social life had to be clearly formulated and based on evidence-based procedures. It also gave

sociology a technological cast as a type of knowledge which could be used to solve social problems.

The emergence of democratic forms of government in the 18th century demonstrated that humans had the capacity to change the world. The rigid hierarchy of medieval society was not a God-given eternal order, but a human order that could be challenged and improved upon through human intervention. Through the revolutionary process of democratization, society came to be seen as both *historical* and the *product of human endeavours.* Age of Enlightenment philosophers like Locke, Voltaire, Montaigne, and Rousseau developed general principles that could be used to explain social life. Their emphasis shifted from the histories and exploits of the aristocracy to the life of ordinary people. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) extended the critical analysis of her male Enlightenment contemporaries to the situation of women. Significantly for modern sociology they proposed that the use of reason could be applied to address social ills and to emancipate humanity from servitude. Wollstonecraft for example argued that simply allowing women to have a proper education would enable them to contribute to the improvement of society, especially through their influence on children. On the other hand, the bloody experience of the democratic revolutions, particularly the French Revolution, which resulted in the "Reign of Terror" and ultimately Napoleon's attempt to subjugate Europe, also provided a cautionary tale for the early sociologists about the need for the sober scientific assessment of society to address social problems.

The Industrial Revolution in a strict sense refers to the development of industrial methods of production, the

introduction of industrial machinery, and the organization of labour to serve new manufacturing systems. These economic changes emblemize the massive transformation of human life brought about by the creation of wage labour, capitalist competition, increased mobility, urbanization, individualism, and all the social problems they wrought: poverty, exploitation, dangerous working conditions, crime, filth, disease, and the loss of family and other traditional support networks, etc. It was a time of great social and political upheaval with the rise of empires that exposed many people — for the first time — to societies and cultures other than their own. Millions of people were moving into cities and many people were turning away from their traditional religious beliefs. Wars, strikes, revolts, and revolutionary actions were reactions to underlying social tensions that had never existed before and called for critical examination. August Comte in particular envisioned the new science of sociology as the antidote to conditions that he described as "moral anarchy."

Sociology therefore emerged; firstly, as an extension of the new worldview of science; secondly, as a part of the Enlightenment project and its focus on historical change, social injustice, and the possibilities of social reform; and thirdly, as a crucial response to the new and unprecedented types of social problems that appeared in the 19th century with the Industrial Revolution. It did not emerge as a unified science, however, as its founders brought distinctly different perspectives to its early formulations.

2.2.1 Founders of Sociology

August Comte: The Father of Sociology

Figure 2.6. Auguste Comte is considered by many to be the father of sociology. (Photo is in the Public Domain.)

The term sociology was first coined in 1780 by the French essayist Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès (1748–1836) in an unpublished manuscript (Fauré et al., 1999). 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). Nevertheless, they both thought that society could be studied using the same scientific methods utilized in the natural sciences. Comte also believed in the potential of social scientists to work toward the betterment of society and coined the slogan "order and progress" to reconcile the opposing progressive and conservative factions that had divided the crisis-ridden, post-revolutionary French society. Comte proposed a renewed, organic spiritual order in which the authority of science would be the means to create a rational social order. Through science, each social strata would be reconciled with 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 described his philosophy in a well-attended and popular series of lectures, which he published as *The Course in Positive Philosophy* (1830–1842)

and *A General View of Positivism* (1848/1977). 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.

While Comte never in fact conducted any social research, his notion of sociology as a positivist science that might effectively socially engineer a better society was deeply influential. Where his influence waned was a result of the way in which he became increasingly obsessive and hostile to all criticism as his ideas progressed beyond positivism as the "science of society" to positivism as the basis of a new cult-like, technocratic "religion of humanity." The new social order he imagined was deeply conservative and hierarchical, a kind of a caste system with every level of society obliged to reconcile itself with its "scientifically" allotted place. Comte imagined himself at the pinnacle of society, taking the title of "Great Priest of Humanity." The moral and intellectual anarchy he decried would be resolved through the rule of sociologists who would eliminate the need for unnecessary and divisive democratic dialogue. Social order "must ever be incompatible with a perpetual discussion of the foundations of society" (Comte, 1830/1975).

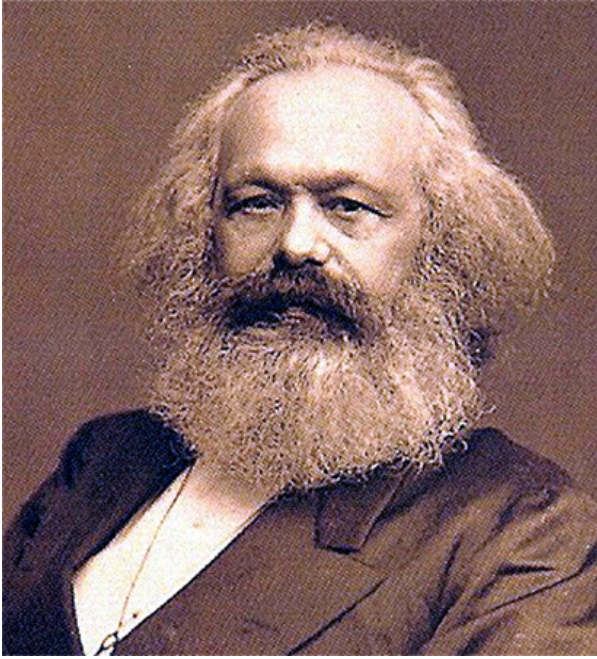## Karl Marx: The Ruthless Critique of Everything Existing

Figure 2.7. Karl Marx was one of the founders of sociology. His ideas about social conflict are still relevant today. (Karl Marx by John Mayal is in the Public Domain)

Karl Marx (1818–1883) was a German philosopher and economist. In 1848 he and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) co-authored the *Communist Manifesto*. This book is one of the most influential political manuscripts in history. It also presents in a highly condensed form Marx's theory of society, which differed from what Comte proposed. Whereas Comte viewed the goal of sociology as recreating a unified, post-feudal *spiritual* order that would help to institutionalize a new era of political and social stability, Marx developed a critical analysis of capitalism that saw the *material* or *economic* basis of inequality and power relations as the cause of social

instability and conflict. The focus of sociology, or what Marx called **historical materialism** (the "materialist conception of history"), should be the "ruthless critique of everything existing," as he said in a letter to his friend Arnold Ruge (1802-1880). In this way the goal of sociology would not simply be to scientifically analyze or objectively describe society, but to use a rigorous scientific analysis as a basis to change it. This framework became the foundation of contemporary **critical sociology**.

Although Marx did not call his analysis "sociology," his sociological innovation was to provide a *social* analysis of the *economic* system. Whereas Adam Smith (1723–1790) and the political economists of the 19th century tried to explain the economic laws of supply and demand solely as a market mechanism (similar to the abstract discussions of stock market indices and investment returns in the business pages of newspapers today), Marx's analysis showed the *social relationships* that had created the market system, and the *social repercussions* of their operation. As such, his analysis of modern society was not static or simply descriptive. He was able to put his finger on the underlying dynamism and continuous change that characterized capitalist society.

Marx was also able to create an effective basis for critical sociology in that what he aimed for in his analysis was, as he put it in another letter to Arnold Ruge, "the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age." While he took a clear and principled value position in his critique, he did not do so dogmatically, based on an arbitrary moral position of what he personally thought was good and bad. He felt, rather, that a critical social theory must engage in clarifying and supporting the

issues of social justice that were inherent within the existing struggles and wishes of the age. In his own work, he endeavoured to show how the variety of specific work actions, strikes, and revolts by workers in different occupations — for better pay, safer working conditions, shorter hours, the right to unionize, etc. — contained the seeds for a vision of universal equality, collective justice, and ultimately the ideal of a classless society.

Harriet Martineau: The First Woman Sociologist?

Figure 2.8. Harriet Martineau. (Portrait of Harriet Martineau is in the Public Domain)

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). Notions of the absence of women from the history of society and sociology are clearly part of a "single story" of human history.

Émile Durkheim: The Pathologies of the Social Order

Figure 2.9. Émile Durkheim. (Photo is in the Public Domain)

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 of the moral order 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 development of a

framework for sociology based on the analysis of **social facts** and social **functions.** Social facts are those things like law, custom, morality, religious rites, language, money, business practices, etc. that are defined *externally* to the individual. Social facts:

- Precede the individual and will continue to exist after she or he is gone;
- Consist of details and obligations of which individuals are frequently unaware; and
- Are endowed with an external coercive power by reason of which individuals are controlled.

For Durkheim, social facts were like the facts of the natural sciences. They could be studied without reference to the subjective experience of individuals. He argued that "social facts must be studied as things, that is, as realities external to the individual" (Durkheim, 1895/1964). Individuals experience them as obligations, duties, and restraints on their behaviour, operating independently of their will. They are hardly noticeable when individuals consent to them but provoke reaction when individuals resist.

Durkheim argued that each of these social facts serve one or more *functions* within a society. They exist to fulfill a societal need. For example, one function of a society's laws may be to protect society from violence and punish criminal behaviour, while another is to create collective standards of behaviour that people believe in and identify with. Laws create a basis for **social solidarity** and order. In this manner, 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. Durkheim's insights into society often revealed that social practices, like the worshipping 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 rites and privations functioned to create social solidarity and cohesion for tribes whose lives were otherwise dispersed through the activities of hunting and gathering in a sparse environment.

Max Weber: Verstehende Soziologie

Figure 2.10. Max Weber. ([Max Weber 1917 at the Lauensteiner Tagung](#) is in the Public Domain.)

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. Along with the philosophers Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) and Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936), 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. They argued that the influence of culture on human behaviour had to be taken into account. What was distinct about human behaviour was that it is essentially *meaningful.* Human behaviour 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 and Dilthey 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.

In his essay "The Methodological Foundations of Sociology," Weber described sociology as "a science

which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects" (Weber, 1922). In this way he delimited the field that sociology studies in a manner almost opposite to that of Émile Durkheim. Rather than defining sociology as the study of the unique dimension of external *social facts,* sociology was concerned with **social action**: actions to which individuals attach *subjective* meanings. "Action is social in so far as, by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual (or individuals), it takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course" (Weber, 1922). 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.

Georg Simmel: A Sociology of Forms

Figure 2.11. Georg Simmel. ([Photo](#) by Julius Cornelius Schaarwächter is in the Public Domain)

Georg Simmel (1858–1918) was one of the founding fathers of sociology, although his place in the discipline is not always recognized. In part, this oversight may be explained by the fact that Simmel was a Jewish scholar in Germany at the turn of 20th century and, until 1914, he was unable to attain a proper position as a professor due to anti-Semitism. Despite the brilliance of his sociological insights, the quantity of his publications, and the popularity of his public lectures as *Privatdozent* at the University of Berlin, his lack of a regular academic

position prevented him from having the kind of student following that would create a legacy around his ideas. It might also be explained by some of the unconventional and varied topics that he wrote on: the structure of flirting, the sociology of adventure, the importance of secrecy, the patterns of fashion, the social significance of money, etc. He was generally seen at the time as not having a systematic or integrated theory of society. However, his insights into how social *forms* emerge at the micro-level of interaction and how they relate to macro-level phenomena remain valuable in contemporary sociology.

Simmel's sociology focused on the key question, "How is society possible?" His answer led him to develop what he called **formal sociology**, or the sociology of social forms. In his essay "The Problem of Sociology," Simmel reaches a strange conclusion for a sociologist: "There is no such thing as society 'as such.'" "Society" is just the name we give to the "extraordinary multitude and variety of interactions [that] operate at any one moment" (Simmel, 1908/1971). This is a basic insight of micro-sociology. However useful it is to talk about macro-level phenomena like capitalism, the moral order, or **rationalization**, in the end what these phenomena refer to is a multitude of *ongoing, unfinished processes of interaction between specific individuals*. Nevertheless, the phenomena of social life do have recognizable forms, and the forms do guide the behaviour of individuals in a regularized way. A bureaucracy is a form of social interaction that persists from day to day. One does not come into work one morning to discover that the rules, job descriptions, paperwork, and hierarchical order of the bureaucracy have disappeared. Simmel's questions

were: How do the forms of social life persist? How did they emerge in the first place? What happens when they get fixed and permanent?

Simmel's focus on how social forms emerge became very important for micro-sociology, symbolic interactionism, and the studies of hotel lobbies, cigarette girls, and street-corner societies, etc. popularized by the Chicago School in the mid-20th century. His analysis of the creation of new social forms was particularly tuned in to capturing the fragmentary everyday experience of modern social life that was bound up with the unprecedented nature and scale of the modern city. In his lifetime, the city of Berlin where he lived and taught for most of his career expanded massively after the unification of Germany in the 1870s and, by 1900, became a major European metropolis of 4 million people. The development of a metropolis created a fundamentally new human experience. The inventiveness of people in creating new forms of interaction in response became a rich source of sociological investigation.

2.3 Sociology: A Multi-Perspectival Science

As this brief survey of the history of sociology suggests, there is considerable diversity in the approaches sociology takes to studying society. Sociology is a **multi-perspectival science**: a number of distinct perspectives or *paradigms* offer competing explanations of social phenomena. **Paradigms** are philosophical and theoretical frameworks used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the research performed in support of them. They refer to the underlying organizing

principles that tie different constellations of concepts, theories, and ways of formulating problems together (Drengson, 1983).

The variety of paradigms 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 existence of multiple approaches to the topic of society and social relationships makes sense given the nature of the subject matter of sociology. 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. For the purposes of analysis, the contents of society can sometimes be viewed in this way, as in the positivist perspective, but in reality, they are imbued with social meanings, historical contexts, political struggles, and human agency.

Figure 2.12. 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!" (Blindman #1, Blindman #2, Blindman #3 by MIke Kline CC BY 2.0)

This makes social life a complex, moving target for researchers to study, and the outcome of the research will be different depending on where and with what assumptions the researcher begins. Even the elementary division of experience into an interior world, which is "subjective," and an exterior world, which is "objective," varies historically, cross-culturally, and sometimes moment by moment in an individual's life. From the phenomenological perspective in sociology, this elementary division, which forms the starting point and basis of the "hard" or "objective" sciences, is in fact usefully understood as a social accomplishment sustained through social interactions. We actively divide the flow of impressions through our consciousness into socially recognized categories of subjective and objective, and we do so by learning and following social norms and rules. The division between subjective impressions and objective facts is natural and necessary only in the sense that it has become what Schutz (1962) called the "natural attitude" for people in modern society. Therefore, this division performs an integral function in organizing modern social and institutional life on an ongoing basis. We assume that the others we interact with view the world through the natural attitude. Confusion ensues when we or they do not. Other forms of society have been based on different modes of being in the world.

Despite the differences that divide sociology into multiple perspectives and methodologies, its unifying aspect is the systematic and rigorous nature of its social inquiry. If the distinction between "soft" and "hard" sciences is useful at all, it refers to the degree of rigour and systematic observation involved in the conduct of

research rather than the division between the social and the natural sciences *per se*. 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

Within this general scientific framework, therefore, sociology is broken into the same divisions that separate the forms of modern knowledge more generally. As Jürgen Habermas (1972) describes, by the time of the Enlightenment in the 18th century, the unified perspective of Christendom had broken into three distinct spheres of knowledge: the natural sciences, hermeneutics (or the interpretive sciences like literature, philosophy, and history), and critique. In many ways the three spheres of knowledge are at odds with one another, but each serves an important human interest or purpose. The natural sciences are oriented to developing a technical knowledge useful for controlling and

manipulating the natural world to serve human needs.

Hermeneutics is oriented to developing a humanistic knowledge useful for determining the meaning of texts, ideas, and human practices in order to create the conditions for greater mutual understanding. Critique is oriented to developing practical knowledge and forms of collective action that are useful for challenging entrenched power relations in order to enable human emancipation and freedoms.

Sociology is similarly divided into three types of sociological knowledge, each with its own strengths, limitations, and practical purposes: **positivist sociology** 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, sociologists develop and draw on different schools of sociological thought to generate and investigate a wide variety of sociological research questions about relationships between individuals and society at multiple levels of social reality. A brief overview of these different types of sociological knowledge along with their primary strengths and weaknesses is provided below.

2.3.1 Positivism

The **positivist perspective** in sociology — introduced above with regard to the pioneers of the discipline, August Comte and Émile Durkheim — is most closely

aligned with the forms of knowledge associated with the natural sciences. The emphasis is on empirical observation and measurement (i.e., observation through the senses), value neutrality or objectivity, and the search for law-like statements about the social world (analogous to Newton's laws of gravity for the natural world). Since mathematics and statistical operations are the main forms of logical demonstration in the natural scientific explanation, positivism relies on translating human phenomena into quantifiable units of measurement. It regards the social world as an objective or "positive" reality, in no essential respects different from the natural world. Positivism is oriented to developing a knowledge useful for controlling or administering social life, which explains its ties to the projects of social engineering going back to Comte's original vision for sociology. Two forms of positivism have been dominant in sociology since the 1940s: **quantitative sociology** and **structural functionalism**.

Quantitative Sociology

In contemporary sociology, positivism is based on four main "rules" that define what constitutes valid knowledge and what types of questions may be reasonably asked (Bryant, 1985):

1. The rule of empiricism: We can only know about things that are actually given in experience. We cannot validly make claims about things that are invisible, unobservable, or supersensible like metaphysical, spiritual, or moral truths.

2. The rule of value neutrality: Scientists should remain value-neutral in their research because it

follows from the rule of empiricism that "values" have no empirical content that would allow their validity to be scientifically tested.

3. The unity of the scientific method rule: All sciences have the same basic principles and practices whether their object is natural or human.

4. The rule of law-like statements: The type of explanation sought by scientific inquiry is the formulation of general laws (like the law of gravity) to explain specific phenomena (like the falling of a stone).

Much of what is referred to today as **quantitative sociology** fits within this paradigm of positivism. Quantitative sociology uses statistical methods such as surveys with large numbers of participants to quantify relationships between social variables. In line with the "unity of the scientific method" rule, quantitative sociologists argue that the elements of human life can be measured and quantified — described in numerical terms — in essentially the same way that natural scientists measure and quantify the natural world in physics, biology, or chemistry. Researchers analyze this data using statistical techniques to see if they can uncover patterns or "laws" of human behaviour. Law-like statements concerning relationships between variables are often posed in the form of statistical relationships or multiple linear regression formulas; these measure and quantify the degree of influence different causal or independent variables have on a particular outcome or dependent variable. For example, the degree of religiosity of an individual in Canada, measured by the frequency of church attendance or religious practice, can be predicted

by a combination of different independent variables such as age, gender, income, immigrant status, and region (Bibby, 2012). This approach is value neutral for two reasons: firstly because the quantified data is the product of methods of systematic empirical observation that seek to minimize researcher bias, and secondly because "values" *per se* are human dispositions towards what "should be" and therefore cannot be observed like other objects or processes in the world. Quantitative sociologists might be able to survey what people say their values are, but they cannot determine through quantitative means what *is* valuable or what *should* be valuable.

Structural Functionalism

Structural Functionalism also 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** — "social facts must be studied as things, that is, as realities external to the individual" (Durkheim, 1895/1997) — and to explain them in terms of their social functions.

Following Durkheim's insight, structural functionalism therefore sees society as composed of **structures** — regular patterns of behaviour and organized social arrangements that persist through time (e.g., like the institutions of the family or the occupational structure) — and the **functions** they serve: the biological and social needs of individuals who make up that society. In this respect, society is like a body that relies on different organs to perform crucial functions. He argued that just as the various organs in the body work together to keep the entire system functioning and regulated, the

various parts of society work together to keep the entire society functioning and regulated. By "parts of society," Spencer was referring to such social institutions as the economy, political systems, health care, education, media, and religion.

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. The institutional structures that define roles and interactions in the family, workplace, or church, etc. are structures. *Functions* refer to how the various needs of a society (i.e., for properly socialized children, for the distribution of food and resources, or for a unified belief system, etc.) are satisfied. 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 to social phenomena must emphasize the systematic nature of society at all levels of social existence: the relation of definable "structures" to their "functions" in relation to the needs or "maintenance" of the system. His **AGIL schema** provided a useful analytical grid for sociological theory in which an individual, an institution, or an entire society could be seen as a system composed of structures that satisfied four primary functions:

- Adaptation (A): how the system adapts to its environment;

- Goal attainment (G): how the system determines what its goals are and how it will attain them;
- Integration (I): how the system integrates its members into harmonious participation and social cohesion; and
- (Latent) Pattern Maintenance (L): how basic cultural patterns, values, belief systems, etc. are regulated and maintained.

So for example, the social system as a whole relied on the *economy* to distribute goods and services as its means of *adaptation* to the natural environment; on the *political system* to make decisions as its means of *goal attainment*; on *roles and norms* to regulate social behaviour as its means of social *integration;* and on *cultural institutions* to reproduce common values as its means of *latent pattern maintenance.* Following Durkheim, he argued that these explanations of social functions had to be made at the macro-level of systems and not at the micro-level of the specific wants and needs of individuals. In a system, there is an interrelation of component parts where a change in one component affects the others *regardless* of the perspectives of individuals.

Another noted structural functionalist, Robert Merton (1910–2003), pointed out that social processes can have more than one function. **Manifest functions** are the consequences of a social process that are sought or anticipated, while **latent functions** are the unsought consequences of a social process. A manifest function of college education, for example, includes gaining knowledge, preparing for a career, and finding a good job that utilizes that education. Latent functions of your college years include meeting new people, participating in extracurricular activities, or even finding a spouse or

partner. Another latent function of education is creating a hierarchy of employment based on the level of education attained. Latent functions can be beneficial, neutral, or harmful. Social processes that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society are called **dysfunctions**. In education, examples of dysfunction include getting bad grades, truancy, dropping out, not graduating, and not finding suitable employment.

Criticisms of Positivism

The main criticisms of both quantitative sociology and structural functionalism have to do with whether social phenomena can truly be studied like the natural phenomena of the physical sciences. Critics challenge the way in which social phenomena are regarded as objective social facts. On one hand, interpretive sociologists suggest that the quantification of variables in *quantitative sociology* reduces the rich complexity and ambiguity of social life to an abstract set of numbers and statistical relationships that cannot capture the meaning it holds for individuals. Measuring someone's depth of religious belief or "religiosity" by the number of times they attend church in a week explains very little about the religious experience itself. Similarly, interpretive sociology argues that *structural functionalism*, with its emphasis on macro-level systems of structures and functions tends to reduce the individual to the status of a sociological "dupe," assuming pre-assigned roles and functions without any individual agency or capacity for self-creation.

On the other hand, 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 the context in which they are applied is always defined by relationships of power and struggles for social justice. In this sense sociology cannot be neutral or purely objective. The context of social science is never neutral. However, both types of positivism also have conservative assumptions built into their basic approach to social facts. The focus in *quantitative sociology* on observable facts and law-like statements presents an ahistorical and deterministic picture of the world that cannot account for the underlying historical dynamics of power relationships and class, gender, or other struggles. One can empirically observe the trees but not see the forest so to speak.

Similarly, the focus on the needs and the smooth functioning of social systems in *structural functionalism* supports a conservative viewpoint because it relies on an essentially 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. Therefore, structural functionalism has a strong conservative tendency, which 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 sociology challenges both the social injustice and practical consequences of social inequality. In particular, social equilibrium and function must be scrutinized closely to see whose interests they serve and whose interests they suppress.

2.3.2. Interpretive Sociology

The interpretive perspective in sociology is aligned with the hermeneutic traditions of the humanities like literature, philosophy, and history. 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 that affects the way people experience the world and conduct themselves within it. The world evidently has a reality outside of these meanings, but interpretive sociology focuses on analysing the processes of collective meaning construction that give us access to it.

Max Weber's Verstehende (understanding) sociology is often cited as the origin of this perspective in sociology because of his emphasis on the centrality of meaning and intention in social action:

> Sociology… is a science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects. In "action" is included all human

behaviour when and in so far as the acting
individual attaches a subjective meaning to it….
[Social action is] action mutually oriented to that of
each other (Weber, 1922).

This emphasis on the meaningfulness of social action —
action to which individuals attach subjective meanings
and interpret those of others — is taken up later by
phenomenology, ethnomethodology, symbolic
interactionism and various contemporary schools of
social constructivism. The interpretive perspective is
concerned with developing a knowledge of social
interaction from the point of view of the meanings
individuals attribute to it. Social interaction is a
meaning-oriented practice. As a result of its research,
interpretive sociology promotes the goal of greater
mutual understanding and the possibility of consensus
among members of society.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is one of the main schools of
interpretive sociology. It provides a theoretical
perspective that helps scholars examine how
relationships between individuals in society are
conducted on the basis of shared understandings. This
perspective is centred on the notion that communication
— or the exchange of meaning through language and
symbols — is how people make sense of their social
worlds. As pointed out by Herman and Reynolds (1994),
this viewpoint also sees people as active in shaping their
world, rather than as entities who are acted upon by
society (Herman and Reynolds, 1994). This approach

looks at society and people from a micro-level perspective.

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) is considered one of the founders of symbolic interactionism. His work in *Mind, Self and Society* (1934) on the "self" and the stages of child development as a sequence of role-playing capacities provides the classic analyses of the perspective. We will discuss Mead further in Module 5 but Mead's key insight is that the self develops only through social interaction with others. We *learn* to be ourselves by the progressive incorporation of the attitudes of others towards us into our concept of self.

His student Herbert Blumer (1900–1987) synthesized Mead's work and popularized the theory. Blumer coined the term "symbolic interactionism" and identified its three basic premises:

1. Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things.
2. The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society.
3. These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters (Blumer, 1969).

In other words, human interaction is not determined in the same manner as natural events. Symbolic interactionism focuses on how individuals reach common definitions of the situation in which they are involved. Through the back and forth of mutual interactions and communication (i.e., symbolic interaction), individuals move from ambiguous or undefined situations to those characterized by mutually

shared meanings. On the basis of shared meanings, a common and coordinated course of action can be pursued. People are able to decide how to help a friend diagnosed with cancer, how to divide up responsibilities at work, or even how to agree to disagree when an irresolvable conflict arises. The passport officer at the airport makes a gesture with her hand, or catches your eye, which you interpret as a signal to step forward in line and pass her your passport so that she can examine its validity. Together you create a joint action — "checking the passport" — which is just one symbolic interaction in a sequence that travelers typically engage in when they arrive at the airport of their vacation destination. Social life can be seen as the stringing together or aligning of multiple joint actions. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes that groups of individuals have the freedom and agency to define their situations in potentially numerous ways.

Social scientists who apply symbolic-interactionist thinking look for patterns of interaction between individuals. Their studies often involve observation of one-on-one interactions. 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 with the process of communication (or symbolic interaction) about the effects. New marijuana users need to go through three stages to become a regular user: they need to 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. In a sense, smoking marijuana could be experienced in numerous ways because the individuals involved exercise agency. No fixed reality, physiological or otherwise, pre-exists the mutual interactions of the users.

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 others 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, it is very difficult to get at the
historical context or the relations of power that structure
or condition face-to-face, symbolic interactions. The
perspective on social life as a spontaneous, unstructured
and unconstrained domain of agency and subjective

meanings has difficulty accounting for the ways that social life does become structured and constrained. The emphasis on face-to-face processes of communication and the emergent or spontaneous qualities of social situations is unable to account for the reproduction of large-scale power relations and structures. Starting from a micro-level analysis, it is difficult to explain how the millions of ongoing symbolic interactions take on particular institutional forms or are subject to historical transformations. 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 the underground trade in marijuana works (and contextualizes the experience of the beginning user), or what the consequences of criminalization are on political discourses, the criminal justice system, and the formation of subcultures (i.e., like the jazz musician subculture Becker studied in the 1950s). Essential aspects of the political context of specific symbolic interactions fall outside the scope of the analysis, which is why, from a critical perspective, the insights of microsociology need to be broadened through an analysis of the intersections of individual biography and social history.

2.3.3. Critical Sociology

The critical perspective in sociology has its origins in social activism, social justice movements, revolutionary struggles, and radical critique. As Karl Marx put it, its focus was the "ruthless critique of everything existing" (Marx, 1843). The key elements of this analysis are the

critique of power relations and the understanding of society as historical — subject to change, struggle, contradiction, instability, social movement, and radical transformation. 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). This is why it is misleading to call critical sociology "conflict theory" as some introductory textbooks do. While conflict is certainly central to the critical analyses of power and domination, the focus of critical sociology is on developing types of knowledge and political action that enable emancipation from power relations (i.e., from the conditions of conflict in society). Historical materialism, feminism, environmentalism, anti-racism, queer studies, and poststructuralism are all examples of the critical perspective in sociology.

One of the outcomes of systematic analyses such as these is that they generate questions about the relationship between our everyday life and issues concerning social justice and environmental sustainability. In line with the philosophical traditions of the Enlightenment, critical sociology is sociology with an "emancipatory interest" (Habermas, 1972); that is, a sociology that seeks not simply to understand or describe the world, but to use sociological knowledge to change and improve the world, and to emancipate people from conditions of servitude.

What does the word *critical* mean in this context? Critical sociologists argue that it is important to understand that 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." As Herbert Marcuse put it in *One Dimensional Man* (1964), critical sociology involves two value judgments:

1. That human life is worth living, or rather that it can be and ought to be made worth living; and

2. In a given society, specific possibilities exist for the amelioration of human life and the specific ways and means of realizing these possibilities.

Critical sociology therefore rejects the notion of a value-free social science, but does not thereby become a moral exercise or an individual "subjective" value preference as a result. Being critical in the context of sociology is about using objective, empirical knowledge to assess the possibilities and barriers to improving or "ameliorating" human life.

Historical Materialism

The tradition of **historical materialism** that developed from Karl Marx's work is one of the central frameworks of critical sociology. Historical materialism concentrates on the study of how our everyday lives are structured by the connection between relations of power and economic processes. The basis of this approach begins with the macro-level question of how specific relations of power and specific economic formations have developed historically. These form the context in which the institutions, practices, beliefs, and social rules (norms) of everyday life are situated. The elements that make up a culture — a society's shared practices, values, beliefs,

and artifacts — are structured by the society's economic **mode of production**: the way human societies act upon their environment and its resources in order to use them to meet their needs. Hunter-gatherer, agrarian, feudal, and capitalist modes of production have been the economic basis for very different types of society throughout world history.

Figure 2.13. *The Last of the Clan* painted by Thomas Faed, (1865). [Long Description] (Painting by Thomas Faed is in the Public Domain)

It is not as if this relationship is always clear to the people living in these different periods of history, however. Often the mechanisms and structures of social life are obscure. For example, it might not have been clear to the Scots who were expelled from their ancestral lands in Scotland during the Highland clearances of the 18th and 19th centuries and who emigrated to the Red River settlements in Rupert's Land (now Manitoba) that they were living through the epochal transformation from

feudalism to capitalism. This transition was nevertheless the context for the decisions individuals and families made to emigrate from Scotland and attempt to found the Red River Colony. It might also not have been clear to them that they were participating in the development of colonial power relationships between the Indigenous people of North America and the Europeans that persist up until today. Through contact with the Scots and the French fur traders, the Cree and Anishinabe were gradually drawn out of their own Indigenous modes of production and into the developing global capitalist economy as fur trappers and provisioners for the 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 analyzes the constraints that define the way individuals review their options and make their decisions in present-day society. From the types of career to pursue to the number of children to have, the decisions and practices of everyday life must be understood in terms of the 20th century shift to corporate ownership and the 21st century context of globalization in which corporate decisions about investments are made.

The historical materialist approach can be called dialectical. **Dialectics** in sociology proposes that social contradiction, opposition, and struggle in society drive processes of social change and transformation. It emphasizes four components in its analysis (Naiman,

2012). The first is that everything in society is related — it is not possible to study social processes in isolation. The second is that everything in society is dynamic (i.e., in a process of continuous social change). It is not possible to study social processes as if they existed outside of history. The third is that the gradual accumulation of many social changes eventually create a qualitative transformation or social turning point.

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 incidences in which people endured the effects of high unemployment, government corruption, poor living conditions, and a lack of rights and freedoms. It is not possible to examine quantitative changes independently of the qualitative transformations they produce, and vice versa.

The fourth analytical component of the dialectical approach is that the tensions that form around relationships of power and inequality in society are the key drivers of social change. In the language of Marx, these tensions are based on "contradictions" built into the organization of the economic or material relationships that structure our livelihoods, our relationships to each other, our relationship to the environment, and our place within the global community. The capitalist class and the working class do not simply exist side by side as other social groups do (e.g., model boat enthusiasts and Christian fundamentalists), but exist in a relationship of contradiction. Each class depends on the other for its existence, but their interests are fundamentally irreconcilable and therefore the relationship is fraught with tension and conflict. Social tensions and

contradictions in society may simmer or they may erupt in struggle, but in either case it is not possible to study social processes as if they were independent of the historical formations of power that both structure them and destabilize them.

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. How can the conditions of inequality faced by women be addressed? As Harriet Martineau put it in *Society in America* (1837):

> All women should inform themselves of the condition of their sex, and of their own position. It must necessarily follow that the noblest of them will, sooner or later, put forth a moral power which shall prostrate cant [hypocrisy], and burst asunder the bonds (silken to some but cold iron to others) of feudal prejudice and usages. In the meantime is it to be understood that the principles of the Declaration of Independence bear no relation to half of the human race? If so, what is the ground of this limitation?

Feminist sociology focuses on analyzing the grounds of the limitations faced by women when they claim the right to equality with 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 from the consciousness-raising exercises and encounter groups initiated by feminists in the 1960s and 1970s that many of the immediate concerns expressed by women about their personal lives had a commonality of themes. These themes were nevertheless difficult to articulate in sociological terms let alone in the language of politics or law.

   Part of the issue was sociology itself. Smith argued that instead of beginning sociological analysis from the abstract point of view of institutions or systems, women's lives could be more effectively examined if one began from the "actualities" of their lived experience in the immediate local settings of everyday/everynight life. She asked, what are the common features of women's

everyday lives? From this standpoint, Smith observed that women's position in modern society is acutely divided by the experience of **dual consciousness**. Every day women crossed a tangible dividing line when they went from the "particularizing work in relation to children, spouse, and household" to the abstract, institutional world of text-mediated work, or in their dealings with schools, medical systems, or government bureaucracies. In the abstract world of institutional life, the actualities of local consciousness and lived life are "obliterated" (Smith, 1977). While the standpoint of women is grounded in bodily, localized, "here and now" relationships between people — due to their obligations in the domestic sphere — society is organized through "relations of ruling," which translate the substance of actual lived experiences into abstract bureaucratic categories. Power and rule in society, especially the power and rule that constrain and coordinate the lives of women, operate through a problematic "move into transcendence" that provides accounts of social life as if it were possible to stand outside of it. 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).
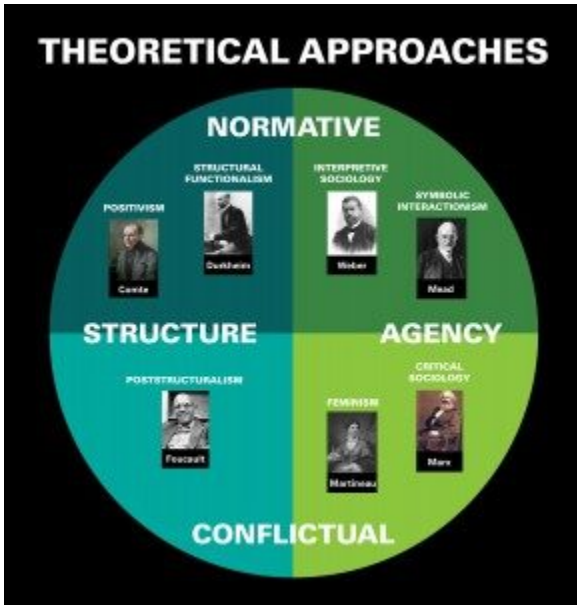
2.4 Summary

Figure 2.14. Theoretical Approaches Summary. [Long Description] (Source: William Little and TRU Media)

To get a clearer picture of how these three sociological perspectives differ, it is helpful to map them out using a diagram. As we noted above, the sociological perspectives differ according to the initial assumptions of the researcher. One way to show this is to position them along two axes according to (a) whether they view society as governed by agreed-upon norms (normative) or by power relations and conflict (conflictual), and (b) whether individuals are subject to structures beyond their control (structure) or are agents who act and change the conditions of their existence (agency). The emphasis of positivism on generating law-like statements suggests that individuals are not agents, but rather are subject

to scientific laws (structure); moreover, its focus on empirical observation relies on the assumption that an underlying consensus exists about the meaning of observed behaviours. That is, there is no essential difficulty in understanding what one is "seeing," and the agreement between the observer and the observed with respect to the meaning of the observed behaviours (normative) can be taken for granted. Interpretive sociology also emphasizes the importance of shared meanings that guide human behaviour (normative), but at the same time — especially in the tradition of symbolic interactionism — focuses on how these shared meanings are created through the mutual interactions of agents in concerted action (agency). Critical sociology does not assume that an underlying agreement or consensus exists about the norms governing society; rather, the accent is on analyzing relations of power and conflict (conflictual). Some perspectives in critical sociology like Marxism and feminism emphasize the agency of collective actors like the working class or women's movements in praxis or struggles for change (agency), whereas other perspectives like poststructuralism emphasize the way in which subjects or agents are themselves constructed within relations of power (structure).

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.

In Sociology 112.3, *Foundations in Sociology: The Social Construction of Everyday Life* a particular emphasis is placed on introducing the schools of thought and corresponding research tools that comprise the Interpretive and Micro or Constructivist Critical perspectives of Sociology. Conversely, the content of Sociology 111.3, *Foundations in Sociology: Society, Structure and Process* places a primary emphasis on the schools of thought and corresponding research tools that comprise the Positivist and Macro-level Critical perspectives of Sociology. Ultimately, however, a full understanding of the discipline and practice of sociology requires an ability to move between these multiple perspectives and to draw on those sociological insights and research tools that are best suited to generating and investigating sociological research questions about complex social phenomena.

Key Terms and Concepts

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.

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

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

Biological Determinism

Sociobiology

Eugenics

Disenchantment of the World: The replacement of magical thinking by technological rationality and calculation.

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

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

Positivism: The scientific study of social patterns based on methodological principles of the natural sciences.

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.

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.

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.

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

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

Social functions

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

Vertstehen: 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.

Social action: Actions to which individuals attach subjective meanings.

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

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

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

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.

Positivist sociology: The scientific study of social patterns based on methodological principles of the natural sciences.

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

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.

Positivist perspective: 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.

Structural functionalism: 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.

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

AGIL schema: Talcott Parsons' division of society into four functional requisites: Adaptation, Goal attainment, Integration, and Latent pattern maintenance.

Manifest functions: Sought consequences of a social process.

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

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

Symbolic interactionism: A theoretical perspective through which scholars

examine the relationship of individuals within their society by studying their communication (language and symbols).

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

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

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

Patriarchy: Institutions of male power in society.

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

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

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.

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3

MODULE 3: RESEARCH DESIGN: INVESTIGATING THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish between scientific and non-scientific reasoning
- Elaborate the meaning of Merton's acronym, CUDOS
- Define the social scientific method and distinguish between positivist and interpretive approaches to research design
- Describe the relationship between research question and research design
- List and describe the common errors that students make when conducting a literature review
- Describe the kind of evidence required for an interpretive approach to research design
- Define what reliability and validity mean in a research study.
- Describe the various elements of the research onion process that inform research design within an interpretive framework
- Discuss the various ethical issues and decisions that arise as part of the development of research design.

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

In an unfortunate comment following the Boston Marathon bombing in April 2013, the then Prime Minister Stephen Harper said "this is not a time to commit sociology." He implied that the "utter condemnation of this kind of violence" *precluded* drawing on sociological research into the causes of political

violence (Cohen, 2013). In his [Harper's] position, there is a disjunction between taking a strong political and moral stance on violence on one hand and working towards a deeper, evidence-based understanding of the social causes of acts of violence on the other. Behind the political and moral rhetoric of Stephen Harper's statement are a number of densely solidified beliefs about the nature of a "terrorist" individual — "people who have agendas of violence that are deep and abiding, [who] are a threat to all the values that our society stands for" (Cohen, 2013). In this framework, the terrorist is a kind of person who is beyond reason and morality. Therefore, sociological analysis is not only futile in the former Prime Minister's opinion but also, for the same reasons, contrary to the "utter determination through our laws and through our activities to do everything we can to prevent and counter [terrorist violence]" (Cohen, 2013).

However, in the research of Robert Pape (2005) a different picture of the terrorist emerges. In the case of the 462 suicide bombers Pape studied, not only were the suicide bombers relatively well educated and affluent, but as other studies of suicide bombers in general confirm, they were not mentally imbalanced *per se*, not blindly motivated by religious zeal, and not unaffected by the moral ambivalence of their proposed acts. They were ordinary individuals caught up in extraordinary circumstances. How would this understanding of the terrorist individual affect the drafting of public policy and public responses to terrorism?

Sociological research is especially important with respect to public policy debates. The political controversies that surround the question of how best to

respond to terrorism and violent crime are difficult to resolve at the level of political rhetoric. Often, in the news and in public discourse, the issue is framed in moral terms and therefore, for example, the policy alternatives get narrowed to the option of either being "tough" or "soft" on crime. Tough and soft are moral categories that reflect a moral characterization of the issue. A question framed by these types of moral categories cannot be resolved using evidence-based procedures. Posing the debate in these terms narrows the range of options available and undermines the ability to raise questions about what responses to crime actually work.

In fact policy debates over terrorism and crime seem especially susceptible to the various forms of specious, unscientific reasoning described later in this module. The story of the isolated individual, whose specific act of violence becomes the basis for the belief that the criminal justice system as a whole has failed, illustrates several qualities of unscientific thinking: knowledge based on casual observation, knowledge based on over-generalization, and knowledge based on selective evidence. The sociological approach to policy questions is essentially different since it focuses on examining the effectiveness of different social control strategies for addressing different types of violent behaviour and the different types of risk to public safety. Thus, from a sociological point of view, it is crucial to think systematically about who commits violent acts and why.

Although moral claims and opinions are of interest to sociologists, sociological researchers use **empirical evidence** (that is, evidence corroborated by direct experience and/or observation) combined with the **scientific method** to deliver sound sociological

research. A truly scientific sociological study of the social causes that lead to terrorist or criminal violence would involve a sequence of prescribed steps: defining a specific research question that can be answered through empirical observation; gathering information and resources through detailed observation; forming a hypothesis; testing the hypothesis in a reproducible manner; analyzing and drawing conclusions from the data; publishing the results; and anticipating further development when future researchers respond to and re-examine the findings.

An appropriate starting point in this case might be the question "What are the social conditions of individuals who are drawn to commit terrorist acts?" In a casual discussion of the issue, or in the back and forth of Twitter or news comment forums, people often make arguments based on their personal observations and insights, believing them to be accurate. But the results of casual observation are limited by the fact that there is no standardization—who is to say if one person's observation of an event is any more accurate than another's? To mediate these concerns, sociologists rely on systematic research processes.

The unwillingness to "commit sociology" and think more deeply about the roots of political violence might lead to a certain moral or rhetorical image of an "uncompromising" response to the "terrorist threat," but not a response that has proven effective in practice nor one that exhausts the options for preventing and countering acts of political violence. Contrary to the former Prime Minister's statements, the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombing is precisely a moment to

commit sociology if the issues that produce acts of violence are to be addressed.

3.1.1 Science vs. Non-Science

We live in an interesting time in which the certitudes and authority of science are frequently challenged. In the natural sciences, people doubt scientific claims about climate change and the safety of vaccines. In the social sciences, people doubt scientific claims about the declining rate of violent crime or the effectiveness of needle exchange programs. Sometimes there is a good reason to be skeptical about science, when scientific technologies prove to have adverse effects on the environment, for example; sometimes skepticism has dangerous outcomes, when epidemics of diseases like measles suddenly break-out in schools due to low vaccination rates. In fact, skepticism is central to both natural and social sciences, but from a scientific point of view the skeptical attitude needs to be combined with systematic research in order for knowledge to move forward.

In sociology, science provides the basis for being able to distinguish between everyday opinions or beliefs and propositions that can be sustained by evidence. In his paper *The Normative Structure of Science* (1942/1973) the sociologist Robert Merton argued that science is a type of empirical knowledge organized around four key principles, often referred to by the acronym CUDOS:

> 1. Communalism: The results of science must be made available to the public; science is freely available, shared knowledge open to public discussion and debate.

2. Universalism: The results of science must be evaluated based on universal criteria, not parochial criteria specific to the researchers themselves.
3. Disinterestness: Science must not be pursued for private interests or personal reward.
4. Organized Skepticism: The scientist must abandon all prior intellectual commitments, critically evaluate claims, and postpone conclusions until sufficient evidence has been presented; scientific knowledge is provisional.

For Merton, therefore, non-scientific knowledge is knowledge that fails in various respects to meet these criteria. Types of esoteric or mystical knowledge, for example, might be valid for someone on a spiritual path, but because this knowledge is passed from teacher to student and it is not available to the public for open debate, or because the validity of this knowledge might be specific to the individual's unique spiritual configuration, esoteric or mystical knowledge is not scientific *per se*. Claims that are presented to persuade (rhetoric), to achieve political goals (propaganda, of various sorts), or to make profits (advertising) are not scientific because these claims are structured to satisfy private interests. Propositions which fail to stand up to rigorous and systematic standards of evaluation are not scientific because they can not withstand the criteria of organized skepticism and scientific method.

The basic distinction between scientific and common, non-scientific claims about the world is that in science "seeing is believing" whereas in everyday life "believing is seeing" (Brym, Roberts, Lie, & Rytina, 2013). Science is in crucial respects based on systematic observation

following the principles of CUDOS. Only on the basis of observation (or "seeing") can a scientist believe that a proposition about the nature of the world is correct. Research methodologies are designed to reduce the chance that conclusions will be based on error. In everyday life, the order is typically reversed. People "see" what they already expect to see or what they already believe to be true. Prior intellectual commitments or biases predetermine what people observe and the conclusions they draw.

Many people know things about the social world without having a background in sociology. Sometimes their knowledge is valid; sometimes it is not. It is important, therefore, to think about how people know what they know, and compare it to the scientific way of knowing. Four types of non-scientific reasoning are common in everyday life: knowledge based on casual observation, knowledge based on selective evidence, knowledge based on overgeneralization, and knowledge based on authority or tradition.

Table 2.1. Scientific and Non-Scientific Ways of Knowing (Source: Amy Blackstone, Sociological Inquiry Principles: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods. Creative Commons by-nc-sa 3.0 License)

Way of Knowing	Description
Casual Observation	Occurs when we make observations without any systematic process for observing or assessing the accuracy of what we observed.
Selective Observation	Occurs when we see only those patterns that we want to see, or when we assume that only the patterns we have experienced directly exist.
Overgeneralization	Occurs when we assume that broad patterns exist even when our observations have been limited.
Authority/ Tradition	A socially defined source of knowledge that might shape our beliefs about what is true and what is not true.
Scientific Research Methods	An organized, logical way of learning and knowing about our social world.

Many people know things simply because they have experienced them directly. If you grew up in Manitoba you may have observed what plenty of kids learn each winter, that it really is true that one's tongue will stick to metal when it's very cold outside. Direct experience may get us accurate information, but only if we are lucky. Unlike the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes, in general we are not very careful observers. In this example, the observation process is not really deliberate or formal. Instead, you would come to know what you believe to be true through **casual observation**. The problem with casual observation is that sometimes it is right, and sometimes it is wrong. Without any systematic process for observing or assessing the accuracy of our

observations, we can never really be sure if our informal observations are accurate.

Figure 3.1. "A Winged Ship in the Sky" seen by all in Sacramento in 1896 (Mystery Air Ship Headline is in the Public Domain)

Many people know things because they overlook disconfirming evidence. Suppose a friend of yours declared that all men are liars shortly after she had learned that her boyfriend had deceived her. The fact that one man happened to lie to her in one instance came to represent a quality inherent in all men. But do *all* men really lie *all* the time? Probably not. If you prompted your friend to think more broadly about her experiences with men, she would probably acknowledge that she knew many men who, to her knowledge, had never lied to her and that even her boyfriend did not generally make a habit of lying. This friend committed what social scientists refer to as **selective observation** by noticing only the pattern that she wanted to find at the time. She ignored disconfirming evidence. If, on the other hand, your friend's experience with her boyfriend had been her only experience with any man, then she would have been committing what social scientists refer to as

overgeneralization, assuming that broad patterns exist based on very limited observations.

Another way that people claim to know what they know is by looking to what they have always known to be true. There is an urban legend about a woman who for years used to cut both ends off of a ham before putting it in the oven (Mikkelson, 2005). She baked ham that way because that is the way her mother did it, so clearly that was the way it was supposed to be done. Her knowledge was based on a family tradition (**traditional knowledge**). After years of tossing cuts of perfectly good ham into the trash, however, she learned that the only reason her mother cut the ends off ham before cooking it was that she did not have a pan large enough to accommodate the ham without trimming it.

Without questioning what we think we know is true, we may wind up believing things that are actually false. This is most likely to occur when an authority tells us that something is true (**authoritatve knowledge**). Our mothers are not the only possible authorities we might rely on as sources of knowledge. Other common authorities we might rely on in this way are the government, our schools and teachers, and churches and ministers. Although it is understandable that someone might believe something to be true if someone he or she looks up to or respects has said it is so, this way of knowing differs from the sociological way of knowing. Whether quantitative, qualitative, or critical in orientation, sociological research is based on the scientific method.

3.2 Approaches to Sociological Research

Figure 3.2. Sherlock Holmes, known for his keen observational skills (Book cover by Conan Doyle from Special Collections Toronto Public Library CC BY-SA 2.0)

When sociologists apply the sociological perspective (elaborated in Module Two) and begin to ask questions, no topic is off limits. Every aspect of human behaviour is a source of possible investigation. Sociologists question the world that humans have created and live in. They notice patterns of behaviour as people move through the world. Using sociological methods and systematic research within the framework of the scientific method,

sociologists have discovered workplace patterns that have transformed industries, family patterns that have enlightened parents, and education patterns that have aided structural changes in classrooms.

Depending on the focus and the type of research conducted, sociological findings could be useful in addressing any of the three basic interests or purposes of sociological knowledge we discussed in the last module: the positivist interest in quantitative factual evidence to determine effective social policy decisions, the interpretive interest in understanding the meanings of human behaviour to foster mutual understanding and consensus, and the critical interest in knowledge useful for challenging power relations and emancipating people from conditions of servitude. It might seem strange to use scientific practices to study social phenomena but, as we have argued above, it is extremely helpful to rely on systematic approaches that research methods provide.

Sociologists often begin the research process by asking a question about how (descriptive research) or why (explanatory research) things happen. It might be a unique question about a new trend or an old question about a common aspect of life. Once a question is formed, a sociologist proceeds through an in-depth and systematic process to answer it. Depending on the nature of the topic and the goals of the research, sociologists have a variety of philosophical orientations, research methodologies to choose from. In particular, in deciding how to design that process, the researcher may adopt a **positivist methodology** or an **interpretive methodology**. Both types of methodology can be useful for **critical research strategies**. Working within the normative principles described by Merton in his *The*

Normative Structure of Science (1942/1973), sociological researchers formulate research questions which are answerable within the parameters of the scientific method and which direct them to the selection of an appropriate **research design**.

3.2.1 The Scientific Method and Research Design

Sociologists make use of tried-and-true methods of research, such as experiments, surveys, field research, and textual analysis. But humans and their social interactions are so diverse that they can seem impossible to chart or explain. It might seem that science is about discoveries and chemical reactions or about proving hypotheses about elementary particles right or wrong rather than about exploring the nuances of human behaviour. However, this is exactly why scientific models work for studying human behaviour. A scientific process of research establishes parameters that help make sure results are objective and accurate. Scientific methods provide limitations and boundaries that focus a study and organize its results. This is the case for both positivist quantitative methodologies, which seek to translate observable phenomena into unambiguous numerical data, and interpretive qualitative methodologies, which seek to translate observable phenomena into definable units of meaning. The social scientific method in both cases involves testing or developing theories about the social world based on empirical (i.e., observable) evidence. The social scientific method is defined by its commitment to systematic observation of the social world, and it strives to be objective, critical, skeptical, and

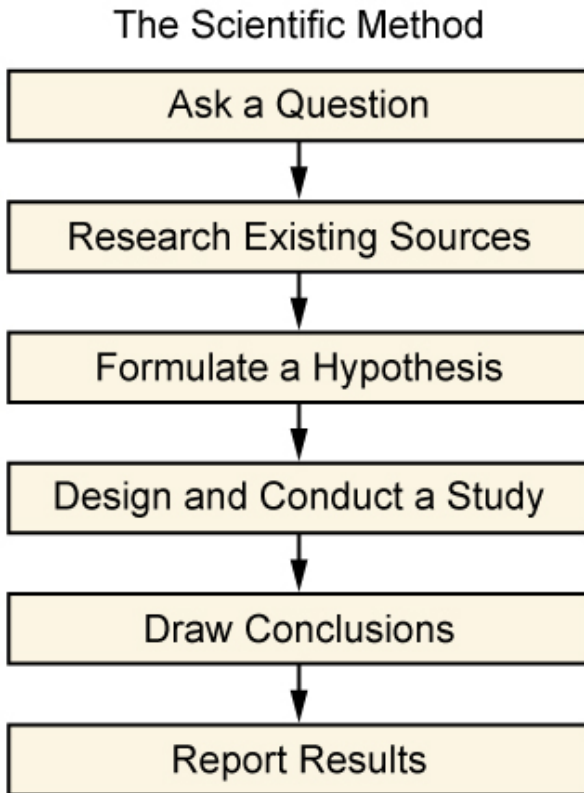logical. It involves a series of established steps known as the **research cycle**.

The Scientific Method

Ask a Question

↓

Research Existing Sources

↓

Formulate a Hypothesis

↓

Design and Conduct a Study

↓

Draw Conclusions

↓

Report Results

Figure 3.3. The research cycle passes through a series of steps. The conclusions and reporting typically generate a new set of questions, which renews the cycle. [Long Description]

However, just because sociological studies use the scientific method it does not make the results less human. Sociological topics like the causes and conditions of political violence are typically not amenable to the mathematical precision or quantifiable predictions of physics or chemistry. In the field of sociology, results of studies tend to provide people with access to knowledge

they did not have before — knowledge of people's social conditions, knowledge of rituals and beliefs, knowledge of trends and attitudes. Nevertheless, no matter what research approach is used, researchers want to maximize the study's **reliability** (how likely research results are to be replicated if the study is reproduced). Reliability increases the likelihood that what is true of one person will be true of all people in a group. Researchers also want to maximize the study's **validity** (how well the study measures or describes what it was designed to measure or describe).

A subtopic in the field of political violence would be to examine the sources of homegrown radicalization: What are the conditions under which individuals in Canada move from a state of indifference or moderate concern with political issues to a state in which they are prepared to use violence to pursue political goals? The reliability of a study of radicalization reflects how well the social factors unearthed by the research represent the actual experience of political radicals. Validity ensures that the study's design accurately examined what it was designed to study. An exploration of an individual's propensity to plan or engage in violent acts or to go abroad to join a terrorist organization should address those issues and not confuse them with other themes such as why an individual adopts a particular faith or espouses radical political views. As research from the UK and United States has in fact shown, while jihadi terrorists typically identify with an Islamic world view, a well-developed Islamic identity counteracts jihadism. Similarly, research has shown that while it intuitively makes sense that people with radical views would adopt radical means like violence to achieve them, there is in fact no consistent

homegrown terrorist profile, meaning that it is not possible to predict whether someone who espouses radical views will move on to committing violent acts (Patel, 2011). To ensure validity, research on political violence should focus on individuals who engage in political violence.

Sociologists use the scientific method not only to collect but to interpret and analyze the data. They deliberately apply scientific logic and objectivity. They are interested in but not attached to the results. Their research work is independent of their own political or social beliefs. This does not mean researchers are not critical. Nor does it mean they do not have their own personalities, preferences, and opinions. But sociologists deliberately use the scientific method to maintain as much objectivity, focus, and consistency as possible in a particular study. With its systematic approach, the scientific method has proven useful in shaping sociological studies. The scientific method provides a systematic, organized series of steps that help ensure objectivity and consistency in exploring a social problem. These steps provide the means for accuracy, reliability, and validity. In the end, the scientific method provides a shared basis for discussion and analysis (Merton, 1949/ 1968). Typically, the scientific method starts with these steps, which are described below: 1) ask a question; 2) research existing sources; and 3) formulate a hypothesis.

Formulate a Sociologically Interesting Question

The first step of the scientific method is to ask a question, describe a problem, and identify the specific area of interest. The topic should be narrow enough to study within a geography and time frame. "Are societies capable

of sustained happiness?" would be too vague. The question should also be broad enough to have universal merit. "What do personal hygiene habits reveal about the values of students at XYZ High School?" would be too narrow. That said, happiness and hygiene are worthy topics to study.
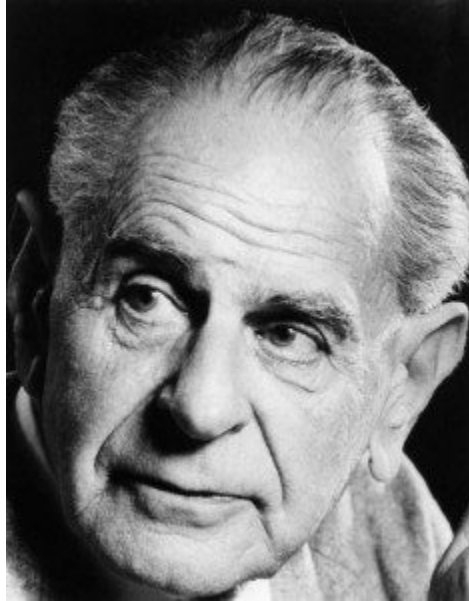

Figure 3.4. Karl Popper (Photo from the LSE Library no known copyrights.)

Sociologists do not rule out any topic, but would strive to frame these questions in better research terms. That is why sociologists are careful to define their terms. Karl Popper (1902-1994) described the formulation of scientific propositions in terms of the concept of **falsifiability** (1963). He argued that the key demarcation between scientific and non-scientific propositions was not ultimately their truth, nor their empirical verification, but whether or not they were stated in such

a way as to be falsifiable; that is, whether a possible empirical observation could prove them wrong. If one claimed that evil spirits were the source of criminal behaviour, this would not be a scientific proposition because there is no possible way to definitively disprove it. Evil spirits cannot be observed. However, if one claimed that higher unemployment rates are the source of higher crime rates, this would be a scientific proposition because it is theoretically possible to find an instance where unemployment rates were not correlated to crime rates. As Popper said, "statements or systems of statements, in order to be ranked as scientific, must be capable of conflicting with possible, or conceivable, observations" (1963).

Once a proposition is formulated in a way that would permit it to be falsified, the variables to be observed need to be operationalized. In a hygiene study, for instance, hygiene could be defined as "personal habits to maintain physical appearance (as opposed to health)," and a researcher might ask, "How do differing personal hygiene habits reflect the cultural value placed on appearance?" When forming these basic research questions, sociologists develop an **operational definition**; that is, they define the concept in terms of the physical or concrete steps it takes to objectively measure it. The concept is translated into an observable **variable**, a measure that has different values. The operational definition identifies an observable condition of the concept.

By operationalizing a variable of the concept, all researchers can collect data in a systematic or replicable manner. The operational definition must be valid in the sense that it is an appropriate and meaningful measure

of the concept being studied. It must also be reliable, meaning that results will be close to uniform when tested on more than one person. For example, good drivers might be defined in many ways: Those who use their turn signals; those who do not speed; or those who courteously allow others to merge. But these driving behaviours could be interpreted differently by different researchers, so they could be difficult to measure. Alternatively, "a driver who has never received a traffic violation" is a specific description that will lead researchers to obtain the same information, so it is an effective operational definition. Asking the question, "how many traffic violations has a driver received?" turns the concepts of "good drivers" and "bad drivers" into variables which might be measured by the number of traffic violations a driver has received. Of course the sociologist has to be wary of the way the variables are operationalized. In this example we know that black drivers are subject to much higher levels of police scrutiny than white drivers, so the number of traffic violations a driver has received might reflect less on their driving ability and more on the crime of "driving while black." Hence the need to consciously reflect on the research design or logic of inquiry which is most suited to answering the research question investigated.

"Introduction to Research Design" with Dr. Michael Patton

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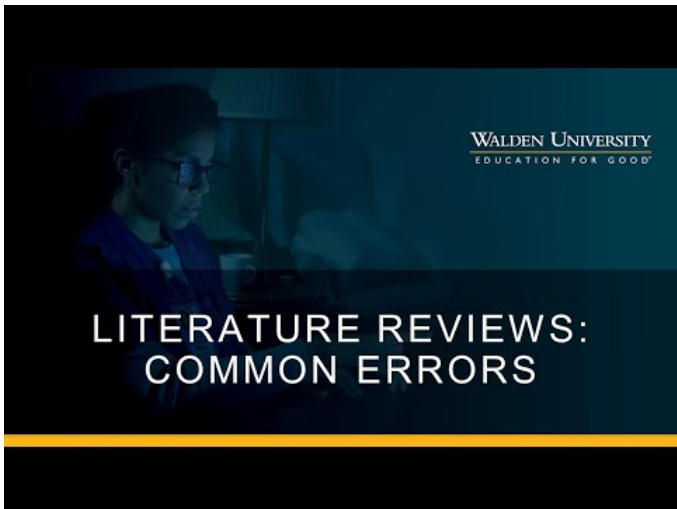
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Research Existing Sources: Theoretical, Methodological and Substantive Research Literatures

The next step researchers undertake is to conduct background research through a **literature review**, which is a review of any existing similar or related studies. A visit to a university library and a thorough online search will uncover existing research about the topic of study. This step helps researchers gain a broad understanding of work previously conducted on the topic at hand and enables them to position their own research to build on prior knowledge. It allows them to sharpen the focus of their research question and avoid duplicating previous research. Researchers — including student researchers — are responsible for correctly citing existing sources they use in a study or sources that inform their work. While it is fine to build on previously published material (as long as it enhances a unique viewpoint), it must be referenced properly and never plagiarized. To study hygiene and its value in a particular society, a researcher might sort through existing research and unearth studies about childrearing, vanity, obsessive-compulsive behaviours, and cultural attitudes toward beauty. It is important to sift through this information and determine what is relevant. Using existing sources educates a researcher and helps refine and improve a study's research design.

"Literature Reviews: Common Errors made when conducting a literature review"

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Hypothesis Formation within an Interpretive Framework

While many sociologists rely on the positivist hypothetico-deductive method in their research, others operate from an **interpretive approach**. While still systematic, this approach typically does not follow the hypothesis-testing model that seeks to make generalizable predictions from quantitative variables. Instead, an interpretive framework seeks to understand social worlds from the point of view of participants, leading to in-depth knowledge. It focuses on **qualitative data,** or the meanings that guide people's behaviour. Rather than relying on quantitative instruments, like fixed questionnaires or experiments, which can be artificial, the interpretive approach attempts to find ways to get closer to the informants' lived experience and perceptions.

Interpretive research is generally more descriptive or narrative in its findings than positivist research. It can begin from a deductive approach by deriving a hypothesis from theory and then seeking to confirm it through methodologies like in-depth interviews. However, it is ideally suited to an **inductive approach** in which the hypothesis emerges only after a substantial period of direct observation or interaction with subjects. This type of approach is exploratory in that the researcher also learns as he or she proceeds, sometimes adjusting the research methods or processes midway to respond to new insights and findings as they evolve.

For example, Glaser and Strauss' (1967) classic elaboration of grounded theory proposed that qualitative researchers working with rich sources of qualitative data from interviews or ethnographic observations need to go through several stages of coding the data before a strong theory of the social phenomenon under investigation can emerge. In the initial stage, the researcher is simply trying to categorize and sort the data. The researchers do not predetermine what the relevant categories of the social experience are but analyze carefully what their subjects actually say. For example, what are the working definitions of health and illness that hospital patients use to describe their situation? In the first stage, the researcher tries to label the common themes emerging from the data: different ways of describing health and illness. In the second stage, the researcher takes a more analytical approach by organizing the data into a few key themes: perhaps the key assumptions that lay people make about the physiological mechanisms of the body, or the metaphors they use to describe their relationship to illness (e.g., a battle, a punishment, a message, etc.).

In the third stage, the researcher would return to the interview subjects with a new set of questions that would seek to either affirm, modify, or discard the analytical themes derived from the initial coding of the interviews. This process can then be repeated until a thoroughly grounded theory is ready to be proposed. At every stage of the research, the researchers are obliged to follow the emerging data by revising their conceptions as new material is gathered, contradictions accounted for, commonalities categorized, and themes re-examined with further interviews.

Once the preliminary work is done and the hypothesis defined, it is time for the next research steps: choosing a research methodology, conducting a study, and drawing conclusions. These research steps are discussed in Module Four. However, before proceeding to a discussion of the nitty gritty of data collection and analysis, it is important to attend to the ethical issues that arise in the conduct of research.

3.3 Ethical Concerns

Sociologists conduct studies to shed light on human behaviours. Knowledge is a powerful tool that can be used toward positive change. And while a sociologist's goal is often simply to uncover knowledge rather than to spur action, many people use sociological studies to help improve people's lives. In that sense, conducting a sociological study comes with a tremendous amount of responsibility. Like any researchers, sociologists must consider their ethical obligation to avoid harming subjects or groups while conducting their research. The Canadian Sociological Association (CSA), is the major

professional organization of sociologists in Canada. The CSA is a great resource for students of sociology as well.

The CSA maintains a **code of ethics** — formal guidelines for conducting sociological research — consisting of principles and ethical standards to be used in the discipline. It also describes procedures for filing, investigating, and resolving complaints of unethical conduct. These are in line with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (2010), which applies to any research with human subjects funded by one of the three federal research agencies — the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Practising sociologists and sociology students have a lot to consider. Some of the guidelines state that researchers must try to be skillful and fair-minded in their work, especially as it relates to their human subjects. Researchers must obtain participants' informed consent, and they must inform subjects of the responsibilities and risks of research before they agree to participate. During a study, sociologists must ensure the safety of participants and immediately stop work if a subject becomes potentially endangered on any level. Researchers are required to protect the privacy of research participants whenever possible. Even if pressured by authorities, such as police or courts, researchers are not ethically allowed to release confidential information. Researchers must make results available to other sociologists, must make public all sources of financial support, and must not accept funding from any organization that might cause a conflict of

interest or seek to influence the research results for its own purposes. The CSA's ethical considerations shape not only the study but also the publication of results.

Pioneer German sociologist Max Weber identified another crucial ethical concern. Weber understood that personal values could distort the framework for disclosing study results. While he accepted that some aspects of research design might be influenced by personal values, he declared it was entirely inappropriate to allow personal values to shape the interpretation of the responses. Sociologists, he stated, must establish **value neutrality**, a practice of remaining impartial, without bias or judgement, during the course of a study and in publishing results (1949). Sociologists are obligated to disclose research findings without omitting or distorting significant data. Value neutrality does not mean having no opinions. It means striving to overcome personal biases, particularly subconscious biases, when analyzing data. It means avoiding skewing data in order to match a predetermined outcome that aligns with a particular agenda, such as a political or moral point of view. Investigators are ethically obligated to report results, even when they contradict personal views, predicted outcomes, or widely accepted beliefs. Is value neutrality possible?

Many sociologists believe it is impossible to set aside personal values and retain complete objectivity. Individuals inevitably see the world from a partial perspective. Their interests are central to the types of topics they choose, the types of questions they ask, the way they frame their research, and the research methodologies they select to pursue it. Moreover, facts, however objective, do not exist in a void. As was noted

in Chapter 1, Jürgen Habermas (1972) argues that sociological research has built-in interests quite apart from the personal biases of individual researchers. Positivist sociology has an interest in pursuing types of knowledge that are useful for controlling and administering social life. Interpretive sociology has an interest in pursuing types of knowledge that promote greater mutual understanding and the possibility of consensus among members of society. Critical sociology has an interest in types of knowledge that enable emancipation from power relations and forms of domination in society. In Habermas' view, sociological knowledge is not disinterested knowledge. This does not discredit the results of sociological research but allows readers to take into account the perspective of the research when judging the validity and applicability of its outcomes.

"Research Ethics: Ethical Practice"

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Key Terms and Concepts

authoritative knowledge: Knowledge based on the accepted authority of the source.

casual observation: Knowledge based on observations without any systematic process for observing or assessing the accuracy of observations.

code of ethics: A set of guidelines that the Canadian Sociological Association has established to foster ethical research and professionally responsible scholarship in sociology.

dependent variable: Variable changed by another variable.

empirical evidence: Evidence corroborated by direct experience and/or observation.

hypothesis: An educated guess with predicted outcomes about the relationship between two or more variables.

hypothetico-deductive methodologies: Methodologies based on deducing a prediction from a hypothesis and testing the validity of the hypothesis by whether it correctly predicts observations.

independent variable: Variable that causes change in a dependent variable.

inductive approach: Methodologies that derive a general statement from a series of empirical observations.

interpretive approach: A sociological research approach that seeks in-depth understanding of a topic or subject through observation or interaction.

literature review: A scholarly research step that entails identifying and studying all existing studies on a topic to create a basis for new research.

nonreactive: Unobtrusive research that does not include direct contact with subjects and will not alter or influence people's behaviours.

operational definitions: Specific explanations of abstract concepts that a researcher plans to study.

overgeneralization: Knowledge that draws general conclusions from limited observations.

positivist approach: A research approach based on the natural science

model of knowledge utilizing a hypothetico-deductive formulation of the research question and quantitative data.

primary data: Data collected directly from firsthand experience.

qualitative data: Information based on interpretations of meaning.

quantitative data: Information from research collected in numerical form that can be counted.

scientific method: A systematic research method that involves asking a question, researching existing sources, forming a hypothesis, designing and conducting a study, and drawing conclusions.

selective observation: Knowledge based on observations that only confirm what the observer expects or wants to see.

traditional knowledge: Knowledge based on received beliefs or the way things have always been done.

validity: The degree to which a sociological measure accurately reflects the topic of study.

value neutrality: A practice of remaining impartial, without bias or judgment, during the course of a study and in publishing results.

variable: A characteristic or measure of a social phenomenon that can take different values.

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4

MODULE 4: RESEARCH DESIGN: COLLECTING AND INTERPRETING THE DATA OF EVERYDAY SOCIAL REALITY
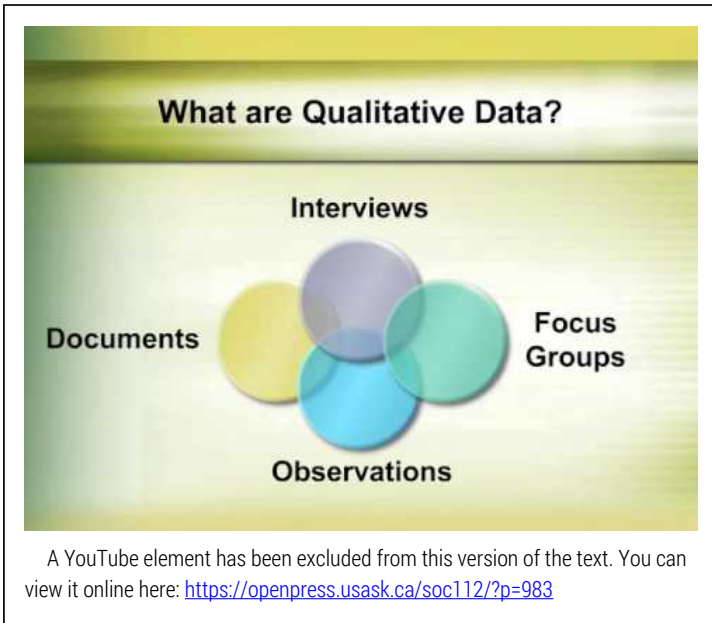
Learning Objectives

- Distinguish between between quantitative and qualitative research in terms of focus, philosophical roots, goals, design and data collection methods
- List and briefly describe the three primary goals of qualitative research
- List and briefly describe typical sources of qualitative data (e.g., Interviews, focus groups, observations and documents)
- List and briefly describe the primary methods of qualitative data analysis (i.e., preparing, summarizing and presenting qualitative data)
- List the primary strategies for determining the validity of qualitative data
- Explain when qualitative research methods are appropriate for a research study
- Explain why it is important to communicate research findings to both, specialized academic audiences and general public audiences

4.1 Introduction to Qualitative Inquiry and Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

Sociologists examine the social world, see a problem or interesting pattern in that world, and set out to study it. They use research methods to design a study — perhaps a positivist, quantitative method for conducting research and obtaining data to explain, predict or control an aspect of social reality; or alternatively, an ethnographic study utilizing an interpretive framework to produce enhanced understanding of the meaning and process of social action and interaction within complex social environments. Planning the **research design** is a key step

in any sociological study. As described in Module Three, there are multiple layers of research design that need to be taken into consideration. Using the research onion metaphor developed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012), the outer layers of the onion (research philosophies, modes of reasoning, and time horizons) point to the various conceptual and logical decisions that inform the process of research inquiry undertaken within particular studies. In discussing the outer layers of the research onion in Module Three, emphasis was placed on a selection of research philosophies and modes of reasoning that inform the collection and interpretation of empirical evidence in the form of meanings, experiences and motivations. Those meanings, experiences and motivations that inform the social actions and social interactions of human actors within the contexts of their everyday social realities. Module Four begins with a brief overview of the conceptual dimensions of qualitative research inquiry before shifting to an examination of the more concrete strategies and methods involved in collecting, summarizing, interpreting and representing various types of qualitative data.

(Overview of Qualitative Research Methods available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsAUNs-IoSQ)

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Researchers who work with qualitative research methods seek to understand social worlds from the perspectives of the participants. Following the lead of Weber's *Verstehende* sociology (See Module Two) and drawing on the theoretical insights of various classical thinkers (e.g., Simmel, Cooley, Mead, Goffman, DuBois), contemporary social constructionists (e.g., Smith, Hochschild) and/or critical thinkers (e.g., Habermas, Foucault, Bourdieu) qualitative researchers generally choose from four widely used data collection strategies. These strategies include field research, secondary data analysis, case study and participatory action research (PAR). Every data collection method comes with pluses and minuses, and the topic of study and research question are primary factors in deciding which method or methods are put to use. The various features, strengths

and weaknesses of each of these strategies is discussed below.

4.2 Methods of Data Collection for Qualitative Inquiry

4.2.1 Field Research

Figure 4.1. Sociological researchers travel across countries and cultures to interact with and observe subjects in their natural environments. (Punk Band by Patrick CC BY 2.0)

The work of sociological data collection rarely happens in limited, confined spaces. Sociologists seldom study subjects in their own offices or laboratories. Rather, sociologists go out into the world. They meet subjects where they live, work, and play. **Field research** refers to gathering **primary data** from a natural environment without doing a lab experiment or a survey. It is a research method suited to an interpretive approach rather than to positivist approaches. To conduct field research, the sociologist must be willing to step into new

environments and observe, participate, or experience those worlds. In fieldwork, the sociologists, rather than the subjects, are the ones out of their element. The researcher interacts with or observes a person or people, gathering data along the way. The key point in field research is that it takes place in the subject's natural environment, whether it's a coffee shop or tribal village, a homeless shelter or a care home, a hospital, airport, mall, or beach resort.

While field research often begins in a specific setting, the study's purpose is to observe specific behaviours in that setting. Fieldwork is optimal for observing *how* people behave. It is less useful, however, for developing causal explanations of *why* they behave that way. From the small size of the groups studied in fieldwork, it is difficult to make predictions or generalizations to a larger population. Similarly, there are difficulties in gaining an objective distance from research subjects. It is difficult to know whether another researcher would see the same things or record the same data. We will look at three types of field research: participant observation, ethnography, and institutional ethnography.

Participant Observation

Figure 4.2. Is she a working waitress or a sociologist conducting a study using participant observation? ([Waitress](#) by Zoetnet [CC BY 2.0](#))

Participant observation, is a form of study in which researchers join people and participate in a group's routine activities for the purpose of observing them within that context. This method lets researchers study a naturally occurring social activity without imposing artificial or intrusive research devices, like fixed questionnaire questions, onto the situation. A researcher might go to great lengths to get a firsthand look into a trend, institution, or behaviour. Researchers temporarily put themselves into "native" roles and record their observations. A researcher might work as a waitress in a diner, or live as a homeless person for several weeks, or ride along with police officers as they patrol their regular beat. Often, these researchers try to blend in seamlessly with the population they study, and they may not disclose their true identity or purpose if they feel it would compromise the results of their research. The issue of

disclosure is also an ethical one and as such, deciding not to disclose one's identity as a researcher would need to be justified and approved by an ethics review board before being used as a strategy within any particular research study.

At the beginning of a field study, researchers might have a question: "What really goes on in the kitchen of the most popular diner on campus?" or "What is it like to be homeless?" Participant observation is a useful method if the researcher wants to explore a certain environment from the inside. Field researchers simply want to observe and learn. In such a setting, the researcher will be alert and open minded to whatever happens, recording all observations accurately. Soon, as patterns emerge, questions will become more specific, observations will lead to hypotheses, and hypotheses will guide the researcher in shaping data into results.

In a study of small town America conducted by sociological researchers John S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, the team altered their purpose as they gathered data. They initially planned to focus their study on the role of religion in American towns. As they gathered observations, they realized that the effect of industrialization and urbanization was the more relevant topic of this social group. The Lynds did not change their methods, but they revised their purpose. This shaped the structure of *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*, their published results (Lynd & Lynd, 1959).

Figure 4.3. A classroom in Muncie, Indiana, in 1917, five years before John and Helen Lynd began researching this "typical" American community. (Muncie, Indiana High School: 1917 by Don O'Brien CC BY 2.0)

The Lynds were upfront about their mission. The townspeople of Muncie, Indiana knew why the researchers were in their midst. But some sociologists prefer not to alert people to their presence. The main advantage of covert participant observation is that it allows the researcher access to authentic, natural behaviours of a group's members. The challenge, however, is gaining access to a setting without disrupting the pattern of others' behaviour. Becoming an inside member of a group, organization, or subculture takes time and effort. Researchers must pretend to be something they are not. The process could involve role playing, making contacts, networking, or applying for a job. Once inside a group, some researchers spend months or even years pretending to be one of the people they are observing. However, as observers, they cannot get too involved. They must keep their purpose in mind and apply the sociological perspective. That way, they illuminate social patterns that are often unrecognized.

Because information gathered during participant observation is mostly qualitative, rather than quantitative, the end results are often descriptive or interpretive. The researcher might present findings in an article or book, describing what he or she witnessed and experienced.

This type of research is what journalist Barbara Ehrenreich conducted for her book *Nickel and Dimed*. One day over lunch with her editor, as the story goes, Ehrenreich mentioned an idea. "How can people exist on minimum-wage work? How do low-income workers get by?" she wondered. "Someone should do a study." To her surprise, her editor responded, "Why don't you do it?" That is how Ehrenreich found herself joining the ranks of the low-wage service sector. For several months, she left her comfortable home and lived and worked among people who lacked, for the most part, higher education and marketable job skills. Undercover, she applied for and worked minimum wage jobs as a waitress, a cleaning woman, a nursing home aide, and a retail chain employee. During her participant observation, she used only her income from those jobs to pay for food, clothing, transportation, and shelter. She discovered the obvious: that it's almost impossible to get by on minimum wage work. She also experienced and observed attitudes many middle- and upper-class people never think about. She witnessed firsthand the treatment of service work employees. She saw the extreme measures people take to make ends meet and to survive. She described fellow employees who held two or three jobs, worked seven days a week, lived in cars, could not pay to treat chronic health conditions, got randomly fired, submitted to drug tests, and moved in and out of homeless shelters. She

brought aspects of that life to light, describing difficult working conditions and the poor treatment that low-wage workers suffer.

Figure 4.4. Field research happens in real locations. What type of environment do work spaces foster? What would a sociologist discover after blending in? (drewzhrodague – 0501 – fedex – inCUBEators.jpg by drewzhrodague CC BY 2.0)

Blending into the social context that one wishes to study is not always a realistic option for the researcher and in those situations it is important to be mindful of the **Hawthorne Effect.** In the 1920s, leaders of a Chicago factory called Hawthorne Works commissioned a study to determine whether or not changing certain aspects of working conditions could increase or decrease worker productivity. Sociologists were surprised when the productivity of a test group increased when the lighting of their workspace was improved. They were even more surprised when productivity improved when the lighting of the workspace was dimmed. In fact almost every change of independent variable — lighting, breaks,

work hours — resulted in an improvement of productivity. But when the study was over, productivity dropped again.

Why did this happen? In 1953, Henry A. Landsberger analyzed the study results to answer this question. He realized that employees' productivity increased because sociologists were paying attention to them. The sociologists' presence influenced the study results. Worker behaviours were altered not by the lighting but by the study itself. From this, sociologists learned the importance of carefully planning their roles as part of their research design (Franke & Kaul, 1978). Landsberger called the workers' response the **Hawthorne effect —** people changing their behaviour because they know they are being watched as part of a study.

The Hawthorne effect is unavoidable in some research. In many cases, sociologists have to make the purpose of the study known for ethical reasons. Subjects must be aware that they are being observed, and a certain amount of artificiality may result (Sonnenfeld, 1985). Making sociologists' presence invisible is not always realistic for other reasons. That option is not available to a researcher studying prison behaviours, early education, or the Ku Klux Klan. Researchers cannot just stroll into prisons, kindergarten classrooms, or Ku Klux Klan meetings and unobtrusively observe behaviours. In situations like these, other methods are needed. All studies shape the research design, while research design simultaneously shapes the study. Researchers choose methods that best suit their study topic and that fit with their overall goal for the research.

Choosing a research methodology depends on a number of factors, including the purpose of the research

and the audience for whom the research is intended. If we consider the type of research that might go into producing a government policy document on the effectiveness of safe injection sites for reducing the public health risks of intravenous drug use, we would expect public administrators to want "hard" (i.e., quantitative) evidence of high reliability to help them make a policy decision. The most reliable data would come from an experimental or quasi-experimental research model in which a control group can be compared with an experimental group using quantitative measures.

This approach has been used by researchers studying InSite in Vancouver (Marshall et al., 2011; Wood et al., 2006). InSite is a supervised safe-injection site where heroin addicts and other intravenous drug users can go to inject drugs in a safe, clean environment. Clean needles are provided and health care professionals are on hand to intervene in the case of overdoses or other medical emergency. It is a controversial program both because heroin use is against the law (the facility operates through a federal ministerial exemption) and because the heroin users are not obliged to quit using or seek therapy. To assess the effectiveness of the program, researchers compared the risky usage of drugs in populations before and after the opening of the facility and geographically near and distant to the facility. The results from the studies have shown that InSite has reduced both deaths from overdose and risky behaviours, such as the sharing of needles, without increasing the levels of crime associated with drug use and addiction.

On the other hand, if the research question is more exploratory (for example, trying to discern the reasons why individuals in the crack smoking subculture engage

in the risky activity of sharing pipes), the more nuanced approach of fieldwork is more appropriate. The research would need to focus on the subcultural context, rituals, and meaning of sharing pipes, and why these phenomena override known health concerns. Graduate student Andrew Ivsins at the University of Victoria studied the practice of sharing pipes among 13 habitual users of crack cocaine in Victoria, B.C. (Ivsins, 2010). He met crack smokers in their typical setting downtown and used an unstructured interview method to try to draw out the informal norms that lead to sharing pipes. One factor he discovered was the bond that formed between friends or intimate partners when they shared a pipe. He also discovered that there was an elaborate subcultural etiquette of pipe use that revolved around the benefit of getting the crack resin smokers left behind. Both of these motives tended to outweigh the recognized health risks of sharing pipes (such as hepatitis) in the decision making of the users. This type of research was valuable in illuminating the unknown subcultural norms of crack use that could still come into play in a harm reduction strategy such as distributing safe crack kits to addicts.

Ethnography

Ethnography is the extended observation of the social perspective and cultural values of an entire social setting. Researchers seek to immerse themselves in the life of a bounded group by living and working among them. Often ethnography involves participant observation, but the focus is the systematic observation of an entire community. The heart of an ethnographic study focuses on how subjects view their own social standing and how they understand themselves in relation to a community.

It aims at developing a "thick description" of people's behaviour that describes not only the behaviour itself but the layers of meaning that form the context of the behaviour (Geertz, 1973). An ethnographic study might observe, for example, a small Newfoundland fishing town, an Inuit community, a scientific research laboratory, a backpacker's hostel, a private boarding school, or Disney World. These places all have borders. People live, work, study, or vacation within those borders. People are there for a certain reason and therefore behave in certain ways and respect certain cultural norms. An ethnographer would commit to spending a determined amount of time studying every aspect of the chosen place, taking in as much as possible, and keeping careful notes on his or her observations. A sociologist studying ayahuasca ceremonies in the Amazon might learn the language, watch the way shamans go about their daily lives, ask individuals about the meaning of different aspects of the activity, study the group's cosmology, and then write a paper about it. To observe a Buddhist retreat centre, an ethnographer might sign up for a retreat and attend as a guest for an extended stay, observe and record how people experience spirituality in this setting, and collate the material into results.

Institutional Ethnography

Figure 4.5. A sociology for women. [Long Description] (Sociology for Women by Zuleyka Zevallos CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Dorothy Smith elaborated on traditional ethnography to develop what she calls **institutional ethnography** (2005). In modern society the practices of everyday life in any particular local setting are often organized at a level that goes beyond what an ethnographer might observe directly. Everyday life is structured by "extralocal," institutional forms; that is, by the practices of institutions that act upon people from a distance. It might be possible to conduct ethnographic research on the experience of domestic abuse by living in a women's shelter and directly observing and interviewing victims to see how they form an understanding of their situation. However, to the degree that the women are seeking redress through the criminal justice system a crucial element of the situation would be missing. In order to activate a

response from the police or the courts, a set of standard legal procedures must be followed, a case file must be opened, legally actionable evidence must be established, forms filled out, etc. All of this allows criminal justice agencies to organize and coordinate the response.The urgent and immediate experience of the domestic abuse victims needs to be translated into a format that enables distant authorities to take action. Often this is a frustrating and mysterious process in which the immediate needs of individuals are neglected so that needs of institutional processes are met. Therefore, to research the situation of domestic abuse victims, an ethnography needs to somehow operate at two levels: the close examination of the local experience of particular women and the simultaneous examination of the extralocal, institutional world through which their world is organized. In order to accomplish this, institutional ethnography focuses on the study of the way everyday life is coordinated through "textually mediated" practices: the use of written documents, standardized bureaucratic categories, and formalized relationships (Smith, 1990). Institutional paperwork translates the specific details of locally lived experience into a standardized format that enables institutions to apply the institution's understandings, regulations, and operations in different local contexts. A study of these textual practices reveals otherwise inaccessible processes that formal organizations depend on: their formality, their organized character, their ongoing methods of coordination, etc. An institutional ethnography often begins by following the paper trail that emerges when people interact with institutions: How does a person formulate a narrative about what has happened to him or her in a way that the

institution will recognize? How is it translated into the abstract categories on a form or screen that enable an institutional response to be initiated? What is preserved in the translation to paperwork, and what is lost? Where do the forms go next? What series of "processing interchanges" take place between different departments or agencies through the circulation of paperwork? How is the paperwork modified and made actionable through this process (e.g., an incident report, warrant request, motion for continuance)?Smith's insight is that the shift from the locally lived experience of individuals to the extralocal world of institutions is nothing short of a radical metaphysical shift in worldview. In institutional worlds, meanings are detached from directly lived processes and reconstituted in an organizational time, space, and consciousness that is fundamentally different from their original reference point. For example, the crisis that has led to a loss of employment becomes a set of anonymous criteria that determines one's eligibility for Employment Insurance.The unique life of a disabled child becomes a checklist that determines the content of an "individual education program" in the school system, which in turn determines whether funding will be provided for special aid assistants or therapeutic programs. Institutions put together a picture of what has occurred that is not at all the same as what was lived. The ubiquitous but obscure mechanism by which this is accomplished is **textually mediated communication**. The goal of institutional ethnography, therefore, is to make "documents or texts visible as constituents of social relations" (Smith, 1990). Institutional ethnography is very useful as a critical research strategy. It is an analysis that gives grassroots organizations, or those excluded from

the circles of institutional power, a detailed knowledge of how the administrative apparatuses actually work. This type of research enables more effective actions and strategies for change to be pursued.
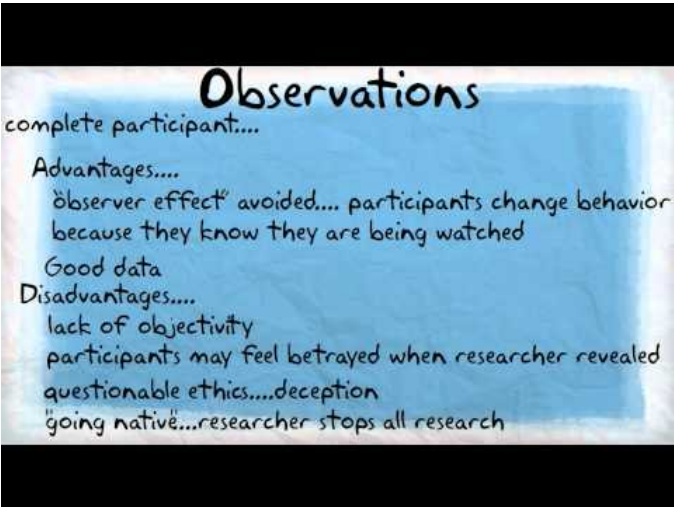
(Qualitative Data 1 is available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzeSc4ESB-c)

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(Qualitative Data 2 is available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTboo9ZhrIM)

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(Qualitative Data 3 is available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdzYIF2wywE)

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4.2.2 Secondary Data, Archival Data and Methods of Textual Analysis

While sociologists often engage in original research studies, they also contribute knowledge to the discipline through **secondary data.** Within qualitative inquiry, secondary data is frequently in the form of **archival** materials which may be formally stored in an archive or exist in the files and records of public and private organizations as well as private persons. Secondary data do not result from firsthand research collected from primary sources, but are drawn from the already-completed work of other researchers, scholars and writers (e.g., the texts of historians, economists, anthropologists, sociologists, teachers, journalists), records produced as a result of the everyday activities within various organizational contexts (e.g., government offices, non-profit organizations, private businesses and corporations), and personal memoirs (e.g., correspondence, diaries, photographs). In the contemporary context of digital technologies and communications, the internet is a rich and expanding resource of various types of text (e.g., written and image based) for the purpose of sociological analysis (e.g., website pages, facebook, twitter, blogs, etc.) alongside more traditional sources such as periodicals, newspapers, or magazines from any period in history. Using available information not only saves time and money, but it can add depth to a study. Sociologists often interpret findings in a new way, a way that was not part

of an author's original purpose or intention. To study how women were encouraged to act and behave in the 1960s, for example, a researcher might watch movies, televisions shows, and situation comedies from that period. Or to research changes in behaviour and attitudes due to the emergence of television in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a sociologist would rely on new interpretations of secondary data. Decades from now, researchers will most likely conduct similar studies on the advent of mobile phones, the internet, or Facebook. Within sociological inquiry the potential sources of secondary data are limited only by the imagination of individual researchers. A particularly rich and longitudinal source of data for the study of everyday social reality is provided in the Mass Observation Project located in the UK.

Video

Watch the video "Mass Observation Project" at http://sk.sagepub.com/video/sociology-of-everyday-life-inpr?fromsearch=true (USASK students should be able to see this video by clicking the link. If the link does not work, access the video Module 4 in the Learning Management System course site.

One methodology that sociologists employ with secondary data is **content analysis**. Content analysis is a quantitative approach to textual research that selects an item of textual content (i.e., a variable) that can be reliably and consistently observed and coded, and surveys the prevalence of that item in a sample of textual output. For example, Gilens (1996) wanted to find out why survey research shows that the American public substantially exaggerates the percentage of African Americans among

the poor. He examined whether media representations influence public perceptions and did a content analysis of photographs of poor people in American news magazines. He coded and then systematically recorded incidences of three variables: (1) race: white, black, indeterminate; (2) employed: working, not working; and (3) age. Gilens discovered that not only were African Americans markedly overrepresented in news magazine photographs of poverty, but that the photos also tended to under represent "sympathetic" subgroups of the poor—the elderly and working poor—while over representing less sympathetic groups—unemployed, working age adults. Gilens concluded that by providing a distorted representation of poverty, U.S. news magazines "reinforce negative stereotypes of blacks as mired in poverty and contribute to the belief that poverty is primarily a 'black problem'" (1996).

Textual analysis is a qualitative methodology use to examine the structure, style, content, purpose and symbolic meaning of various written, oral and visual texts. The roots of textual analysis extend into the humanities and draw on the theory and methodologies of **hermeneutic** interpretation and linguistics (the science of language). Within the broader domain of textual analysis, **narrative analysis** draws on the strategies and techniques of literary scholars to analyze the stories people create and use to express meaning and experience within the context of everyday lived reality. **Discourse analysis**, another form of textual analysis, finds its roots in linguistics and is an interpretive approach to texts that focuses on the contextual meanings and social uses of larger chunks of communication. In addition to there being multiple sources of secondary data for the purpose

of sociological analysis, there are a variety of analytical tools and techniques that can be drawn on from the domains of science and the humanities to enhance our capacity as sociologists to understand meaning and motivation within the context of everyday social reality.

(Linguistics and Discourse Analysis in available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=JZ8bkus3vis)

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Social scientists also learn by analyzing the research of a variety of agencies. Governmental departments, public interest research groups, and global organizations like Statistics Canada, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, or the World Health Organization publish studies with findings that are useful to sociologists. A public statistic that measures inequality of incomes might be useful for studying who benefited and who lost as a

result of the 2008 recession; a demographic profile of different immigrant groups might be compared with data on unemployment to examine the reasons why immigration settlement programs are more effective for some communities than for others. One of the advantages of secondary data is that it is **nonreactive** (or unobtrusive) research, meaning that it does not include direct contact with subjects and will not alter or influence people's behaviours. Unlike studies requiring direct contact with people, using previously published data does not require entering a population and the investment and risks inherent in that research process.

Using available data does have its challenges. Public records are not always easy to access. A researcher needs to do some legwork to track them down and gain access to records. In some cases there is no way to verify the accuracy of existing data. It is easy, for example, to count how many drunk drivers are pulled over by the police. But how many are not? While it's possible to discover the percentage of teenage students who drop out of high school, it might be more challenging to determine the number who return to school or get their high school diplomas later. Another problem arises when data are unavailable in the exact form needed or do not include the precise angle the researcher seeks. For example, the salaries paid to professors at universities are often published, but the separate figures do not necessarily reveal how long it took each professor to reach the salary range, what their educational backgrounds are, or how long they have been teaching.

In his research, sociologist Richard Sennett uses secondary data to shed light on current trends. In *The Craftsman* (2008), he studied the human desire to perform

quality work, from carpentry to computer programming. He studied the line between craftsmanship and skilled manual labour. He also studied changes in attitudes toward craftsmanship that occurred not only during and after the Industrial Revolution, but also in ancient times. Obviously, he could not have firsthand knowledge of periods of ancient history, so he had to rely on secondary data for part of his study.

When conducting secondary data or textual analysis, it is important to consider the date of publication of an existing source and to take into account attitudes and common cultural ideals that may have influenced the research. For example, Robert and Helen Lynd gathered research for their book *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* in the 1920s. Attitudes and cultural norms were vastly different then than they are now. Beliefs about gender roles, race, education, and work have changed significantly since then. At the time, the study's purpose was to reveal the truth about small American communities. Today, it is an illustration of 1920s attitudes and values. An important principle for sociological researchers to be mindful of is to exercise caution when presuming to impose today's values and attitudes on the practices and circumstances of the past.

4.2.3 Case Studies

A **case study** is an in-depth analysis of a single event, social situation, individual, organization, community, or process. To conduct a case study, a researcher typically collects or accesses data from a variety of sources. Data collection strategies may include the examination of existing documents and archival records, interviews

with key informants, direct observation, and even participant observation, if possible. While there is no single definition of the case study method, the approach generally involves an intense investigation of a bounded (i.e., spatial or temporal) phenomena within its natural context. For example, researchers might use this method to study a single case of a foster child, drug lord, cancer patient, criminal, or sexual assault victim or they could develop a multiple case study design to facilitate comparative analysis. Alternatively, the case study researcher may examine an exemplary event within the context of an entire community or organization. The primary purposes of case study research are illustrative, descriptive, explanatory and exploratory. A major criticism of the case study as a method is that a developed study of a single case, while offering depth on a topic, does not provide enough evidence to form a generalized conclusion. In other words, it is difficult to make universal claims based on just one case, since one case does not verify a pattern.

However, case studies are useful when the single case is unique. In these instances, a single case study can add tremendous knowledge to a certain discipline. For example, a feral child, also called "wild child," is one who grows up isolated from human beings. Feral children grow up without social contact and language, which are elements crucial to a "civilized" child's development. These children mimic the behaviours and movements of animals, and often invent their own language. There are only about 100 cases of feral children in the world. As you may imagine, a feral child is a subject of great interest to researchers. Feral children provide unique information about child development because they have grown up

outside of the parameters of normal child development. And since there are very few feral children, the case study is the most appropriate method for researchers to use in studying the subject. At age three, a Ukrainian girl named Oxana Malaya suffered severe parental neglect. She lived in a shed with dogs, eating raw meat and scraps. Five years later, a neighbour called authorities and reported seeing a girl who ran on all fours, barking. Officials brought Oxana into society, where she was cared for and taught some human behaviours, but she never became fully socialized. She has been designated as unable to support herself and now lives in a mental institution (Grice, 2006). Case studies like this offer a way for sociologists to collect data that may not be collectable by any other method.

4.2.4 Community Based Participatory Action Research

Community Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) is a methodological approach to research that not only seeks to understand the social world, or a part of the social world, but also to change it in a particular, normative direction. **Photovoice** or **photoelicitation** is a form of qualitative, textual inquiry that uses visual imagery and dialogue between researchers and participants to democratize the researcher participant relationship and enable participants to represent and express experiences and meanings in ways that are meaningful to the standpoints and perspectives of the research participants.

(Photovoice is available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyXnnOlvqOM)

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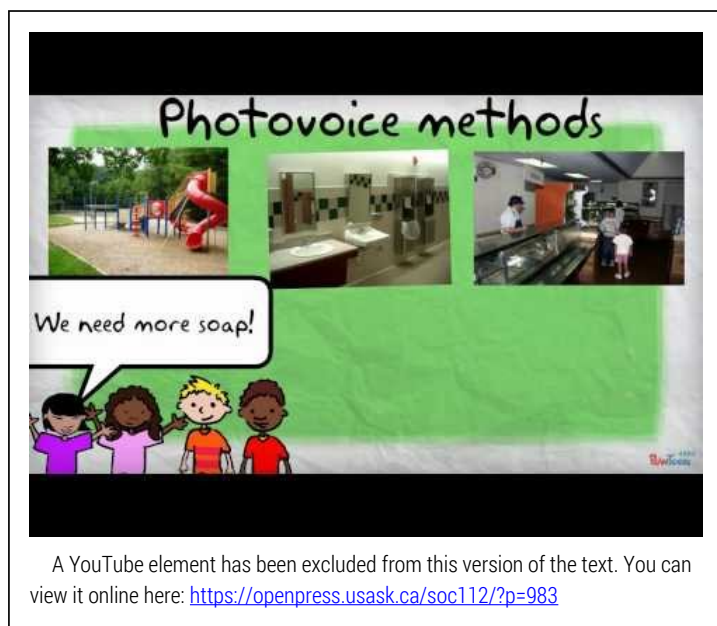
4.3 Reporting and Translating Qualitative Research Findings

Sociological researchers are motivated, and ethically obliged, to communicate the process and findings of their research to other social scientists. The rationale for this is twofold. On the one hand, research findings serve to advance and improve the knowledge base of the discipline. On the other, researchers are obliged to subject their logics, methods and findings to other members of the scholarly community for scrutiny and evaluation (See CUDOS, Module 3). The primary avenue for achieving this objective is via peer reviewed academic journals which are considered the gold standard of the scientific and scholarly community. In addition to publishing research articles in peer reviewed academic

journals and other media primarily oriented to other social scientists, the knowledge outcomes of sociological research are also communicated in forms accessible to research participants, policy makers and members of the public more generally. In the case of qualitative inquiry, where researchers are confronted with a need to communicate meaning and emotion alongside social and historical facts, the knowledge, techniques and strategies of the fine and popular arts provide a rich resource.

(With Glowing Hearts: Academic Page to Popular Stage is available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5yYY-UEGyQ)
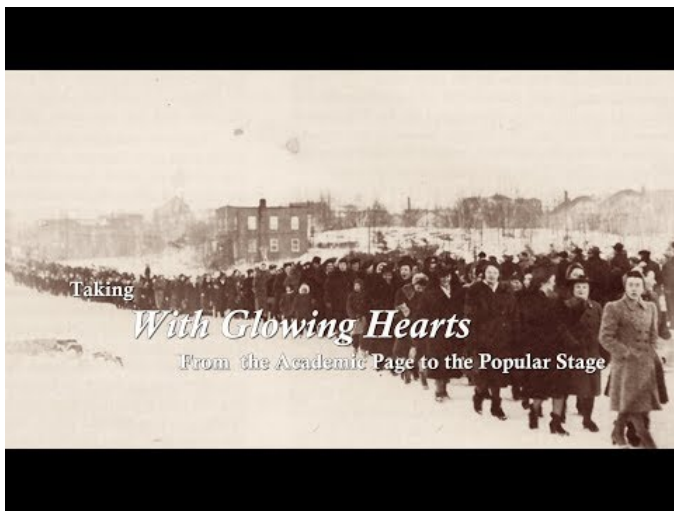
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Key Terms and Concepts

Archival data: A type of secondary data that consists of documentary material left by people and organizations as a product of their everyday lives.

Case study: In-depth analysis of a single event, situation, or individual.

Content Analysis: A quantitative approach to textual research that selects an item of textual content that can be reliably and consistently observed and coded, and surveys the prevalence of that item in a sample of textual output.

Ethnography: Observing a complete social setting and all that it entails.

Field research: Gathering data from a natural environment without doing a lab experiment or a survey.

Hawthorne effect: When study subjects behave in a certain manner due to their awareness of being observed by a researcher.

Hermeneutic: A theory and methodology of interpretation.

Institutional ethnography: The study of the way everyday life is coordinated through institutional, textually mediated practices.

Nonreactive: Unobtrusive research that does not include direct contact with subjects and will not alter or influence people's behaviours.

Participant observation: Immersion by a researcher in a group or social setting in order to make observations from an "insider" perspective.

Primary data: Data collected directly from firsthand experience.

Research design: the set of methods and procedures used in collecting and analyzing measures of the variables specified in the problem research. (Creswell, J. 2017).

Secondary data analysis: Using data collected by others but applying new interpretations.

Textual analysis: Using data collected by others but applying new interpretations.

Textually mediated communication: Institutional forms of communication that rely on written documents, texts, and paperwork.

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5

MODULE 5: SOCIALIZATION AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL SELVES

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. (Kids at Kubota Garden, 2003 by Seattle Municipal Archives CC BY 2.0)

Learning Objectives

- Describe the self as a social structure.
- Explain the four stages of role development in child socialization.
- Describe the importance of socialization for individuals and society.
- Explain why biological explanations of human behaviour are deficient from a sociological perspective.
- Describe both the conformity of behaviour in society and the existence of individual uniqueness.
- List and describe the basic contents of socialization processes
- Describe the significance of symbols and language to a culture and to the process of socialization
- Distinguish between material and non-material culture
- Describe the roles of families and peer groups in socialization
- Explain how we are socialized through formal institutions like

schools, workplaces, and the government
- •   Explain how people are socialized into new roles at age-related transition points.
- •   Describe when and how resocialization occurs.

5.0 Introduction to Socialization and Social Selves

Der Wilde von Aveyron.

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). ([Victor of Aveyron](#) is in the Public Domain)

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.

5.0.1 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 learn 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 self, 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 Sociological 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. As Zygmunt Bauman put it, one's distinct sense of identity is a "postulated self," a "horizon towards which I strive and by which I assess, censure and correct my moves" (2004). It is clear, however, that the self does not develop in the absence of socialization. The self is a social product.

The American sociologist George Herbert Mead is often seen as the founder of the school of symbolic interactionism in sociology, although he referred to himself as a social behaviourist. His conceptualization of the self has been very influential. Mead defines the emergence of the self as a thoroughly social process: "The self, as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience" (Mead, 1934).

In this description, you should notice first that the key quality of the self that Mead is concerned with is the ability to be reflexive or self-aware (i.e., to be an "object" to oneself). One can think *about* oneself, or feel how one is feeling. Second, this key quality of the self can only arise in a social context through social interactions with

others. In Charles Horton Cooley's concept of the "looking glass self," others, and their attitudes towards us, are like mirrors in which we are able to see ourselves and formulate an idea of who we are (Cooley, 1902). Without others, or without society, the self does not exist: "[I]t is impossible to conceive of a self arising outside of social experience" (Mead, 1934, p. 293).

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." (Gollum by Brenda Clarke CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

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.

The necessity for early social contact was demonstrated by the research of Harry and Margaret Harlow. From 1957–1963, the Harlows conducted a series of experiments studying how rhesus monkeys, which behave a lot like people, are affected by isolation as babies. They studied monkeys raised under two types of "substitute" mothering circumstances: a mesh and wire sculpture, or a soft terry cloth "mother." The monkeys systematically preferred the company of a soft, terry cloth substitute mother (closely resembling a rhesus monkey) that was unable to feed them, to a mesh and wire mother that provided sustenance via a feeding tube. This demonstrated that while food was important, social comfort was of greater value (Harlow & Harlow, 1962; Harlow, 1971). Later experiments testing more severe isolation revealed that such deprivation of social contact led to significant developmental and social challenges later in life.

Figure 5.4. Baby rhesus monkeys, like humans, need to be raised with social contact for healthy development. (rhesus macaque Macaca mulatta by Paul Asman and Jill Lenoble CC BY 2.0)

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.

5.1.1 Charles Horton Cooley

Figure 5.5 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. Do contemporary social media like Facebook present a new mode of "looking glass self" today? [Long Description] (Facebook: Self-constructed digital identity and academic performance by Joelle L CC BY 2.0)

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, we base our image on what we think other people see (1902). We imagine how we must appear to others, then react to this speculation. We 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.Cooley believed that our sense of self is not based on some internal source of individuality. Rather, we imagine how we look to others, draw conclusions based on their reactions to us, and then develop our personal sense of self. In other words, people's reactions to us are like a mirror in which we are reflected. We live a mirror image of ourselves. "The imaginations people have of one another are the solid facts of society" (Cooley, 1902).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. It is based on how we imagine we appear to others. It is not how we actually appear to others but our projection of what others think or feel towards us. This projection defines how we feel about ourselves and who we feel ourselves to be. The development of a self, therefore, involves three elements in Cooley's analysis: "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).

5.1.2 George Herbert Mead
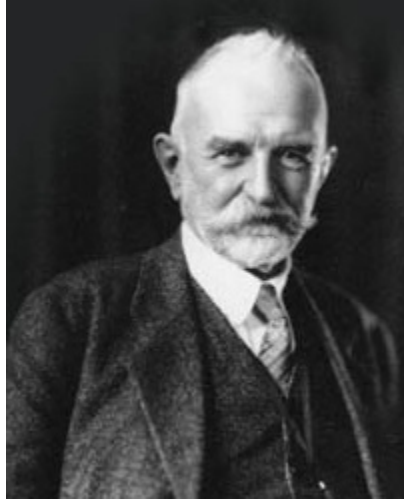
Figure 5.6. Prince William by Alexandre Goulet CC BY-SA 3.0

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. As we noted above, he argued that the crucial component of the self is its capacity for self reflection, its capacity to be "an object to itself" (Mead, 1934). On this basis, he 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.

This flipping back and forth is the condition of our being able to be social. It is not an ability that we are born with (Mead, 1934). 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 Mead's point of view, she had no "self." Without others, or without society, the self cannot exist: "[I]t is impossible to conceive of a self arising outside of social experience" (Mead, 1934).

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. A **role** is the behaviour expected of a person who occupies particular social status or position in society. In learning to play roles one also learns how to put oneself in the place of another, to see through another's eyes. At one point in their life, a child simply cannot play a game like baseball; they do not "get it" because they cannot insert themselves into the complex role of the player. They cannot see themselves from the point of view of all the other players on the field or figure out their place within a rule bound sequence of activities. At another point in their life, a child becomes able to learn how to play. 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 5.7. 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). (newly opened Child, Youth and School Services' youth sports and fitness complex by Public Affairs Office Fort Wainwright CC BY 2.0).

Mead uses the example of a baseball game. "If we contrast play with the situation in an organized game, we note the essential difference that the child who plays in a game must be ready to take the attitude of everyone else

involved in that game, and that these different roles must have a definite relationship to each other" (Mead, 1934). 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. "What he does is controlled by his being everyone else on that team, at least in so far as those attitudes affect his own particular response" (Mead, 1934). The players have to be able to anticipate the actions of others and adjust or orient their behaviour accordingly. Role play in games like baseball involves the understanding that ones own role is tied to the roles of several people simultaneously and that these roles are governed by fixed, or at least mutually recognized, rules and expectations. 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." Being able to guide one's actions according to the attitudes of the generalized other provides the basis of having a "self" in the sociological sense. "[O]nly in so far as he takes the attitudes of the organized social group to which he belongs toward the organized, cooperative social activity or set of such activities in which that group as such is engaged, does he develop a complete self" (Mead, 1934).

This capacity defines the conditions of thinking, of language, and of society itself as the organization of complex co-operative processes and activities.

> It is in the form of the generalized other that the social process influences the behavior of the individuals involved in it and carrying it on, that is, that the community exercises control over the conduct of its individual members; for it is in this form that the social process or community enters as a determining factor into the individual's thinking. In abstract thought the individual takes the attitude of the generalized other toward himself, without reference to its expression in any particular other individuals; and in concrete thought he takes that attitude in so far as it is expressed in the attitudes toward his behavior of those other individuals with whom he is involved in the given social situation or act. But only by taking the attitude of the generalized other toward himself, in one or another of these ways, can he think at all; for only thus can thinking — or the internalized conversation of gestures which constitutes thinking-occur. And only through the taking by individuals of the attitude or attitudes of the generalized other toward themselves is the existence of a universe of discourse, as that system of common or social meanings which thinking presupposes at its context, rendered possible. (Mead, 1934)

5.2 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. For Canadian culture to continue, for example, children in Canada must learn about cultural values related to democracy: They have to learn the norms of voting, as well as how to use material objects such as a ballot. Of course, some would argue that it is just as important in Canadian culture for the younger generation to learn the etiquette of eating in a restaurant or the rituals of tailgate parties before baseball games. In fact, there are many ideas and objects that Canadians teach children in hopes of keeping the society's way of life going through another generation.

Figure 5.8. 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. (FullCircle by Niyam Bhushan CC BY 2.0)

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.

5.2.1 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? How can an individual have **agency**, the ability to choose and act independently of external constraints? 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.

Mead addressed the question of agency at the level of the relationship between the "I" and the "me" as two "phases" that flip back and forth in the life of the self. The "me" is the part of the self in which one recognizes and assumes the expectations or "organized sets of attitudes" of others: our social roles, our designations, our personalities (as they appear to others), and so on. On the basis of the "me" the individual knows what is expected of him or her in a social situation and what the consequences of an action will be. The "I" represents the part of the self which acts or responds to the organized attitudes of others. It is, however, the unpredictable part of the self which embodies the principles of novelty, spontaneity, freedom, initiative (and the possibility of change) in social action because we can never be sure in advance how we will act, nor be certain of the outcome of our actions. "Exactly how we will act never gets into experience until after the action takes place" (Mead, 1934). Both phases are thoroughly social — the individual only ever experiences him- or herself "indirectly" from the standpoint of others — but without the two phases "there could be no conscious responsibility, and there would be nothing novel in experience" (Mead, 1934).

In a similar manner, sociologists argue that individuals vary because the social environments to which they adapt vary. The socialization process occurs in different social environments — i.e., environments made up of the

responses of others — each of which impose distinctive and unique requirements. In one family, children are permitted unlimited access to TV and video games; in another, there are no TV or video games, for example. When they are growing up, children adapt and develop different strategies of play and recreation. Their parents and others respond to the child's choices, either by reinforcing them or encouraging different choices. Along a whole range of social environmental differences and responses, support and resistance, children gradually develop stable and consistent orientations to the 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.

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.

Key to Simmel's analysis is the distinction he makes between the **contents** and **forms** of sociation. Individuals enter into interaction on the basis of their specific drives, needs, purposes, or interests (erotic, spiritual, acquisitive, defensive, playful, etc.). He defines these specific factors as the *contents* of the interaction. As Simmel says, "In themselves, these materials which fill life, these motivations which propel it, are not social… strictly speaking"(1908/1971). It is "only when they transform the mere aggregation of isolated individuals into specific *forms* of being with and for one another… in which individuals grow together into a unity and within which their interests are realized" that these contents become social (emphasis is the editor's).

Therefore, the *forms* of sociation are the true objects of sociology because only through these forms can the social (i.e., "reciprocal influence") be said to exist. Simmel (1908/1971) notes that innumerable types of forms are possible, including "superiority, subordination, competition, division of labour, formation of parties, representation, inner solidarity coupled with exclusiveness from the outside," etc. These forms are the patterns of behaviour that guide individuals' actions in different social settings. Therefore, his analysis shifts from the micro-level to the meso- and macro-levels when he posits how the forms themselves endure and work on the individuals who compose them.

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 5.9. Cocktail parties as the play form of interaction. What are the rules for "gracious entertaining"? (…more party animals by James Vaughan CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

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."

Simmel's work on social forms was not just confined to micro-level interactions. He developed an analysis of the **tragedy of culture** in which he argued that the cultural creations of "subjective culture" — like the emergent social forms created by people in their face-to-face interactions, as well as the forms of art, music, literature, political analyses, etc. — tended to detach themselves from lived experience and become fixed and elaborated in the form of "objective culture" — the accumulated products of human cultural creation. There are intrinsic limits to an individual's ability to assimilate, organize,

appreciate, and make sense of these forms. As the quantity of objective culture increases and becomes more complex, it becomes progressively more alienating, incomprehensible, and overwhelming. It takes on a life of its own and the individual can no longer see him- or herself reflected in it. Music, for example, can be enriching, but going to an orchestral performance of contemporary music can often be baffling, as if you need an advanced music degree just to be able to understand that what you are hearing *is* music.

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. Individuals learn and assume different social roles as they age. The roles come with relatively fixed norms and social expectations attached, which allow for predictable interactions between people, but how the individual lives and balances their roles is subject to variation. A critical sociologist might argue that 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. 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.

> The video, "*The Self-Made Society.*" Films Media Group, 1996, fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=105077&xtid=6383. Accessed 3 Feb. 2020, accessible in the LMS, will highlight some of these key ideas.

(The Examined Life: Know Thyself #1 is available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ccwmn5T3-54)

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc112/?p=1000

5.3 Contents of Socialization

In Module One it was stated that culture is the term

used to describe the meaningful experience of collective existence.   More specifically, the concept refers to a shared system of meanings and symbols; a set of values, beliefs and practices and shared forms of communication. In this module, socialization has been depicted as a social learning process which is critical to the emergence of social selves as well as to the survival and development of individual societal relations and their cultural context.

5.3.1 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. 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 value celibacy. 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 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 5.10. 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? (Soldiers Holding Hands by Geordie Mott CC BY 2.0)

5.3.2 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. In Canada, there are informal norms regarding behaviour at fast food 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.

5.3.3 Folkways, Mores, and Taboos

Norms may be further classified as mores, folkways, or taboos. **Mores** (pronounced *mor–ays*) are norms that embody the moral views and principles of a group. They are based on social requirements. Violating them can have serious consequences. The strongest mores are legally protected with laws or other formal norms. In Canada, for instance, murder is considered immoral, and it is punishable by law (a formal norm). More often, mores are judged and guarded by public sentiment (an informal norm). People who violate mores are seen as shameful. They can even be shunned or banned from some groups. The mores of the Canadian school system require that a student's writing be in the student's own words or else the student should use special stylistic forms such as quotation marks and a system of citation, like MLA (Modern Language Association) style, for crediting the words to other writers. Writing another person's words as if they are one's own has a name: plagiarism. The consequences for violating this norm are severe, and can even result in expulsion.

Unlike mores, **folkways** are norms without any moral underpinnings. They are based on social preferences. Folkways direct appropriate behaviour in the day-to-day practices and expressions of a culture. Folkways indicate whether to shake hands or kiss on the cheek when greeting another person. They specify whether to wear a

tie and a blazer or a T-shirt and sandals to an event. In Canada, women can smile and say hello to men on the street. In Egypt, it is not acceptable. In northern Europe, it is fine for people to go into a sauna or hot tub naked. Often in North America, it is not. An opinion poll that asked Canadian women what they felt would end a relationship after a first date showed that women in British Columbia were pickier than women in the rest of the country (*Times Colonist*, 2014). First date deal breakers included poor hygiene (82 percent), being distracted by a mobile device (74 percent), talking about sexual history and being rude to waiters (72 percent), and eating with one's mouth open (60 percent). All of these examples illustrate breaking informal rules, which are not serious enough to be called mores, but are serious enough to terminate a relationship before it has begun. Folkways might be small manners, but they are by no means trivial.

Taboos refer to actions which are strongly forbidden by deeply held sacred or moral beliefs. They are the strongest and most deeply held norms. Their transgression evokes revulsion and severe punishment. In its original use taboo referred to being "consecrated, inviolable, forbidden, unclean, or cursed" (Cook & King, 1784). There was a clear supernatural context for the prohibition; the act offended the gods or ancestors, and evoked their retribution. In secular contexts, taboos refer to powerful moral prohibitions that protect what are regarded as inviolable bonds between people. Incest, pedophilia, and patricide or matricide are taboos.

Many mores, folkways, and taboos are taken for granted in everyday life. People need to act without thinking to get seamlessly through daily routines; we can

not stop and analyze every action (Sumner, 1906). The different levels of norm enable the "ongoing concerting and coordinating of individuals' activities" as Dorothy Smith put it (1999). These different levels of norm help people negotiate their daily life within a given culture and as such their study is crucial for understanding the distinctions between different cultures.

5.3.4 Symbols and Language

Figure 5.11. Some road signs are universal. But how would you interpret sign (b)? (Pedestrians Right There (a) by Andrew Bain CC BY 2.0; Traffic sign (b) by HonzaSoukup CC BY 2.0)

Humans, consciously and subconsciously, are always striving to make sense of their surrounding world. **Symbols —** such as gestures, signs, objects, signals, and words — are tangible marks that stand in for or represent something else. Symbols provide clues to understanding the underlying experiences, statuses, states, and ideas

they express. They convey recognizable meanings that are shared by societies. In the words of George Herbert Mead:

> Our symbols are universal. You cannot say anything that is absolutely particular, anything you say that has any meaning at all is universal. (*Mind, Self and Society,* 1934)

The world is filled with symbols. Sports uniforms, company logos, and traffic signs are symbols. In some cultures, a gold ring is a symbol of marriage. Some symbols are highly functional; stop signs, for instance, provide useful instruction. As physical objects they belong to material culture, but because they function as symbols, they also convey nonmaterial cultural meanings. Some symbols are only valuable in what they represent. Trophies, blue ribbons, or gold medals, for example, serve no purpose other than to represent accomplishments. Many objects have both material and nonmaterial symbolic value.

A police officer's badge and uniform are symbols of authority and law enforcement. The sight of a police officer in uniform or in a police car triggers reassurance in some citizens but annoyance, fear, or anger in others.

It's easy to take symbols for granted. Few people challenge or even think about the signs on the doors of public restrooms, but the figures on the signs are more than just symbols that tell men and women which restroom to use. They also uphold the value, in North America, that public restrooms should be gender exclusive. Even though stalls are relatively private, it is

still   somewhat uncommon   to   encounter unisex bathrooms.

Figure 5.12. An exercise in detournement in Barcelona transforms the symbol for "do not enter" into a hand holding a brick, a symbol for insurrection (Image courtesy of acb/Flickr).

Symbols often get noticed when they are used out of context. Used unconventionally, symbols convey strong messages. A stop sign on the door of a corporation makes a political statement, as does a camouflage military jacket worn in an antiwar protest. Together, the semaphore signals for "N" and "D" represent nuclear disarmament and form the well-known peace sign (Westcott, 2008). Internet memes — images that spread from person to person through reposting — often adopt the tactics of **detournement** or misappropriation used by the French Situationists of the 1950s and 1960s. The Situationists

sought to subvert media and political messages by altering them slightly — "detouring" or hijacking them — in order to defamiliarize familiar messages, signs, and symbols. An ordinary image of a cat combined with the grammatically-challenged caption "I Can Has Cheezburger?" spawned the internet phenomenon lolcats because of the funny, nonsensical nature of its non sequitur message. An image of former Prime Minister Stephen Harper in a folksy sweater holding a cute cat was altered to show him holding an oily duck instead; this is a detournement with a political message.

Even the destruction of symbols is symbolic. Effigies representing public figures are beaten to demonstrate anger at certain leaders. In 1989, crowds tore down the Berlin Wall, a decades-old symbol of the division between East and West Germany, or between communism and capitalism.

While different cultures have varying systems of symbols, there is one that is common to all: the use of language. **Language** is a symbolic system through which people communicate and through which culture is transmitted. Some languages contain a system of symbols used for written communication, while others rely only on spoken communication and nonverbal actions.

Societies often share a single language, and many languages contain the same basic elements. An alphabet is a written system made of symbolic shapes that refer to spoken sounds. Taken together, these symbols convey specific meanings. The English alphabet uses a combination of 26 letters to create words; these 26 letters make up over 600,000 recognized English words (*Oxford English Dictionary,* 2011).

Rules for speaking and writing vary even within

cultures, most notably by region. Do you refer to a can of carbonated liquid as a soda, pop, or soft drink? Is a household entertainment room a family room, rec room, or den? When leaving a restaurant, do you ask your server for the cheque, the ticket, l'addition, or the bill?

Language is constantly evolving as societies create new ideas. In this age of technology, people have adapted almost instantly to new nouns such as email and internet, and verbs such as download, text, and blog. Twenty years ago, the general public would have considered these nonsense words.

Even while it constantly evolves, language continues to shape our reality. This insight was established in the 1920s by two linguists, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf. They believed that reality is culturally determined, and that any interpretation of reality is based on a society's language. To prove this point, the sociologists argued that every language has words or expressions specific to that language. In Canada, for example, the number 13 is associated with bad luck. In Japan, however, the number four is considered unlucky, since it is pronounced similarly to the Japanese word for death.

The **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis** is based on the idea that people experience their world through their language and that they, therefore, understand the world through the culture embedded in their language. The hypothesis, which has also been called linguistic relativity, states that we initially develop language to express concepts that emerge from our experience of the world, but afterwards language comes back to shape our experience of the world (Swoyer, 2003). Studies have shown, for instance, that unless people have access to the word "ambivalent,"

they do not recognize an experience of uncertainty due to conflicting positive and negative feelings about one issue. If a person cannot describe the experience, the person cannot have the experience.

Similarly, in Wade Davis' (2007) discussion about the ethnosphere — the sum total of "ways of thinking, ways of being, and ways of orienting oneself on the earth" — that we began the chapter with, each language is understood to be more than just a set of symbols and linguistic rules. Each language is an archive of a culture's unique cosmology, wisdom, ecological knowledge, rituals, beliefs and norms. Each contributes its unique solution to the question of what it means to be human to the ethnosphere. The compilers of *Ethnologue* estimate that currently 7,105 languages are used in the world (Lewis et al., 2013). This would suggest that there are at least 7,105 distinct cultural contexts through which humans interpret and experience the world. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis would suggest that their worlds differ to the degree that their languages differ. However Davis notes that today half of the world's languages are no longer being passed down to children. When languages die out or fail to be passed on to subsequent generations, whole ways of knowing and being in the world die out with them and the ethnosphere is diminished.

5.3.5 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

learn and 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.

5.4 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.

5.4.1 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. These connections are developed further in subsequent modules of this course.

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. Only 10 percent of men participate. In Quebec, however, where in addition to 32 weeks of shared parental leave, men also receive five weeks of paid leave, the participation rate of men is 48 percent. In Canada overall, the participation of men in paid parental leave increased from 3 percent in 2000 to 20 percent in 2006 because of the change in law in 2001 that extended the number of combined paid weeks parents could take. Researchers note that a father's involvement in child raising has a positive effect on the parents' relationship, 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 5.13. The socialized roles of dads and moms vary by society. (I'll Bathe You, Baby! by Nate Grigg CC BY 2.0)

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.

5.4.2 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 5.14. 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. (Bonner Springs Library Reads for the Record 2009 by Bonner Springs Library CC BY 2.0)

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.

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.

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 aged 1
over, grouped by sex, Canada, 2010

[Skip Table]

Activity group	Population			Participants			Participation	
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	F
	hours and minutes			hours and minutes				percentag
1. Television, reading, and other passive leisure	**02:29**	**02:39**	**02:20**	**03:08**	**03:19**	**02:58**	**79**	**80**
Watching television	02:06	02:17	01:55	02:52	03:03	02:41	73	75
Reading books, magazines, newspapers	00:20	00:18	00:23	01:26	01:29	01:25	24	20
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**	**54**
Active sports	00:30	00:37	00:23	01:54	02:12	01:34	26	28
Computer use	00:20	00:23	00:17	01:23	01:32	01:14	24	25
Video games	00:09	00:14	00:04	02:20	02:40	01:38	6	9
Other active leisure	00:14	00:13	00:15	02:05	02:06	02:04	11	10

[Skip Table]

Activity group	Population			Participants			Participation		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	F
	hours and minutes			hours and minutes			percentag		

Note: Average time spent is the average over a 7-day week.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2010 (Statistics Canada, 2011). Note: this survey asked approximately 15,400 Canadians aged 15 and o report in a daily journal details of the time they spent on various activities on given day. Because they were reporting about a given day, the figures sited ab average use of television and other media differ from reports provided by BBI other groups on the average weekly usage, like the figure of 4 hours per day o cited in Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout (2005) above.

Social Media

Social media are various forms of digital communication that allow sharing of information and images through the building of virtual networks and communities. With the advent of social media and its widespread usage questions have emerged concerning its effects on processes of socialization, identify formation and the implications for individual society relationships more generally.

> The video, "*The Internet: The Origins of the Web.*" Films Media Group, 2016, fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=105077&xtid=145602. Accessed 3 Feb. 2020, accessible in the LMS, will highlight some of these key ideas.

5.5 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 are 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).

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.

> Listen to the BBC podcast, Scott Last on 'Liquid Modernity' episode 1 from The Essay series "*At the Speed of Thought*". https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b01n11qn

5.5.1 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 5.15. In basic training, soldiers are taught to walk, move, and look like each other (Basic Training Parade by Staff Sergeant Desiree N. Palacios, U.S. Air Force is in the Public Domain)

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 5.16. Riverview mental hospital, Port Coquitlam, B.C. (Provincial Mental Hospital (West Lawn) at Essondale, B.C. by City of Vancouver Archives CC BY 2.0)

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 to 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 and Concepts

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.

5.6 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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6

MODULE 6: SOCIAL INTERACTION, SOCIAL GROUPS AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

Learning Objectives

- Use Goffman's dramaturgical perspective to describe the social dynamics of self-presentation and mutual accommodation.
- Distinguish between different levels of analysis in sociology: Micro, Meso, Macro and Global
- Distinguish between the form and content of social interaction
- Describe the paradox of the modern individual
- Describe the social dimensions of emotional life
- Explain why the operation of a group is more than the sum of its parts
- Distinguish between primary and secondary groups as two key sociological groups
- Describe in-groups, out-groups, and reference groups as subtypes of primary and secondary groups.
- Distinguish between different types and styles of leadership.
- Describe how conformity is impacted by group membership.

6.0 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 6.1. "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). (The Face, Like A Switch by Derrick Tyson CC BY 2.0).

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. Before delving deeper into Goffman's dramaturgical analysis of face to face interaction, it is useful to consider the multiple layers of social life that establish the context for face to face interaction.

6.0.1 Micro, Meso, Macro, and Global Levels of Sociological Analysis

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 video of people from different societies as they carry on everyday conversations to study the rules of polite conversation from different world cultures. Another sociologist might interview a representative sample of people to see how email and instant messaging have

changed the way organizations are run. Yet another sociologist might study how migration determined the way in which language spread and changed over time. A fourth sociologist might study the history of international agencies like the United Nations or the International Monetary Fund to examine how the globe became divided into a First World and a Third World after the end of the colonial era.

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. It is common to divide these levels of analysis into different gradations based on the scale of interaction involved. Generally speaking, sociologists break the study of society down into four separate levels of analysis: micro, meso, macro, and global. In Sociology 112 we focus primarily on the theoretical and methodological approaches which facilitate sociological analysis at the micro and meso scales of social interaction. In Sociology 111, the focus shifts to those theoretical and methodological approaches which are more suited to macro and global levels of analysis. It is important to keep in mind, however, that in the world of everyday social reality the multiple layers of social reality co-exist and are inter-related.

At the micro-level of analysis, the focus is on the social dynamics of face-to-face interaction: How are specific individuals in specific locations able to interact in a coherent and consistent manner? For example, how is a conversation possible? How do you know when it is your turn to speak or when someone has been speaking

too long? We will discuss the analysis of various types of social interaction at the micro-level later in this Module.

At the meso-level of analysis, the focus shifts to the characteristics of specific networks, groups, and organizations (i.e., collectivities). The meso-level refers to the connection, interaction and ongoing coordination of numerous different social roles simultaneously. When we speak of a school, for example, we need to move beyond the analysis of single face-to-face interactions–interactions in a single setting where participants are co-present–to examine the combined interactions and relationships between students, parents, teachers, and administrators. At this level, we ask, how do the properties of different types of social collectivity affect or alter the actions of individuals? Why does an individual's behaviour change when they are in a collectivity? How do collectivities constrain or enable their members to act in certain ways? What is it about collectivities that entice people to conform, or resist? In these meso-level examples we are still talking about specific, identifiable individuals–albeit not necessarily in direct face-to-face situations–but take into account the complex entwinement of their lives to account for their social actions and interactions. In this Module, we draw on the theoretical insights of Simmel to examine how group identification and membership impacts the social actions and interactions of individuals.

At the macro-level of analysis, the focus is on the properties of large-scale, society-wide social interactions: the dynamics of institutions, classes, or whole societies. The macro therefore extends beyond the immediate milieu or direct experience of individuals. These large-scale social structures might be nothing

more than the aggregations of specific interactions between individuals at any particular moment as Simmel argues. However, the properties of structures, institutions, and societies — described by statistical analysis, cross-cultural comparisons, or historical research — also have a reality that Emile Durkheim called *sui generis* (i.e., of their own kind). The properties that make society possible at a macro scale cannot be explained by, or reduced to, their components without missing their most important features.

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, the introduction of new technologies, the investment and disinvestment of capital, the images of popular culture, or the tensions of cross-cultural conflict, etc. increasingly involve our daily life in the affairs of the entire globe, by-passing traditional borders and, to some degree, distance itself. The way in which the world became divided into wealthy First World and impoverished Third World societies reflects social processes — the formation of international institutions such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and non-governmental organizations, for example — which are global in scale and global in their effects. 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 not only by their intimate relationships with the people around them, nor only by provincial and national based corporations and policies,

etc., but by global markets that determine the price of oil and the global flows of capital investment. The *context* of these processes has to be analysed at a global scale of analysis, but their effects may be experienced at the macro, meso and micro levels of social reality.

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? The early German sociologist Georg Simmel pointed out that macro-level processes are in fact nothing more than the sum of all the unique interactions between specific individuals at any one time (1908/1971), yet they have properties of their own which would be missed if sociologists only focused on the interactions of specific individuals. Émile Durkheim's classic study of suicide (1897/1951) is a case in point. While suicide is one of the most personal, individual, and intimate acts imaginable, Durkheim demonstrated that rates of suicide differed between religious communities — Protestants, Catholics, and Jews — in a way that could not be explained by the individual factors involved in each specific case. The different rates of suicide had to be explained by macro-level variables associated with the different religious beliefs and practices of the faith communities; more specifically, the different degrees of *social integration* of these communities. On the other hand, macro-level phenomena like class structures, institutional organizations, legal systems, gender stereotypes, population growth, and urban ways of life provide the shared context for everyday life but do not explain its specific nuances and micro-variations very well. 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.

6.1. Symbolic Interaction and Everyday Social 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 these 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.

6.1.1 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 the access to resources and benefits a person experiences according to the rank or prestige of his or her role in society. 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.

6.1.2 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 6.2. Perfume shop in Mumbai, India. (perfume shopping, Mumbai by monika.monika CC BY 2.0)

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.

6.1.3 Front Stage and Back Stage

Figure 6.3. Erving Goffman (1922–1982). "We move into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons" (Goffman, 1959). (Erving Goffman, CC BY-SA 3.0).

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).

6.2. Micro-level Interaction and Social Structure

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.

6.2.1 Emotional Management

Figure 6.4. A-maze-ing Laughter sculpture (2009) by Chinese artist Yue Minjun, Vancouver B.C. (2014 − Vancouver − A-maze-ing Laughter by Ted McGrath CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

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 6.5. 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? (Commodus, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna – 20100226 by the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna CC BY-SA 3.0)

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 6.6. Do funeral selfies violate deeply held feeling rules? (Funeral Service by MudflapDC CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

An example of an 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.

The philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1992) also noted the emotional or affective nature of power. He drew on Spinoza's distinction between joy and sadness as affects that express the feelings of power and powerlessness respectively. Power for Deleuze is defined as the sense of being able to do something; feeling uninhibited. Powerlessness on the other hand is the sense of being unable to do something; feeling blocked. When we feel joy, we feel ourselves to be at the maximum of our power of action; we feel that we have fulfilled one of our abilities. Joy is the *expression* of the experience of feeling empowered. When we feel sadness we feel separated from our power of action; we feel that we failed to do something we could have done because of circumstances, or because we were prevented or forbidden from doing it. Sadness is the expression of the experience of feeling disempowered. Deleuze argues that sadness is therefore

the effect of a power that is exercised over us; we are prevented from realizing or fulfilling our powers of action. In Deleuze's analysis contemporary manifestations of power–the power of various types of tyrant, judge or priest in particular–are accompanied by techniques that strip people of their powers of action (joy) and instill feelings of impotence, inadequacy, guilt, indebtedness, and bad conscience.

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."

The video, "*Rosenhan's Experiment: Being Sane in Insane Places.*" https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=105077&xtid=94188. Accessed 3 Feb. 2020, accessible in the LMS, will highlight some of these key ideas.

6.2.2 The Individual and Society

Figure 6.7. The individual and society. (Cell Phone Business by Stefan Klauke CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

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 of impression management stratagems (i.e., culture) to demonstrate it. Paradoxically, to be different means to be the same in many important aspects.

Figure 6.8. We are all individuals! (117/365 – Movie Quote by RXAphotos CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Often, a comparison of individual members 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.

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 discomfort and doubts about how to behave appropriately in the new situation. Eventually, as people learn more about a culture, they recover from culture shock.

Culture shock 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. 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 6.9. American anthropologist Ruth Benedict: "The purpose of anthropology is to make the world safe for human differences." (Ruth Benedict courtesy of Library of Congress no copyright restriction known)

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 could 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.

(The video Cross Cultural Communication is available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMyofREc5Jk)

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc112/?p=1004

6.3. Social Groups and Social Networks

6.3.1 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.

> With each formation of parties, with each joining for common tasks or in a common feeling or way of thinking, with each articulation of the distribution of positions of submission and domination, with each common meal, with each self-adornment for others — with every growth of new synthesizing phenomena such as these, the same group becomes "more society" than it was before. *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).

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 (Review Module 5 for a fuller discussion of Simmel's ideas)?

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.

Figure 6.10. Engineering and construction students gather around a job site. How do your academic interests define your in- and out-groups? (Construction and engineering students visit the Folsom spillway job site by USACEpublicaffairs CC0)

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.

Reference Groups

Figure 6.11. Athletes are often viewed as a reference group for young people.
([HayleyWickenheiserCgyGoal](#) by Canada Hky [CC BY-SA 3.0](#))

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.

Figure 6.12. Cadets illustrate how strongly conformity can define groups. ([Cadets March Past](#) by David Spender [CC BY 2.0](#))

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.

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. An army general or a Fortune 500 CEO would be an instrumental leader. In contrast, **expressive leaders** are more concerned with promoting emotional strength and health, and ensuring that people feel 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 6.13. This gag gift demonstrates how female leaders may be viewed if they violate social norms. [Long Description] (the hillary nutcracker by istolethetv CC BY 2.0)

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?

Group 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. Following 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. Philip Zimbardo's Stanford Prison experiment is a classic example. 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."

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?

Micro, Meso and Macro analysis of group dynamics

How do sociologists approach the analysis of group dynamics? At the micro-level of analysis, the focus is on the social dynamics of face-to-face interaction: How are specific individuals in specific locations able to interact in a coherent and consistent manner? For example, how is a conversation possible? How do you know when it is your turn to speak or when someone has been speaking too long?

At the meso-level of analysis, the focus shifts to the characteristics of specific networks, groups, and organizations (i.e., collectivities). The meso-level refers to the connection, interaction and ongoing coordination of numerous different social roles simultaneously. When we speak of a school, for example, we need to move beyond the analysis of single face-to-face interactions–interactions in a single setting where participants are co-present–to examine the combined

interactions and relationships between students, parents, teachers, and administrators. At this level, we ask, how do the properties of different types of social collectivity affect or alter the behaviour of individuals? Why does an individual's behaviour change when they are in a collectivity? How do collectivities constrain or enable their members to act in certain ways? What is it about collectivities that entice people to conform? In these meso-level examples we are still talking about specific, identifiable individuals–albeit not necessarily in direct face-to-face situations–but take into account the complex entwinement of their lives to account for their behaviour.

Finally, at the macro-level of analysis, the focus is on the properties of large-scale, society-wide social interactions: the dynamics of institutions, classes, or whole societies. The macro therefore extends beyond the immediate milieu or direct experience of individuals. These large-scale social structures might be nothing more than the aggregations of specific interactions between individuals at any particular moment as Simmel argues. However, the properties of structures, institutions, and societies — described by statistical analysis, cross-cultural comparisons, or historical research — also have a reality that Emile Durkheim called *sui generis* (i.e., of their own kind). The properties that make society possible at a macro scale cannot be explained by, or reduced to, their components without missing their most important features.

Figure 6.14. Hockey is a social activity that can be examined at micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of analysis. (Sedin's Fun by Jerry Meaden CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

To illustrate the micro, meso, and macro distinction, we might consider how a sociologist would analyze the game of hockey. At the micro-level of analysis, the sociologist would be interested in the interpersonal structures and role-play that governs how various specific individuals (players, coaches, managers, owners, fans, etc.) interact face to face. With respect to the players, how do they interact on the ice in a coherent manner? How do they coordinate their activities to win games? How do they make the game work? In part, this analysis is a matter of simply knowing the rules of the game and each player's role or position (center, winger, defense, goalie). From a different angle, the analysis has to do with the players practicing the plays by which they move the puck out of the defensive zone, cross the blue line into the offensive zone, defend against offensive plays, cycle the puck behind the net, set up a power play, etc. From another angle, the analysis is also a matter of the personal dynamic between individual players, their ability to read each other's cues, to anticipate each other's moves, and to work off each other's strengths, etc. (or the failure to do so). In this regard, hockey is an entirely symbolic

interaction, which depends on individuals sending signals and interpreting signals. It is, after all, a game based on chasing a small disk of rubber around a frozen surface of ice. It is thoroughly symbolic.

At the meso-level of analysis, a sociologist takes into account group dynamics involving a number of different roles simultaneously such as team membership or fandom. How and why do fans get so emotionally involved in the fortunes of their favourite team? How do they sort themselves into categories — "true" fans and "occasional" fans — and with what consequences? How do team rivalries develop? Similarly, the sociologist might be interested in the hockey team as a type of institutional arrangement of roles that organizes its members by collectively defining roles, functions, norms, official rules, hierarchical relationships, and channels of communication, etc.

The meso-level sociologist might also be interested in trying to define what defines hockey as a type of activity — a "game." Roger Caillois (1961) noted that games, or what Simmel called the "play forms" of association, constitute a separate and unique type of activity. We cross a boundary whenever we leave the ordinary world of everyday life to enter the zone of play. In particular, games are defined by six characteristics:

1. They are free (playing cannot be obligatory),
2. They are separate (play is distinct from ordinary life),
3. They are uncertain (outcomes cannot be determined in advance),
4. They are unproductive (play *by itself* creates neither goods nor wealth),
5. They are governed by rules (under conventions

that suspend ordinary laws), and

6. They are make-believe (they partake in a second reality or a "free unreality").

In part, due to the distinction between games and normal life, activities like the use of violence and the infliction of injury — that would be punishable by law off the ice — are events that are frequently celebrated (or at most deplored) when they occur on the ice. It is the status of hockey as a game that makes the issue of its violence both ambiguous and subject to arbitrary assessments and punishments.

At the macro-level of analysis, the sociologist would be interested in how hockey is structured by the type of society in which it is embedded. The Micmac game of wolchamaadijik, which is cited as an early stick and ball progenitor of Canadian hockey, was played in the context of ceremonial exchanges between native tribes (Rand, 2005). NHL hockey, on the other hand, is a capitalist enterprise, and as such, it takes the form of a commodity produced for sale on the market for profit. The commodity is the spectacle of the hockey game, which fans pay to see and advertisers pay to use as a vehicle for promoting their products. Therefore, the organization and dynamics of the sport are defined by the logic of capital as Marx defined it — a logic in which teams are competitive corporations that invest in their players like any other asset; in which team hometowns are assessed in terms of their viability as profitable markets (hence the oddity of having teams based in Florida or California where natural ice probably has not existed for 10,000 years); in which the logic of class struggle periodically leads to disruptions in play (such as lock-outs and strikes); and in which an elaborate set of

regulations (like salary caps and organized draft picks) are instituted by the league to ensure the viability of the competition and manage the excesses and crises that are tendencies of capitalist accumulation.

6.3.2 Social Networks

Dyads, Triads, and Social Networks

Figure 6.15. A visual representation of network connections formed through Twitter showing dense nodes of tightly interconnected friends and outliers. (20120212-NodeXL-Twitter-socbiz network graph courtesy of Marc Smith CC BY 2.0)

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. Social Identity

A person's social identity is the sense of who they are based on their group memberships. Because individuals are members of multiple and varied social groups at any given point in time, our identities are similarly characterized by multiplicity rather than singularity. For example we may identity our selves as members of a particular religion, nationality, political party, social class, occupation, relationship, etc. Moreover, some of the dimensions of our identity may be allocated privileged social status while other dimensions may be stigmatized. Your social identity not only influences how you see and relate to yourself, but also how other selves view and relate to you. In Modules 7, 8 and 9 attention is turned to a fuller elaboration of the concept of social identity and an examination of various dimensions of social identity including social class, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity.

Key Terms and Concepts

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).

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7

MODULE 7: SOCIAL IDENTITIES: CLASS, STATUS AND POWER

Learning Objectives

- Elaborate the concept of social inequality into its component parts: social difference, social stratification and social distributions of wealth, income, power and status.
- Define the difference between equality of opportunity and

equality of condition.
- Explain why there is a decline in most Canadian's identification with a social class identity.
- Explain why the ideology of the middle class and identification with the middle class is a problem for average Canadians.
- Discuss significant similarities and differences among Marx, Weber and Durkheim relative to their definitions of social class and the consequences of class identification for social participation.
- Identify and describe cultural markers that are used to express class identity in contemporary society.
- Describe and discuss how a revitalization of discussions of social class identification and expression may have positive implications for efforts to achieve social justice in society.

7.0 Introduction to Class Identity and Classism

Figure 7.1. The Ted Rogers statue with Ted Rogers Centre for Heart Research in the background. Who gets monumentalized in Canada, and who gets forgotten? (Statue of Ted Rogers by Oaktree (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ted_Rogers_Statue_Toronto.JPG) is used under a Free Art License.)

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 Aboriginal gang members in the Saskatchewan Correctional Centre. 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.

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.

How do we make sense of these 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?

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 in 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.

7.1. What Is Social Inequality?

Figure 7.2. 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. (Office Politics: A Rise to the Top, by Alex Proimos, CC-BY-NC 2.0)

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 7.3. 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. (Strata in the Badlands, by Just a Prairie Boy, CC-BY 2.0)

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. Ultimately, equality of opportunity means that inequalities of condition are not so great that they greatly hamper a person's life chances. Whether Canada is a society characterized by equality of opportunity or not is a subject of considerable sociological debate.

To a certain extent, 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. This emphasis on self-effort is based on the belief that people individually control their own social standing, which is a key piece in the idea of equality of opportunity. Most people connect inequalities of wealth, status, and power to the individual characteristics of those who succeed or fail. The story of the Aboriginal 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 Aboriginal gang members are of a different range and quality than those available to the Rogers family. The available choices are a product of habitus.

Sociologists recognize that social stratification is a society-wide system that makes inequalities apparent.

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 examining the structural conditions of social inequality. 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 7.4. 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. (Fort Mason Neighborhood, by Orin Zebest, CC-BY 2.0)

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.

While Canadians are generally aware of the existence of social inequality in Canada and of the fact that gaps between upper and lower economic strata have widened in recent decades, there continues to be a high level of ambivalence among Canadians when it comes to the meaning of social class, class identification and class consciousness. In fact, a majority of Canadians, when asked to identify their social class location will respond 'middle', with little objective justification or explanation to account for their identification with that strata.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://openpress.usask.ca/soc112/?p=1010

For additional insight into the disappearing recognition of class location and influence of class consciousness in the social construction of Canadian identity, attention is turned to a series of essays written by a social activist, Sandy Cameron.

7.2. Class, Class Consciousness and Class Relationships within Classical Sociology

7.2.1. Marx and the History of Class Struggle

For Marx, what we do defines who we are. What it is to be "human" is defined by the capacity we have as a species to creatively transform the world in which we live to meet our needs for survival. Humanity at its core is *Homo faber* ("Man the Creator"). In historical terms, in spite of

the persistent nature of one class dominating another, the element of humanity as creator existed. There was at least some connection between the worker and the product, augmented by the natural conditions of seasons and the rising and setting of the sun, such as we see in an agricultural society. But with the bourgeois revolution and the rise of industry and capitalism, workers now worked for wages alone. The essential elements of creativity and self-affirmation in the free disposition of their labour was replaced by compulsion. The relationship of workers to their efforts was no longer of a human nature, but based purely on animal needs. As Marx put it, the worker "only feels himself freely active in his animal functions of eating, drinking, and procreating, at most also in his dwelling and dress, and feels himself an animal in his human functions" (1932/1977).

Marx described the economic conditions of production under capitalism in terms of alienation. **Alienation** refers to the condition in which the individual is isolated and divorced from his or her society, work, or the sense of self and common humanity. Marx defined four specific types of alienation that arose with the development of wage labour under capitalism.

Alienation from the product of one's labour. An industrial worker does not have the opportunity to relate to the product he or she is labouring on. The worker produces commodities, but at the end of the day the commodities not only belong to the capitalist, but serve to enrich the capitalist at the worker's expense. In Marx's language, the worker relates to the product of his or her labour "as an alien object that has power over him [or her]" (1932/ 1977). Workers do not care if they are making watches or cars; they care only that their jobs exist. In the same

way, workers may not even know or care what products they are contributing to. A worker on a Ford assembly line may spend all day installing windows on car doors without ever seeing the rest of the car. A cannery worker can spend a lifetime cleaning fish without ever knowing what product they are used for.

Alienation from the process of one's labour. Workers do not control the conditions of their jobs because they do not own the means of production. If someone is hired to work in a fast food restaurant, that person is expected to make the food exactly the way they are taught. All ingredients must be combined in a particular order and in a particular quantity; there is no room for creativity or change. An employee at Burger King cannot decide to change the spices used on the fries in the same way that an employee on a Ford assembly line cannot decide to place a car's headlights in a different position. Everything is decided by the owners who then dictate orders to the workers. The workers relate to their own labour as an activity that does not belong to them.

Alienation from others. Workers compete, rather than cooperate. Employees vie for time slots, bonuses, and job security. Different industries and different geographical regions compete for investment. Even when a worker clocks out at night and goes home, the competition does not end. As Marx commented in *The Communist Manifesto*, "No sooner is the exploitation of the labourer by the manufacturer, so far at an end, that he receives his wages in cash, than he is set upon by the other portion of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker" (1848/1977).

Alienation from one's humanity. A final outcome of industrialization is a loss of connectivity between a

worker and what makes them truly human. Humanity is defined for Marx by "conscious life-activity," but under conditions of wage labour this is taken not as an end in itself — only a means of satisfying the most base, animal-like needs. The "species being" (i.e., *conscious* activity) is only confirmed when individuals can create and produce freely, not simply when they work to reproduce their existence and satisfy immediate needs like animals.

Taken as a whole, then, alienation in modern society means that individuals have no control over their lives. There is nothing that ties workers to their occupations. Instead of being able to take pride in an identity such as being a watchmaker, automobile builder, or chef, a person is simply a cog in the machine. Even in feudal societies, people controlled the manner of their labour as to when and how it was carried out. But why, then, does the modern working class not rise up and rebel?

In response to this problem, Marx developed the concept of **false consciousness**. False consciousness is a condition in which the beliefs, ideals, or ideology of a person are not in the person's own best interest. In fact, it is the ideology of the dominant class (here, the bourgeoisie capitalists) that is imposed upon the proletariat. Ideas such as the emphasis of competition over cooperation, of hard work being its own reward, of individuals as being the isolated masters of their own fortunes and ruins, etc. clearly benefit the owners of industry. Therefore, to the degree that workers live in a state of false consciousness, they are less likely to question their place in society and assume individual responsibility for existing conditions.

Like other elements of the superstructure, "consciousness," is a product of the underlying

economic; Marx proposed that the workers' false consciousness would eventually be replaced with **class consciousness** — the awareness of their *actual* material and political interests as members of a unified class. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels wrote,

> The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself. But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons — the modern working class — the proletarians (1848/1977).

Capitalism developed the industrial means by which the problems of economic scarcity could be resolved and, at the same time, intensified the conditions of exploitation due to competition for markets and profits. Thus emerged the conditions for a successful working class revolution. Instead of existing as an unconscious "class in itself," the proletariat would become a "class for itself" and act collectively to produce social change (Marx and Engels, 1848/1977). Instead of just being an inert strata of society, the class could become an advocate for social improvements. Only once society entered this state of political consciousness would it be ready for a social revolution. Indeed, Marx predicted that this would be the ultimate outcome and collapse of capitalism.

7.1.2. Weber and the rise of Modern Subjectivity

If Marx's analysis is central to the sociological understanding of the structures that emerged with the rise of capitalism, Max Weber is a central figure in the

sociological understanding of the effects of capitalism on modern subjectivity: how our basic sense of who we are and what we might aspire to has been defined by the culture and belief system of capitalism. The key work here is Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905/1958) in which he lays out the characteristics of the modern *ethos* of work. Why do we feel compelled to work so hard?

An ethic or **ethos** refers to a way of life or a way of conducting oneself in life. For Weber, the **Protestant work ethic** was at the core of the modern ethos. It prescribes a mode of self-conduct in which discipline, work, accumulation of wealth, self-restraint, postponement of enjoyment, and sobriety are the focus of an individual life.

In Weber's analysis, the ethic was indebted to the religious beliefs and practices of certain Protestant sects like the Lutherans, Calvinists, and Baptists who emerged with the Protestant Reformation (1517–1648). The Protestant theologian Richard Baxter proclaimed that the individual was "called" to their occupation by God, and therefore, they had a *duty* to "work hard in their calling." "He who will not work shall not eat" (Baxter, as cited in Weber, 1958). This ethic subsequently worked its way into many of the famous dictums popularized by the American Benjamin Franklin, like "time is money" and "a penny saved is two pence dear" (i.e., "a penny saved is a penny earned").

In Weber's estimation, the Protestant ethic was fundamentally important to the emergence of capitalism, and a basic answer to the question of how and why it could emerge. Throughout the period of feudalism and the domination of the Catholic Church, an ethic of

poverty and non-materialist values was central to the subjectivity and worldview of the Christian population. From the earliest desert monks and followers of St. Anthony to the great Vatican orders of the Franciscans and Dominicans, the image of Jesus was of a son of God who renounced wealth, possessions, and the material world. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25). We are of course well aware of the hypocrisy with which these beliefs were often practiced, but even in these cases, wealth was regarded in a different manner prior to the modern era. One worked only as much as was required. As Thomas Aquinas put it "labour [is] only necessary … for the maintenance of individual and community. Where this end is achieved, the precept ceases to have any meaning" (Aquinas, as cited in Weber, 1958). Wealth was not "put to work" in the form of a gradual return on investments as it is under capitalism. How was this medieval belief system reversed? How did capitalism become possible?

The key for Weber was the Protestant sects' doctrines of predestation, the idea of the personal calling, and the individual's direct, unmediated relationship to God. In the practice of the Protestant sects, no intermediary or priest interpreted God's will or granted absolution. God's will was essentially unknown. The individual could only be recognized as one of the predestined "elect" — one of the saved — through outward signs of grace: through the continuous display of moral self-discipline and, significantly, through the accumulation of earthly rewards that tangibly demonstrated God's favour. In the absence of any way to know with certainty whether one was destined for salvation, the accumulation of wealth

and material success became a sign of spiritual grace rather than a sign of sinful, earthly concerns. For the individual, material success assuaged the existential anxiety concerning the salvation of his or her soul. For the community, material success conferred status.

Weber argues that gradually the practice of working hard in one's calling lost its religious focus, and the ethic of "sober bourgeois capitalism" (Weber, 1905/1958) became grounded in discipline alone: work and self-improvement *for their own sake*. This discipline of course produces the rational, predictable, and industrious personality type ideally suited for the capitalist economy. For Weber, the consequence of this, however, is that the modern individual feels compelled to work hard and to live a highly methodical, efficient, and disciplined life to demonstrate their self-worth to themselves as much as anyone. The original goal of all this activity — namely religious salvation — no longer exists. It is a highly rational conduct of life in terms of *how* one lives, but is simultaneously irrational in terms of *why* one lives. Weber calls this conundrum of modernity the **iron cage**. Life in modern society is ordered on the basis of efficiency, rationality, and predictability, and other inefficient or traditional modes of organization are eliminated. Once we are locked into the "technical and economic conditions of machine production" it is difficult to get out or to imagine another way of living, despite the fact that one is renouncing all of the qualities that make life worth living: spending time with friends and family, enjoying the pleasures of sensual and aesthetic life, and/or finding a deeper meaning or purpose of existence. We might be obliged to stay in this

iron cage "until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt" (Weber, 1905/1958).

7.1.3. Durkheim and the rise of Moral Individualism

Émile Durkheim's (1858-1917) key focus in studying modern society was to understand the conditions under which social and moral cohesion could be reestablished. He observed that European societies of the 19th century had undergone an unprecedented and fractious period of social change that threatened to dissolve society altogether. In his book *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893/1960), Durkheim argued that as modern societies grew more populated, more complex, and more difficult to regulate, the underlying basis of solidarity or unity within the social order needed to evolve. His primary concern was that the cultural glue that held society together was failing, and that the divisions between people were becoming more conflictual and unmanageable. Therefore Durkheim developed his school of sociology to explain the principles of cohesiveness of societies (i.e., their forms of *social solidarity*) and how they change and survive over time. He thereby addressed one of the fundamental sociological questions: why do societies hold together rather than fall apart?

Two central components of social solidarity in traditional, premodern societies were the common **collective conscience** — the communal beliefs, morals, and attitudes of a society shared by all — and high levels of **social integration** — the strength of ties that people have to their social groups. These societies were held together because most people performed similar tasks

and shared values, language, and symbols. There was a low division of labour, a common religious system of social beliefs, and a low degree of individual autonomy. Society was held together on the basis of **mechanical solidarity**: a minimal division of labour and a shared collective consciousness with harsh punishment for deviation from the norms. Such societies permitted a low degree of individual autonomy. Essentially there was no distinction between the individual conscience and the collective conscience.

Societies with mechanical solidarity act in a mechanical fashion; things are done mostly because they have always been done that way. If anyone violated the collective conscience embodied in laws and taboos, punishment was swift and *retributive*. This type of thinking was common in preindustrial societies where strong bonds of kinship and a low division of labour created shared morals and values among people, such as among the feudal serfs. When people tend to do the same type of work, Durkheim argued, they tend to think and act alike.

Modern societies, according to Durkheim, were more complex. Collective consciousness was increasingly weak in individuals and the ties of social integration that bound them to others were increasingly few. Modern societies were characterized by an increasing diversity of experience and an increasing division of people into different occupations and specializations. They shared less and less commonalities that could bind them together. However, as Durkheim observed, their ability to carry out their specific functions depended upon others being able to carry out theirs. Modern society was increasingly held together on the basis of a division of

labour or **organic solidarity:** a complex system of interrelated parts, working together to maintain stability, i.e., like an organism (Durkheim, 1893/1960).

According to his theory, as the roles individuals in the division of labour become more specialized and unique, and people increasingly have less in common with one another, they also become increasingly interdependent on one another. Even though there is an increased level of individual autonomy — the development of unique personalities and the opportunity to pursue individualized interests — society has a tendency to cohere because everyone depends on everyone else. The academic relies on the mechanic for the specialized skills required to fix his or her car, the mechanic sends his or her children to university to learn from the academic, and both rely on the baker to provide them with bread for their morning toast. Each member of society relies on the others. In premodern societies, the structures like religious practice that produce shared consciousness and harsh retribution for transgressions *function* to maintain the solidarity of society as a whole; whereas in modern societies, the occupational structure and its complex division of labour *function* to maintain solidarity through the creation of mutual interdependence.

While the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity is, in the long run, advantageous for a society, Durkheim noted that it creates periods of chaos and "normlessness." One of the outcomes of the transition is social **anomie**. Anomie — literally, "without norms" — is a situation in which society no longer has the support of a firm collective consciousness. There are no clear norms or values to guide and regulate behaviour. Anomie was associated with the rise of industrial society, which

removed ties to the land and shared labour; the rise of individualism, which removed limits on what individuals could desire; and the rise of secularism, which removed ritual or symbolic foci and traditional modes of moral regulation. During times of war or rapid economic development, the normative basis of society was also challenged. People isolated in their specialized tasks tend to become alienated from one another and from a sense of collective conscience. However, Durkheim felt that as societies reach an advanced stage of organic solidarity, they avoid anomie by redeveloping a set of shared norms. According to Durkheim, once a society achieves organic solidarity, it has finished its development.

While each of the classical sociological thinkers discussed here presented somewhat different conceptualizations of social class and the consequences of class for individuals and society, all viewed social class as a central feature of individual and social existence as well as the future of human society. However, as illustrated in the essays by activist, Sandy Cameron, discussion of social class and to some extent, explicit identification with traditional notions of social class have been significantly marginalized, if not relegated to the status of taboo in popular and sociological discourse. Does this mean that social class is no longer a marker and factor in collective actions to achieve social justice in society, or might there be other factors to consider?

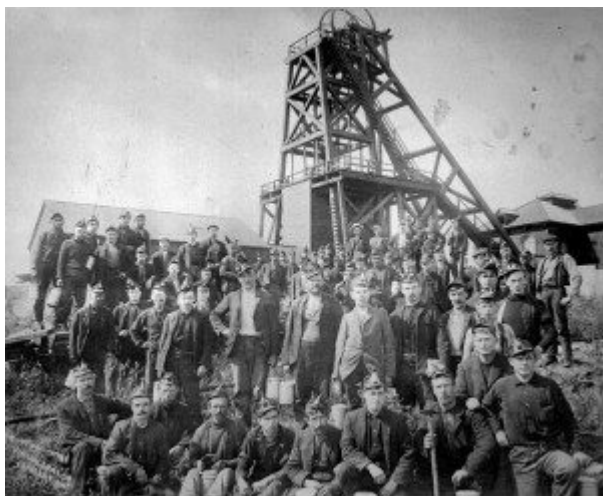# 7.3 Social Class Identities in Canada

Figure 7.5: 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 7.6: The owning class—James a[...] garden at their Hatley Castle residence [...] University). James Dunsmuir was heir t[...] coal operations on Vancouver Island fr[...] capitalist interests and anti-union effor[...] 1900–1902. (Image courtesy of Royal [...]

Although Canadian's tend to self identify with a rather ambiguous middle class identity and political, business and academic leaders encourage this somewhat 'classless' identity, does a person's appearance and manner 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 module, 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 class 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 the formation of status gradations, common subjective 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. But perhaps there is an even deeper subjective dimension to contemporary analyses of social class and its implications in society.

7.3.1. Class Traits and Markers

Figure 7.7. 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 by Quaid Lagan on Unsplash)

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.

7.3.2 Class Identity: Is it the Elephant in the Room?

Bourdieu's concept of habitus was introduced at the beginning of this module. As previously defined, habitus refers to 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). In short, our habitus is the way we embody and express our class identity in society, whether we are consciously aware of that embodiment and expression, or not. As this module draws to a close you are encouraged to use your understanding of interpretive sociology to reflect on how you, and people you know, embody class identity and how that embodiment impacts the opportunities and challenges that individuals experience in their everyday social realities.

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 7.8. 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. (Imelda Marcos Shoes, by David Stanley, CC-BY 2.0)

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

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).

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.

downward mobility: A lowering of one's social class.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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8

MODULE 8: SOCIAL IDENTITIES: SEX, GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Figure 8.1. Some children may learn at an early age that their gender does not correspond with their sex. Only Still for a Second by trazomfreak CC BY 2.0.

Learning Objectives

- Define and differentiate between sex, gender, and sexuality.
- Describe the relationship between society and biology in formations of gender identity.
- Discuss the role of homophobia and heterosexism in society.
- Distinguish between transgendered, transsexual, intersexual, and homosexual identities.
- Describe the dominant gender schema and how it influences social perceptions of sex and gender.
- Explain the influence of socialization on gender roles in Canada.
- Discuss the effect of gender inequality in major North American institutions.
- Describe different attitudes associated with sex and sexuality.
- Define sexual inequality in various societies.

8.0 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 Module, 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.

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.

8.1. The Difference between Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

Figure 8.2. 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. One the Beach by FaceMePLS CC BY 2.0

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's 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 8.3. 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. *Dance to the Berdache* by George Catlin is in the public domain.

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).

8.1.1 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).
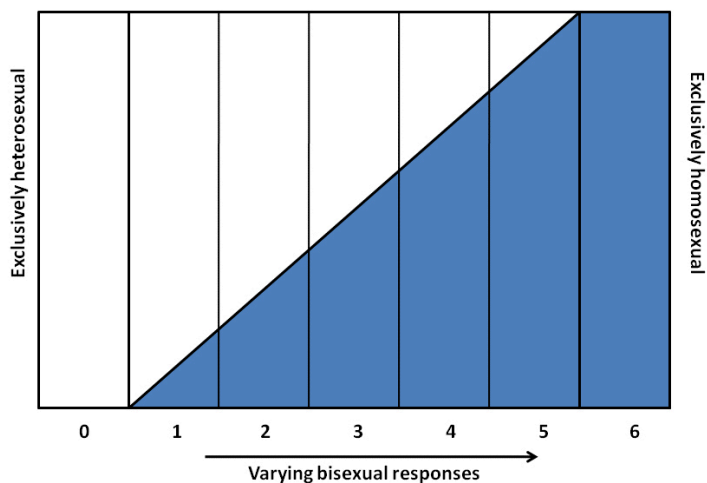
Figure 8.4. The Kinsey scale indicates that sexuality can be measured by more than just heterosexuality and homosexuality.

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."

8.1.2 Gender Roles

Moral development is an important part of the socialization process. The term refers to the way people learn what society considers to be "good" and "bad," which is important for a smoothly functioning society. Moral development prevents people from acting on unchecked urges, instead considering what is right for society and good for others. Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987) was interested in how people learn to decide what is right and what is wrong. To understand this topic, he developed a theory of moral development that includes three levels: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional.

In the preconventional stage, young children, who lack a higher level of cognitive ability, experience the world around them only through their senses. It is not until the teen years that the conventional theory develops, when youngsters become increasingly aware of others' feelings and take those into consideration when determining what's good and bad. The final stage, called postconventional, is when people begin to think of morality in abstract terms, such as North Americans believing that everyone has equal rights and freedoms. At this stage, people also recognize that legality and morality

do not always match up evenly (Kohlberg, 1981). When hundreds of thousands of Egyptians turned out in 2011 to protest government autocracy, they were using postconventional morality. They understood that although their government was legal, it was not morally correct.

Carol Gilligan (b. 1936), recognized that Kohlberg's theory might show gender bias since his research was conducted only on male subjects. Would female study subjects have responded differently? Would a female social scientist notice different patterns when analyzing the research? To answer the first question, she set out to study differences between how boys and girls developed morality. Gilligan's research demonstrated that boys and girls do, in fact, have different understandings of morality. Boys tend to have a justice perspective, placing emphasis on rules, laws, and individual rights. They learn to morally view the world in terms of categorization and separation. Girls, on the other hand, have a care and responsibility perspective; they are concerned with responsibilities to others and consider people's reasons behind behaviour that seems morally wrong. They learn to morally view the world in terms of connectedness.

Gilligan also recognized that Kohlberg's theory rested on the assumption that the justice perspective was the right, or better, perspective. Gilligan, in contrast, theorized that neither perspective was "better": The two norms of justice served different purposes. Ultimately, she explained that boys are socialized for a work environment where rules make operations run smoothly, while girls are socialized for a home environment where flexibility allows for harmony in caretaking and nurturing (Gilligan, 1982, 1990).

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.

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. 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. It takes place through the child's developing awareness of self. Whereas in the Freudian model of gender development children become aware of their own genitals and spontaneously generate erotic fantasies and speculations whose resolution lead them to identify with their mother or father, in the sociological model, it is adults' awareness of a child's genitals that leads to gender labelling, differential reinforcement and the assumption of gender roles.

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.

Similarly, when they 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 use differential reinforcement in the form of positive and negative responses to gender-typed toy play.

It is interesting, with respect to the difference between the Freudian and sociological models of gender socialization, 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).

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).

8.1.3 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.

8.1.4 The Dominant Gender Schema

Figure 8.5. Chaz Bono is the transgendered son of Cher and Sonny Bono. Being transgendered is not about clothing or hairstyles; it is about self-perception. Chaz Bono by Greg Hernandez CC BY 2.0

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 (maybe?), 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 (Goffman's dramaturgical analysis was discussed in Module 6). 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.

Video: ***The Transgender Journey: Struggle for Rights and Respect*. (https://www.cpac.ca/en/transgender-journey/)**

"This 60-minute documentary gives voice to transgender Canadians of all ages, from children and young adults to married couples and senior citizens. They tell their personal stories about why they transitioned and the challenges they face, like bullying and violence, discrimination and barriers to health care. As the trans community becomes more visible and more vocal, the documentary also looks at the continuing struggle for equal rights, recognition and respect."

8.2. Gender and Society

8.2.1 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 *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 8.6. 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. Pink by Robert Couse Baker used under CC BY 2.0 license.

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 8.7. 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. Emily Murphy. Public domain.

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?

8.2.2 Her-story: The History of Gender Inequality

Missing in the classical theoretical accounts of modernity is an explanation of how the developments of modern

society, industrialization, and capitalism have affected women differently from men. Despite the differences in Durkheim's, Marx's, and Weber's main themes of analysis, they are equally *androcentric* to the degree that they cannot account for why women's experience of modern society is structured differently from men's, or why the implications of modernity are different for women than they are for men. They tell his-story but neglect her-story.

For most of human history, men and women held more or less equal status in society. In hunter-gatherer societies gender inequality was minimal as these societies did not sustain institutionalized power differences. They were based on cooperation, sharing, and mutual support. There was often a gendered division of labour in that men are most frequently the hunters and women the gatherers and child care providers (although this division is not necessarily strict), but as women's gathering accounted for up to 80% of the food, their economic power in the society was assured. Where headmen lead tribal life, their leadership is informal, based on influence rather than institutional power (Endicott, 1999). In prehistoric Europe from 7000 to 3500 BCE, archaeological evidence indicates that religious life was in fact focused on female deities and fertility, while family kinship was traced through matrilineal (female) descent (Lerner, 1986).
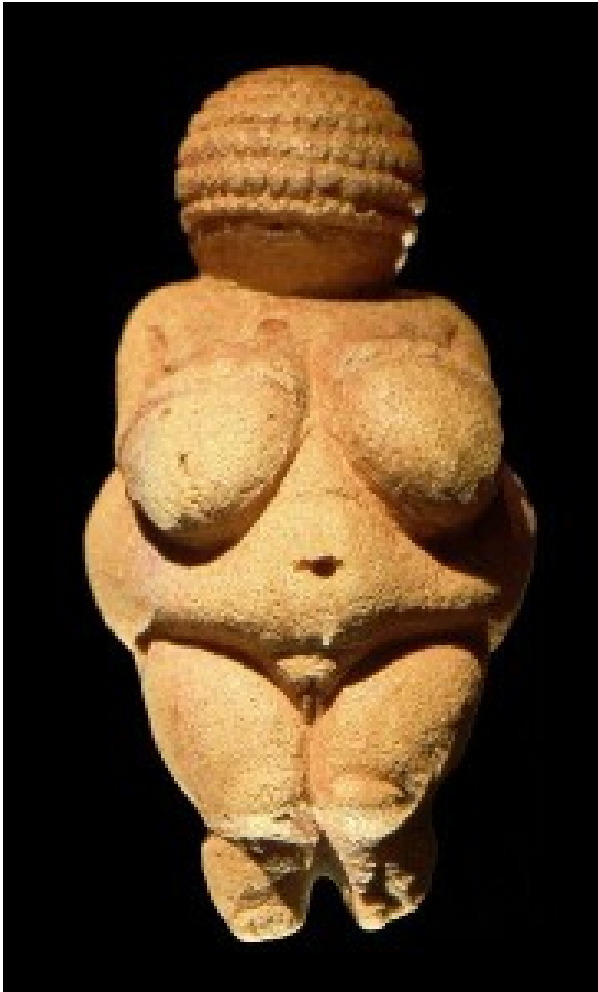
Figure 8.8. The Venus of Willendorf discovered in Willendorf, Austria, is thought to be 25,000 years old. It is widely assumed to be a fertility goddess and indicative of the central role of women in Paleolithic society. Venus of Willendorf by Matthias Kabel CC BY-SA 3.0

It was not until about 6,000 years ago that gender inequality emerged. With the transition to early agrarian and pastoral types of societies, food surpluses created the conditions for class divisions and power structures

to develop (as discussed in Module 7). Property and resources passed from collective ownership to family ownership with a corresponding shift in the development of the monogamous, patriarchal (rule by the father) family structure. Women and children also became the property of the patriarch of the family. The invasions of old Europe by the Semites to the south, and the Kurgans to the northeast, led to the imposition of male-dominated hierarchical social structures and the worship of male warrior gods. As agricultural societies developed, so did the practice of slavery. Lerner (1986) argues that the first slaves were women and children.

The development of modern, industrial society has been a two-edged sword in terms of the status of women in society. Marx's collaborator Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) argued in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884/1972) that the historical development of the male-dominated monogamous family originated with the development of private property. The family became the means through which property was inherited through the male line. This also led to the separation of a private domestic sphere and a public social sphere. "Household management lost its public character. It no longer concerned society. It became a private service; the wife became the head servant, excluded from all participation in social production" (1884/1972). Under the system of capitalist wage labour, women were doubly exploited. When they worked outside the home as wage labourers they were exploited in the workplace, often as cheaper labour than men. When they worked within the home, they were exploited as the unpaid source of labour needed to reproduce the capitalist workforce. The role of the

proletarian housewife was tantamount to "open or concealed domestic slavery" as she had no independent source of income herself (Engels, 1884/1972). Early Canadian law, for example, was based on the idea that the wife's labour belonged to the husband. This was the case even up to the famous divorce case of Irene Murdoch in 1973, who had worked the family farm in the Turner Valley, Alberta, side by side with her husband for 25 years. When she claimed 50% of the farm assets in the divorce, the judge ruled that the farm belonged to her husband, and she was awarded only $200 a month for a lifetime of work (CBC, 2001).

On the other hand, feminists note that gender inequality was more pronounced and permanent in the feudal and agrarian societies that proceeded capitalism. Women were more or less owned as property, and were kept ignorant and isolated within the domestic sphere. These conditions still exist in the world today. The World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report (2014) shows that in a significant number of countries women are severely restricted with respect to economic participation, educational attainment, political empowerment, and basic health outcomes. Yemen, Pakistan, Chad, Syria, and Mali were the five worst countries in the world in terms of women's inequality.

> Yemen is the world's worst country for women in 2014, according to the WEF. In addition to being one of the worst countries in women's economic participation and opportunity, Yemen received some of the world's worst scores in relative educational attainment and political participation for females. Just half of women in the country could read, versus 83% of men. Further, women accounted for just 9% of ministerial positions and for none of

the positions in parliament. Child marriage is a huge
problem in Yemen. According to Human Rights
Watch, as of 2006, 52% of Yemeni girls were married
before they reached 18, and 14% were married
before they reached 15 years of age (Hess, 2014).

With the rise of capitalism, Engels noted that there was
also an improvement in women's condition when they
began to work outside the home. Writers like Mary
Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) in her *Vindication of the
Rights of Women* (1792/1997) were also able to see, in
the discourses of rights and freedoms of the bourgeois
revolutions and the Enlightenment, a general "promise"
of *universal emancipation* that could be extended to
include the rights of women. The focus of the *Vindication
of the Rights of Women* was on the right of women to have
an education, which would put them on the same footing
as men with regard to the knowledge and rationality
required for "enlightened" political participation and
skilled work outside the home. Whereas property rights,
the role of wage labour, and the law of modern society
continued to be a source for gender inequality, the
principles of universal rights became a powerful resource
for women to use in order to press their claims for
equality.

   As the World Economic Forum (2014) study reports,
"good progress has been made over the last years on
gender equality, and in some cases, in a relatively short
time." Between 2006 and 2014, the gender gap in the
measures of economic participation, education, political
power, and health narrowed for 95% of the 111 countries
surveyed. In the top five countries in the world for
women's equality — Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden,
and Denmark — the global gender gap index had closed

to 80% or better. (Canada was 19th with a global gender gap index of 75%).

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 8.9. 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. Woman's Work is Never Done by Evil Erin CC BY 2.0

8.2.3 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 to 2008.

[Skip Table]

| Year | Total | Age Group | | | | | |
		25 to 29	30 to 34	35 to 39	40 to 44	45 to 49	50 to 54
1988	0.757	0.846	0.794	0.768	0.736	0.681	0.645
1993	0.794	0.905	0.886	0.772	0.762	0.700	0.709
1998	0.811	0.901	0.851	0.805	0.808	0.750	0.749
2003	0.825	0.920	0.868	0.843	0.804	0.768	0.771
2008	0.833	0.901	0.858	0.837	0.825	0.784	0.807
Change: 1988 to 2008	0.076	0.056	0.064	0.068	0.089	0.103	0.162

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?Making Connections: Sociological Research

8.2.4 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*.

8.3. Sex and Sexuality

Figure 8.10. 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). Long Wedding Dress for Couple with Flowers by epSos.de CC BY 2.0

8.3.1 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.

Sexuality 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).

Figure 8.11. Two men in Florence kissing. Bartolomeo Cesi, 1600. Two men in Florence kissing. Bartolomeo Cesi, Public domain.

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". 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.

8.3.2 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.

8.4 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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9

MODULE 9: SOCIAL IDENTITIES: RACE, ETHNICITY AND NATIONALITY

Figure 9.1. 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? Baltej Singh Dhillon by Gurumustuk Singh used under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Learning Objectives

- Understand the difference between race and ethnicity.
- Distinguish between majority and minority groups
- Distinguish between nationalism and patriotism
- Explain the difference between stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and racism.
- Identify and describe the features of different types of

discrimination.
- Describe how major sociological perspectives view race and ethnicity.
- Identify examples of culture of prejudice.
- Explain different intergroup relations in terms of their relative levels of tolerance.
- Give historical and/or contemporary examples of each type of intergroup relation.
- Compare and contrast the different experiences of Indigenous and various ethnic groups in Canada.

9.1 Introduction to Race, Ethnicity and National Identity

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 module, 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 numerical majority.

Table 9.1. 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 \[PDF\]][link])

[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
Edmonton	1,139,585	254,990	22.4%	South Asian, Chinese, Filipino

[Skip Table]

Cities	Total Population	Visible Minority Population	Percentage	Top Three Visible Minority Groups
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?

9.1.1 Multiculturalism in Canada

Figure 9.2. 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? Multiculturalism tree planted in Stanley Park by Province of British Columbia CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

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 (discussed further below). 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 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).

9.2 Racial, Ethnic, Minority and National Identities

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.

9.2.1 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.

9.2.2 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.

9.2.3 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. In the United States, many states have enacted laws to disenfranchise immigrants; these laws are popular because they let the dominant group scapegoat a subordinate group. Many minority groups have been scapegoated for a nation's — or an individual's — woes.

9.2.4 Multiple Identities

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 9.3. 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. Louis Riel is in the public domain

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).

9.2.5 What is Nationality?

Nationality is a concept that refers to the legal relationship between an individual and an ethnic group, cultural community or nation state. Nationality is a status acquired by virtue of the location of one's birth, inheritance or naturalization. As such, an individual's national status and identity overlaps and intersects with membership in racial and ethnic groups as well as with one's status and location within a geo-political territory. Citizenship is a concept related to nationality, but the two concepts are not interchangeable. Citizenship refers to a legal status that is acquired as a result of legal procedures. While citizenship may be acquired as a result of ones location of birth, it may also be acquired by means of marriage, adoption or application. Depending upon the particular nation state, citizenship status is generally related to various rights and responsibilities, such as the right to vote, work, access entitlements and pay taxes.

Nationalism and patriotism are two additional concepts which circulate in popular discourse. Both concepts have their roots in an emotional identification with ones group membership(s). Nationalism refers to a sentiment, or ideology that is bound up with an extreme loyalty or devotion to a racial or ethnic group. Patriotism, on the other hand refers to a person's loyalty

or devotion to a constitutional group defined in terms of citizenship, common values, beliefs and institutions.

9.3 Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination

9.3.1 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.

9.3.2 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.

9.3.4 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 demonstrated by the 1946 Nova Scotia case of Viola Desmond (business woman and civil rights activist who is now featured on Canada's $10 bill), 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 described several examples of "white privilege." For instance, white women can easily find makeup that matches their skin tone, and white people can be assured that, most of the time, they will be dealing with authority figures of their own race (1988). How many other examples of white privilege can you think of?

9.3.5 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 higher 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 9.4. St. Joseph's Mission residential school near Williams Lake, B.C., circa 1890. Class of Mi'kmaq (Micmac) girls taken in the Shubenacadie Residential School, Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia, 1929 by LibraryArchives used under CC BY 2.0 license .

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.

9.3.6 Income Inequality among Racialized Canadians

Figure 9.5. Rastafarian in Toronto, Kensington Market, 2012.
Marijuana Shop by Eric Parker CC BY-NC 2.0

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 9.2. Average Employment Income for Racialized and Non-Racialized Canadians by Generation in 2005 (Table courtesy of Block & Galabuzi, 2011/CCPA [Average Employment Income in Block and Galabuzi, 2011 [PDF]](#) [CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 licence](#))

[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

9.4 Theories of Race and Ethnicity

9.4.1 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.

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.

9.5 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.

9.5.1 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 9.6. Portrait of Demasduit in 1819, a Beothuk woman captured and renamed "Mary March" by her captors. Demasduit died of tuberculosis in 1820. A female Red Indian of Newfoundland by Philip Henry Gosse is in the public domain.

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.

9.5.2 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.

9.5.3 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.
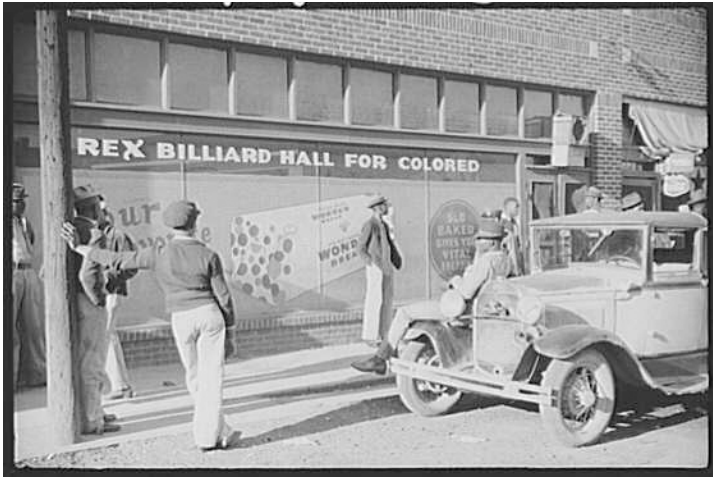
Figure 9.7. In the "Jim Crow" South, it was legal to have "separate but equal" facilities for blacks and whites. Beale Street, Memphis, Tennessee." (Sign: "Rex Billiard Hall for Colored.") courtesy of Library of Congress is in the Public Domain

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).

9.5.4 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 9.8. Government advertisement in 1907 to encourage immigration and settlement of the western provinces. The last best west by The Globe – Toronto is in the public domain.

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 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.

9.5.5 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 9.9. The Monument to Multiculturalism (1985) by Francesco Pirelli, in front of Union Station, Toronto Reach Toronto by Paul CC BY 2.0 license.

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).

9.5.6 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).

9.6 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.

9.6.1 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).

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 9.10. 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). Elders and Indian soldiers in the uniform of the Canadian Expeditionary Force by Canada. Dept. of the Interior is in the public domain.

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 module. 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 module,

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.

9.6.2 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 9.11. St. Jean Baptiste Day, *La Fête Nationale*, celebrated in Quebec on June 24. First Nations CEF Soldiers is in the public domain.

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).

9.6.3 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).

History of Intergroup Relations

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 module, 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.
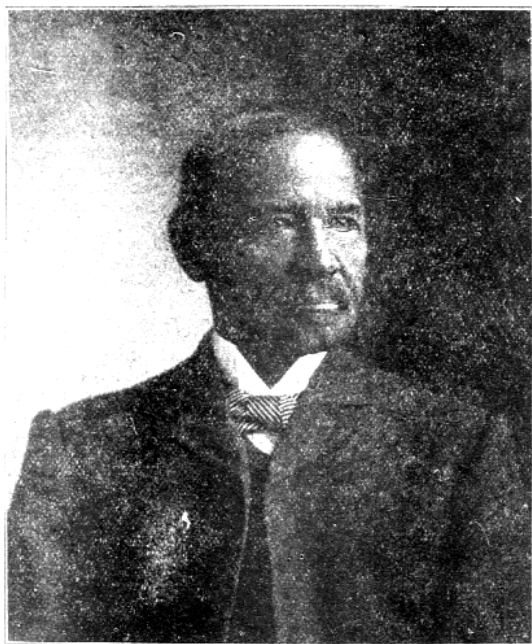
HON. MIFFLIN WISTAR GIBBS,

Figure 9.12. Mifflin Wistar Gibbs Mifflin Wistar Gibbs is in public domain.

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).

9.6.4 Asian Canadians
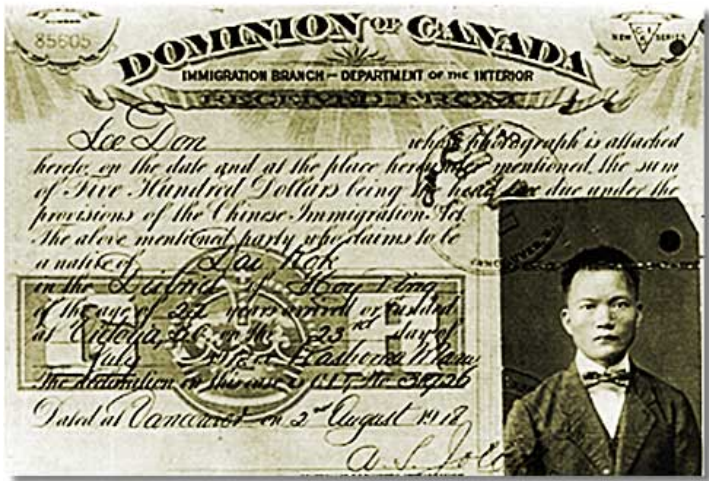
Figure 9.13. A Chinese head tax receipt for $500 issued on August 2, 1918. Chinese Head Tax Receipt courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

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).
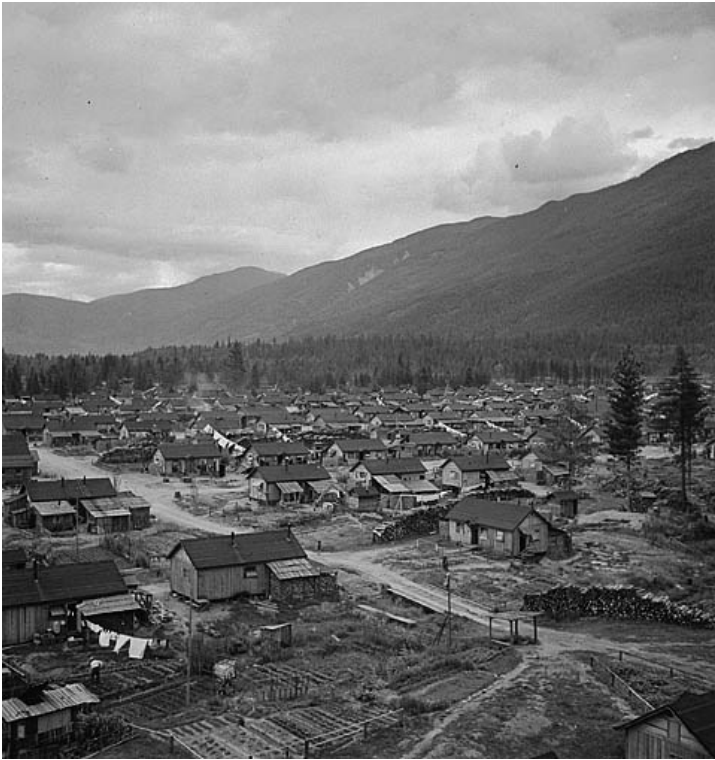
Figure 9.14. Japanese internment camp in British Columbia. Japanese internment camp in British Columbia by Jack Long is in public domain.

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 9.15. South Asians aboard the Komagata Maru in English Bay, Vancouver, in 1914. Komagata Maru is in the public domain .

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.

9.7 Further Research

Explore aspects of race and ethnicity at PBS's site, "What Is Race?": http://www.pbs.org/race/001_WhatIsRace/001_00-home.htm

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

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

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

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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10

MODULE 10: NON-CONFORMITY AND SOCIAL CONTROL: HEALTH AND MEDICINE

Figure 10.1. Vaccinations can slow or halt the spread of disease, but some families refuse them. Photo by USACE Europe District CC BY 2.0

Learning Objectives

- Describe the relationship between the body and society.
- Elaborate the meaning of the concept biopolitics as a relationship between the body and modern forms of power.
- Distinguish between moral and statistical meanings of norm.
- Discuss how medical sociology describes illness and health as social and cultural constructions.
- Define the field of social epidemiology and discuss how social epidemiology can be applied to the distribution of health outcomes in Canada and elsewhere.
- Describe how health issues and health disparities are related to social class, gender, race and ethnicity, generation and the global distribution of wealth.
- Give an overview of mental health and disability issues in Canada.
- Explain the terms stigma and medicalization.
- Apply functionalist, critical, and interpretive sociological

perspectives to social issues of health and illness.

10.0 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?

10.1 The Sociology of the Body and Health

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, 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?

10.1.1 The Sociology of the Body

Figure 10.2. Nicolas Andry, Orthopedics or the art of preventing and correcting deformities of the body in children, 1741. Andry tree by Nicolas Andry is in the Public Domain.

Michel Foucault has argued that the shift in the way we

related to our bodies in the 18th and 19th centuries is central to the formation of modern institutions and societies. In monastic practices, military discipline, factory organization, hospital design, prison rehabilitation, and educational programs, the individual body was redefined as something that needed to be trained, disciplined, and transformed. For the first time in history, the body became the center of numerous detailed procedures designed to improve its performance in a variety of institutional contexts. At the same time, the qualities of the life of the population as a whole came to be seen as a concern for government: public health, sanitary conditions in cities, the rate of population increase, the need for a productive workforce, etc.

Foucault calls this the era of **biopolitics**: "the entry of life into history" or the moment when "the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life" became the priority in the organization of social life (Foucault, 1980). Authorities and individuals themselves began to seek ways in which to foster life and improve the body's capacity for efficiency, health, learning, skill, and responsiveness. Today, preserving and fostering life might be the one central unifying value that underlies all of our politics and all of our social policy concerns.

Foucault cites a military ordinance of 1764 with regard to the military training of recruits:

> Recruits become accustomed to 'holding their heads high and erect; to standing upright, without bending the back, to sticking out the belly, throwing out the chest and throwing back the shoulders; and, to help them acquire the habit, they are given this position while standing against a wall in such a way that the

heels, the thighs, the waist and the shoulders touch it, as also do the backs of the hands, as one turns the arms outwards, without moving them away from the body . . . Likewise, they will be taught never to fix their eyes on the ground, but to look straight at those they pass . . . to remain motionless until the order is given, without moving the head, the hands or the feet . . . lastly to march with a bold step, with knee and ham taut, on the points of the feet, which should face outwards.' (Foucault, 1979, pp. 135–136)

If before the 18th century, the individual's body and the life of the population were matters of indifference to authorities, after the 18th century, it is possible to argue that all of institutional life became focused on disciplining and improving the individual body and collective life.

It is in this context that the concept of the **norm** became so important. A norm is a socially defined rule that allows us to distinguish between what conforms to accepted standards and what does not. In the biopolitical era, norms are typically understood less as moral rules about what is *morally* correct or good and more as calculated averages that define what is *statistically* normal behaviour and what deviates from the norm (Ewald, 1990). In schooling, for example, norms define what level of knowledge each grade should attain. Within each grade, students' performance is judged in relationship to these norms and as a result, they receive A, B, C, etc. letter grades, so they know where they stand with regard to the norm, (and with regard to each other). The whole learning operation depends on the detailed control of the students' bodies as they must learn to physically read and write, to sit quietly and listen to instruction, to organize

routines around a fixed schedule, and to take steps to improve their abilities.

The same can be said about the norms of health in the medical system, the norms of productivity in the workplace, the norms of soldiering in the military, and the norms of "good behaviour" in the prison system. In each case, a disciplinary procedure is instituted to improve the individual's abilities so that they can become normal (e.g. to enjoy normal health or work at a normal level of productivity). Therefore, with regard to the establishment of norms, and what Foucault called *the normalizing society*, the problem of deviance became more prominent in the 19th and 20th centuries. The problem of disabilities is a good example of *medicalized* deviance. Those with disabilities do not fit within the norms of the healthy body and therefore, beginning in the 19th century, scientists and reformers sought their rehabilitation through medical, technological, therapeutic, and educational interventions. We will discuss this further below.

Today, the relationship to the body has become even more complex. We are still obliged by different institutions to act on our bodies in specific ways: to be more efficient at work, to recover from injury or illness through the health care system, to develop good study habits at school, etc. However, we are also increasingly concerned to improve our bodies on a voluntary basis. Individually, we turn to experts in a variety of fields who advise us on different procedures to act upon our bodies like exercise regimes, dieting, cosmetic surgery, skin care products, meditation techniques, yoga, sex therapy, life coaching, martial arts, etc. A bewildering amount of information about life improvement and numerous

competing options is available. Increasingly we live in an era of **medical pluralism**, in which no one model of health practice can successfully claim to provide the definitive truth for how to attain health. But as Zygmunt Bauman (2005) argues, the increased capacity to control our bodies in the absence of certainty about which way is best, only increases our anxiety (2005).

In addition, the control of the body has become increasingly "molecularized" through the advances of genetic and bio-chemical research. That is, we attempt to act upon and change our bodies at the level of primary biochemical, cellular, molecular processes like ribosomic protein synthesis. Nikolas Rose (2007) has argued that this leads to entirely new forms of somatic (bodily) existence and genetic risk in which we come to define ourselves by our genetic markers and seek to not only cure illness or forestall congenital dispositions to disease but to *optimize* our existence through genetic engineering, designer pharmaceuticals, and epigenetic therapies.

10.1.2 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.

10.1.3 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.

10.1.4 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.

10.1.5 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.

10.2 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. 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.

10.2.1 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.

10.2.2 Health in Low-Income Nations

Figure 10.3. In low-income countries, malnutrition and lack of access to clean water contribute to a high child mortality rate. Mozambique 02100 by Steve Evans CC BY-NC 2.0

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).

10.3 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.

10.3.1 Health by Race and Ethnicity

Unlike the United States, where strong health disparities exist along racial lines, in Canada differences in health between non-indigenous 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).

Indigenous 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 indigenous 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 indigenous 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).

Life Expectancy, Registered Indians, Canada, 1980, 1990 and 2000
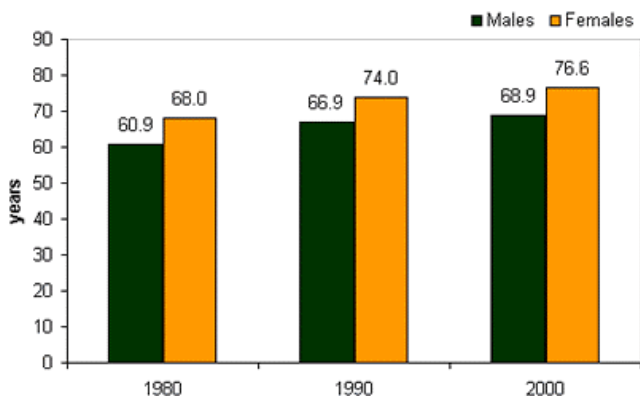
Figure 10.4. Life expectancy of Aboriginal men and women in Canada has improved but remains significantly lower than for the rest of the population [Long Description] (Graph courtesy of Health Canada, 2005). This reproduction was produced under the terms outlined by the Government of Canada.

Figure 19.7 shows that life expectancy for Indigenous people (registered Indians) has improved. However, it remains significantly lower than for the average population: Indigenous 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), Indigenous 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 Indigenous people are also significantly worse than for the average population. While nearly 59 percent of non-Indigenous 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-Indigenous 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 Indigenous and non-Indigenous 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 indigenous 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).

10.3.2 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.

10.3.3 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.

10.3.4 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.

Depending on what definition is used, there is some

overlap between mood disorders and **personality disorders**. Canadian data on the prevalence of personality disorders is lacking but estimates in the United States suggest they affect 9 percent of Americans yearly. In Canada, epidemiological research reporting on antisocial personality disorder shows that about 1.7 percent of the population experience this specific disorder yearly (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2002). The American Psychological Association publishes the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual on Mental Disorders* (*DSM*), and their definition of personality disorders is changing in the fifth edition, which is being revised in 2011 and 2012. In the *DSM-IV*, personality disorders represent "an enduring pattern of inner experience and behaviour that deviates markedly from the expectations of the culture of the individual who exhibits it" (National Institute of Mental Health). In other words, personality disorders cause people to behave in ways that are seen as abnormal to society but seem normal to them. The *DSM-V* proposes broadening this definition by offering five broad personality trait domains to describe personality disorders, some related to the level or type of their disconnect with society. As their application evolves, we will see how their definitions help scholars across disciplines understand the intersection of health issues and how they are defined by social institutions and cultural norms.

Figure 10.5. Medication is a common option for children with ADHD. Tramadol by Deviation56 is in the Public Domain.

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.

Disability

Figure 10.6. 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. Handicapped Accessible sign by Ltljltlj is in the Public Domain.

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).

10.3.5 Obesity: The Last Acceptable Prejudice

Figure 10.7. Obesity is considered the last acceptable social stigma. Beach Man by Kyle May CC BY 2.0

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 indigenous 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.

10.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Health and Medicine

Each of the three major theoretical perspectives approaches the topics of health, illness, and medicine differently.

10.4.1 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).

10.4.2 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, indigenous 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 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).

10.4.3 Symbolic Interactionism

According to theorists working in this perspective, health and illness are both socially constructed. As we discussed in the beginning of the module, 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 10.8. 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. King Alcohol and his Prime Minister courtesy of the Library of Congress is in the Public Domain.

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.

10.5 Further Research

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/.

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.

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.

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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Long Desciptions

**Figure 10.4 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 10.4]

11

MODULE 11: NON-CONFORMITY AND SOCIAL CONTROL: CRIMINAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Figure 11.1. Psychopaths and sociopaths are some of the star deviants in contemporary popular culture. What makes them so appealing as fictional characters? DEXTER by pimkie CC BY SA 2.0 license

Learning Objectives

- Define deviance and categorize different types of deviant behaviour.
- Explain why certain behaviours are defined as deviant while others are not.
- Distinguish between different methods of social control.
- Describe social control as forms of governance including penal social control, discipline, and risk management.
- Describe the functionalist view of deviance in society including social disorganization theory, control theory, and strain theory.
- Discuss how critical sociology understands the relationship between deviance, crime, and social inequality (i.e., class, gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, generations).
- Describe interpretive approaches to deviance.
- Identify and differentiate between different types of crimes.
- Identify and distinguish between different sources of crime

statistics.
*   Desribe and discuss the overrepresentation of different minorities in the corrections system in Canada.
*   Examine alternatives to prison.

11.0 Introduction to Deviance, Crime, and Social Control

Psychopaths and sociopaths are some of the favourite "deviants" in contemporary popular culture. From Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho* to Dr. Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* to Dexter Morgan in *Dexter*, the figure of the dangerous individual who lives among us provides a fascinating fictional figure. Psychopathy and sociopathy both refer to personality disorders that involve anti-social behaviour, diminished empathy, and lack of inhibitions. In clinical analysis, these analytical categories should be distinguished from psychosis, which is a condition involving a debilitating break with reality.

Psychopaths and sociopaths are often able to manage their condition and pass as "normal" citizens, although their capacity for manipulation and cruelty can have devastating consequences for people around them. The term **psychopathy** is often used to emphasize that the source of the disorder is internal, based on psychological, biological, or genetic factors, whereas **sociopathy** is used to emphasize predominant social factors in the disorder: The social or familial sources of its development and the inability to be social or abide by societal rules (Hare, 1999). In this sense sociopathy would be the sociological

disease *par excellence*. It entails an incapacity for companionship (*socius*), yet many accounts of sociopaths describe them as being charming, attractively confident, and outgoing (Hare, 1999).

In a modern society characterized by the predominance of secondary rather than primary relationships, the sociopath or psychopath functions, in popular culture at least, as a prime index of contemporary social unease. The sociopath is like the nice neighbour next door who one day "goes off" or is revealed to have had a sinister second life. In many ways the sociopath is a cypher for many of the anxieties we have about the loss of community and living among people we do not know. In this sense, the sociopath is a very modern sort of deviant. Contemporary approaches to psychopathy and sociopathy have focused on biological and genetic causes. This is a tradition that goes back to 19th century positivist approaches to deviance, which attempted to find a biological cause for criminality and other types of deviant behaviour.

Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), an Italian professor of legal psychiatry, was a key figure in positivist criminology who thought he had isolated specific physiological characteristics of "degeneracy" that could distinguish "born criminals" from normal individuals (Rimke, 2011). In a much more sophisticated way, this was also the premise of James Fallon (b. 1947), a neuroscientist at the University of California. His research involved analyzing brain scans of serial killers. He found that areas of the frontal and temporal lobes associated with empathy, morality, and self-control are "shut off" in serial killers. In turn, this lack of brain activity has been linked with specific genetic markers

suggesting that psychopathy or sociopathy was passed down genetically. Fallon's premise was that psychopathy is genetically determined. An individual's genes determine whether they are psychopathic or not (Fallon, 2013).

Figure 11.2. Lizzie Borden was tried but not convicted of the axe murders of her father and stepmother in 1892. The popular rhyme of the time went, "Lizzie Borden took an axe, and gave her mother 40 whacks.When she saw what she had done, she gave her father 41. " Lizzie Borden is in the public domain.

However, at the same time that Fallon was conducting research on psychopaths, he was studying the brain scans of Alzheimer's patients. In the Alzheimer's study, he

discovered a brain scan from a control subject that indicated the symptoms of psychopathy he had seen in the brain scans of serial killers. The scan was taken from a member of his own family. He broke the seal that protected the identity of the subject and discovered it was his own brain scan.

Fallon was a married man who had raised children and held down a demanding career as a successful scientist, and yet the brain scan indicated he was a psychopath. When he researched his own genetic history, he realized that his family tree contained seven alleged murderers including the famous Lizzie Borden (1860–1927) who allegedly killed her father and stepmother in 1892. He began to notice some of his own behaviour patterns as being manipulative, obnoxiously competitive, egocentric, and aggressive, just not in a criminal manner. He decided that he was a "pro-social psychopath" — an individual who lacks true empathy for others but keeps his or her behaviour within acceptable social norms — due to the loving and nurturing family he grew up in. He had to acknowledge that environment, and not just genes, played a significant role in the expression of genetic tendencies (Fallon, 2013).

What can we learn from Fallon's example from a sociological point of view? Firstly, psychopathy and sociopathy are recognized as problematic forms of deviance because of prevalent social anxieties about serial killers as a type of criminal who "lives next door" or "blends in". This is partly because we live in a type of society where we do not know our neighbours well and partly because we are concerned to discover their identifiable traits are otherwise concealed. Secondly,

Fallon acknowledged that there is no purely biological or genetic explanation for psychopathy and sociopathy.

Many individuals with the biological and genetic markers of psychopathy are not dangers to society — key to pathological expressions of psychopathy are elements of an individual's social environment and social upbringing (i.e., nurture). Finally, in Fallon's own account, it is difficult to separate the discovery of the aberrant brain scan and the discovery and acknowledgement of his personal traits of psychopathy. Is it clear which came first? He only recognizes the psychopathology in himself after seeing the brain scan. This is the problem of what Ian Hacking calls the "looping effect" (see the discussion of looping effect in 11.1 "Deviance and Control") that affects the sociological study of deviance (2006). In summary, what Fallon's example illustrates is the complexity of the study of social deviance.

11.1 Deviance and Control

Figure 11.3. Much of the appeal of watching entertainers perform in drag comes from the humour inherent in seeing everyday norms violated. BabsanMello 2011 by Cassiopeija CC BY 3.0

What, exactly, is deviance? And what is the relationship between deviance and crime? According to sociologist William Graham Sumner (1840–1910), **deviance** is a violation of established contextual, cultural, or social norms, whether folkways, mores, or codified law (1906). As we learned in previous modules, **folkways** are norms based on everyday cultural customs concerning practical matters like how to hold a fork, what type of clothes are appropriate for different situations, or how to greet someone politely. **Mores** are more serious moral injunctions or taboos that are broadly recognized in a society, like the incest taboo. Codified **laws** are norms that are specified in explicit codes and enforced by government bodies. A **crime** is therefore an act of deviance that breaks not only a norm, but a law. Deviance

can be as minor as picking one's nose in public or as major as committing murder.

John Hagen provides a typology to classify deviant acts in terms of their perceived harmfulness, the degree of consensus concerning the norms violated, and the severity of the response to them (1994). The most serious acts of deviance are **consensus crimes** about which there is near-unanimous public agreement. Acts like murder and sexual assault are generally regarded as morally intolerable, injurious, and subject to harsh penalties. **Conflict crimes** are acts like prostitution or smoking marijuana, which may be illegal but about which there is considerable public disagreement concerning their seriousness. **Social deviations** are acts like abusing serving staff or behaviours arising from mental illness or addiction, which are not illegal in themselves but are widely regarded as serious or harmful. People agree that these behaviours call for institutional intervention. Finally there are **social diversions** like riding skateboards on sidewalks, overly tight leggings, or facial piercings that violate norms in a provocative way but are generally regarded as distasteful, or for some cool, but harmless.

The point is that the question, "What is deviant behaviour?" cannot be answered in a straightforward manner. No act or person is *intrinsically* deviant. This follows from two key insights of the sociological approach to deviance (which distinguish it from moral and legalistic approaches). Firstly, deviance is defined by its social context. To understand why some acts are deviant and some are not, it is necessary to understand what the context is, what the existing rules are, and how these rules came to be established. If the rules change,

what counts as deviant also changes. As rules and norms vary across cultures and time, it makes sense that notions of deviance also change.

Fifty years ago, public schools in Canada had strict dress codes that, among other stipulations, often banned women from wearing pants to class. Today, it is socially acceptable for women to wear pants, but less so for men to wear skirts. In a time of war, acts usually considered morally reprehensible, such as taking the life of another, may actually be rewarded. Much of the confusion and ambiguity regarding the use of violence in hockey has to do with the different sets of rules that apply inside and outside the arena. Acts that are acceptable and even encouraged on the ice would be punished with jail time if they occurred on the street.

Whether an act is deviant or not depends on society's definition of that act. Acts are not deviant in themselves. The second sociological insight is that deviance is not an intrinsic (biological or psychological) attribute of individuals, nor of the acts themselves, but a product of social processes. The norms themselves, or the social contexts that determine which acts are deviant or not, are continually defined and redefined through ongoing social processes — political, legal, cultural, etc. One way in which certain activities or people come to be understood and defined as deviant is through the intervention of moral entrepreneurs.

Howard Becker (b. 1928) defined **moral entrepreneurs** as individuals or groups who, in the service of their own interests, publicize and problematize "wrongdoing" and have the power to create and enforce rules to penalize wrongdoing (1963). Judge Emily Murphy, commonly known today as one of the Famous

Five feminist suffragists who fought to have women legally recognized as "persons" (and thereby qualified to hold a position in the Canadian Senate), was a moral entrepreneur instrumental in changing Canada's drug laws. In 1922 she wrote *The Black Candle*, in which she demonized the use of marijuana:

> [Marijuana] has the effect of driving the [user] completely insane. The addict loses all sense of moral responsibility. Addicts to this drug, while under its influence, are immune to pain, and could be severely injured without having any realization of their condition. While in this condition they become raving maniacs and are liable to kill or indulge in any form of violence to other persons, using the most savage methods of cruelty without, as said before, any sense of moral responsibility…. They are dispossessed of their natural and normal will power, and their mentality is that of idiots. If this drug is indulged in to any great extent, it ends in the untimely death of its addict. (Murphy, 1922)

One of the tactics used by moral entrepreneurs is to create a **moral panic** about activities, like marijuana use, that they deem deviant. A moral panic occurs when media-fuelled public fear and overreaction lead authorities to label and repress deviants, which in turn creates a cycle in which more acts of deviance are discovered, more fear is generated, and more suppression enacted. The key insight is that individuals' deviant status is ascribed to them through social processes. Individuals are not born deviant, but become deviant through their interaction with reference groups, institutions, and authorities.

Through social interaction, individuals are labelled

deviant or come to recognize themselves as deviant. For example, in ancient Greece, homosexual relationships between older men and young acolytes were a normal component of the teacher-student relationship. Up until the 19th century, the question of who slept with whom was a matter of indifference to the law or customs, except where it related to family alliances through marriage and the transfer of property through inheritance. However, in the 19th century sexuality became a matter of moral, legal, and psychological concern. The homosexual, or "sexual invert," was defined by the emerging psychiatric and biological disciplines as a psychological deviant whose instincts were contrary to nature.

Homosexuality was defined as not simply a matter of sexual desire or the act of sex, but as a dangerous quality that defined the entire personality and moral being of an individual (Foucault, 1980). From that point until the late 1960s, homosexuality was regarded as a deviant, closeted activity that, if exposed, could result in legal prosecution, moral condemnation, ostracism, violent assault, and loss of career. Since then, the LGBTQ rights movement and constitutional protections of civil liberties have reversed many of the attitudes and legal structures that led to the prosecution of gays, lesbians, and transgendered people. The point is that to whatever degree homosexuality has a natural or inborn biological cause, its deviance is the outcome of a social process.

It is not simply a matter of the events that lead authorities to define an activity or category of persons deviant, but of the processes by which individuals come to recognize themselves as deviant. In the process of socialization, there is a "looping effect" (Hacking, 2006). Once a category of deviance has been established and

applied to a person, that person begins to define himself or herself in terms of this category and behave accordingly. This influence makes it difficult to define criminals as kinds of person in terms of pre-existing, innate predispositions or individual psychopathologies.

As we will see later in this module, it is a central tenet of symbolic interactionist **labelling theory**, that individuals become criminalized through contact with the **criminal justice system** (Becker, 1963). The well-known problem of using imprisonment to respond to criminal offenders is that prison influences individual behaviour and self-understanding, but often not in the way intended. Prisons are agents of socialization. The act of imprisonment itself modifies individual behaviour to make individuals more criminal. When we add to this insight the sociological research into the social characteristics of those who have been arrested or processed by the criminal justice system — variables such as gender, age, race, and class — it is evident that social variables and power structures are key to understanding who chooses a criminal career path.

One of the principle outcomes of these two sociological insights 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. In the study of crime and deviance, the sociologist often confronts a legacy of entrenched beliefs concerning either the innate biological disposition or the individual psychopathology of persons considered abnormal: the criminal personality, the sexual or gender "deviant," the disabled or ill person, the addict, or the mentally unstable individual. However, as Ian Hacking observed, 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 (2006).

The process of classifying kinds of people is a social process that Hacking called "making up people" (2006) and Howard Becker called "labelling" (1963). Crime and deviance are social constructs that vary according to the definitions of crime, the forms and effectiveness of policing, the social characteristics of criminals, and the relations of power that structure society. Part of the problem of deviance is that the social process of labelling some kinds of persons or activities as abnormal or deviant limits the type of social responses available. The major issue is not that labels are arbitrary or that it is possible not to use labels at all, but that the choice of label has consequences. Who gets labelled by whom and the way social labels are applied have powerful social repercussions. Therefore, it is necessary to use the sociological imagination to address crime and deviance both at the individual and social levels. With a deeper understanding of the social factors that produce crime and deviance, it becomes possible to develop a set of strategies that might more effectively encourage individuals to change direction.

11.1.1 Social Control as Sanction

When a person violates a social norm, what happens? A driver caught speeding can receive a speeding ticket. A student who texts in class gets a warning from a professor. An adult belching loudly is avoided. All societies practise **social control**, the regulation and

enforcement of norms. Social control can be defined broadly as an organized action intended to change people's behaviour (Innes, 2003). The underlying goal of social control is to maintain **social order**, an arrangement of practices and behaviours on which society's members base their daily lives. Think of social order as an employee handbook, and social control as the incentives and disincentives used to encourage or oblige employees to follow those rules. When a worker violates a workplace guideline, the manager steps in to enforce the rules.

One means of enforcing rules are through **sanctions**. Sanctions can be positive as well as negative. **Positive sanctions** are rewards given for conforming to norms. A promotion at work is a positive sanction for working hard. **Negative sanctions** are punishments for violating norms. Being arrested is a punishment for shoplifting. Both types of sanctions play a role in social control.

Sociologists also classify sanctions as formal or informal. Although shoplifting, a form of social deviance, may be illegal, there are no laws dictating the proper way to scratch one's nose. That doesn't mean picking your nose in public won't be punished; instead, you will encounter **informal sanctions**. Informal sanctions emerge in face-to-face social interactions. For example, wearing flip-flops to an opera or swearing loudly in church may draw disapproving looks or even verbal reprimands, whereas behaviour that is seen as positive — such as helping an old man carry grocery bags across the street — may receive positive informal reactions, such as a smile or pat on the back.

Formal sanctions, on the other hand, are ways to officially recognize and enforce norm violations. If a

student is caught plagiarizing the work of others or cheating on an exam, for example, he or she might be expelled. Someone who speaks inappropriately to the boss could be fired. Someone who commits a crime may be arrested or imprisoned. On the positive side, a soldier who saves a life may receive an official commendation, or a CEO might receive a bonus for increasing the profits of the corporation.

Not all forms of social control are adequately understood through the use of sanctions, however. Donald Black (b. 1941) identified four key styles of social control, each of which defines deviance and the appropriate response to it in a different manner (1976). **Penal social control** functions by prohibiting certain social behaviours and responding to violations with punishment. **Compensatory social control** obliges an offender to pay a victim to compensate for a harm committed. **Therapeutic social control** involves the use of therapy to return individuals to a normal state. **Conciliatory social control** aims to reconcile the parties of a dispute and mutually restore harmony to a social relationship that has been damaged. While penal and compensatory social controls emphasize the use of sanctions, therapeutic and conciliatory social controls emphasize processes of restoration and healing.

Figure 11.4. Machiavelli: "If an injury has to be done to a man it should be so severe that his vengeance need not be feared." The ruthlessness with which Machiavelli advised the prince to govern his relationships with subjects and rivals has earned its own adjective in common usage: Machiavellian. Cover page of 1550 edition of Machiavelli's Il Principe and La Vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca by RJC is in the public domain

11.1.2 Social Control as Government and Discipline

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) notes that from a period of early modernity onward, European society became increasingly concerned with social control as a practice of government (Foucault, 2007). In this sense of the term, government does not simply refer to the activities of the state, but to all the practices by which individuals or organizations seek to govern the behaviour of others or themselves. **Government** refers to the strategies by which one seeks to direct or guide the conduct of another or others. In the 15th and 16th centuries, numerous

treatises were written on how to govern and educate children, how to govern the poor and beggars, how to govern a family or an estate, how to govern an army or a city, how to govern a state and run an economy, and how to govern one's own conscience and conduct. These treatises described the burgeoning arts of government, which defined the different ways in which the conduct of individuals or groups might be directed. Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1532), which offers advice to the prince on how best to conduct his relationship with his subjects, is the most famous of these treatises.

The common theme in the various arts of governing proposed in early modernity was the extension of Christian monastic practices involving the detailed and continuous government and salvation of souls. The principles of monastic government were applied to a variety of non-monastic areas. People needed to be governed in all aspects of their lives. It was not, however, until the 19th century and the invention of modern institutions like the prison, public school, modern army, asylum, hospital, and factory, that the means for extending government and social control widely through the population were developed.

Foucault describes these modern forms of government as **disciplinary social control** because they each rely on the detailed continuous training, control, and observation of individuals to improve their capabilities: to transform criminals into law abiding citizens, children into educated and productive adults, recruits into disciplined soldiers, patients into healthy people, etc. (1979). Foucault argues that the ideal of discipline as a means of social control is to render individuals docile. That does not mean that they become passive or sheep-

like, but that disciplinary training simultaneously increases their abilities, skills, and usefulness while making them more compliant and manipulable.

Figure 11.5. Presidio Modelo prison, Cuba, built between 1926 and 1928 was based on Bentham's panopticon design. Inside one of the prison buildings at Presidio Modelo by Friman CC BY SA 3.0

The chief components of disciplinary social control in modern institutions like the prison and the school are surveillance, normalization, and examination (Foucault, 1979). **Surveillance** refers to the various means used to make the lives and activities of individuals visible to authorities. In 1791, Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) published his book on the ideal prison, the **panopticon** or "seeing machine." Prisoners' cells would be arranged in a circle around a central observation tower where they could be both separated from each other and continually exposed to the view of prison guards. In this way, Bentham proposed, social control could become automatic because prisoners would be induced to monitor and control their own behaviour.

Similarly, in a school classroom, students sit in rows of

desks immediately visible to the teacher at the front of the room. In a store, shoppers can be observed through one-way glass or video monitors. Contemporary surveillance expands the capacity for observation using video or electronic forms of surveillance to render the activities of a population visible. London, England holds the dubious honour of being the most surveilled city in the world. The city's "ring of steel" is a security cordon in which over half a million surveillance cameras are used to monitor and record traffic moving in and out of the city centre.

The practice of **normalization** refers to the way in which norms, such as the level of math ability expected from a grade 2 student, are first established and then used to assess, differentiate, and rank individuals according to their abilities (e.g., as an A student, B student, C student, etc.). Individuals' progress in developing their abilities, whether in math skills, good prison behaviour, health outcomes, or other areas, is established through constant comparisons with others and with natural and observable norms. Minor sanctions are used to continuously modify behaviour that does not comply with correct conduct: Rewards are applied for good behaviour and penalties for bad.

Periodic **examinations** through the use of tests in schools, medical examinations in hospitals, inspections in prisons, year-end reviews in the workplace, etc. bring together surveillance and normalization in a way that enables each individual and each individual's abilities to be assessed, documented, and known by authorities. On the basis of examinations, individuals can be subjected to different disciplinary procedures more suited to them. Gifted children might receive an enriched educational

program, whereas poorer students might receive remedial lessons.

Foucault describes disciplinary social control as a key mechanism in creating a **normalizing society**. The establishment of norms and the development of disciplinary procedures to correct deviance from norms become increasingly central to the organization and operation of institutions from the 19th century onward. To the degree that "natural" or sociological norms are used to govern our lives more than laws and legal mechanisms, society can be said to be controlled through normalization and disciplinary procedures. Whereas the use of formal laws, **courts**, and the **police** come into play only when laws are broken, disciplinary techniques enable the continuous and ongoing social control of an expanding range of activities in our lives through surveillance, normalization, and examination. While we may never encounter the police for breaking a law, if we work, go to school, or end up in hospital, we are routinely subject to disciplinary control through most of the day.

11.1.3 Social Control as Risk Management

Figure 11.6. The contents of a needle exchange kit. Needle Exchange by Todd Huffman CC BY 2.0

Recent types of social control have adopted a model of **risk management** in a variety of areas of problematic behaviour. Risk management refers to interventions designed to reduce the likelihood of undesirable events occurring based on an assessment of probabilities of risk. Unlike the crime and punishment model of penal social sanctions, or the rehabilitation, training, or therapeutic models of disciplinary social control, risk management strategies do not seize hold of individual deviants but attempt to restructure the environment or context of problematic behaviour in order to minimize the risks to the general population.

For example, the public health model for controlling intravenous drug use does not focus on criminalizing drug use or obliging users to rehabilitate themselves to "kick drugs" (O'Malley, 1998). It recognizes that fines or imprisonment do not curtail drug users propensity to continue to use drugs, and that therapeutic rehabilitation of drug use is not only expensive but unlikely to succeed

unless drug users are willing to quit. Instead, it calculates the risk of deaths from drug overdoses and the danger to the general population from the transmission of disease (like HIV and hepatitis C) and attempts to modify the riskiest behaviours through targeted interventions. Programs like needle exchanges (designed to prevent the sharing of needles) or safe-injection-sites (designed to provide sanitary conditions for drug injection and immediate medical services for overdoses) do not *prevent* addicts from using drugs but *minimize* the harms resulting from drug use by modifying the environment in which drugs are injected. Reducing risks to public health is the priority of the public health model.

In the case of crime, the **new penology** strategies of social control are also less concerned with criminal responsibility, moral condemnation, or rehabilitative intervention and treatment of individual offenders (Feely & Simon, 1992). Rather, they are concerned with techniques to identify, classify, and manage groupings of offenders sorted by the degree of dangerousness they represent to the general public. In this way, imprisonment is used to incapacitate those who represent a significant risk, whereas probation and various levels of surveillance are used for those who represent a lower risk. Examples include sex offender tracking and monitoring, or the use of electronic monitoring ankle bracelets for low-risk offenders. New penology strategies seek to regulate levels of deviance, not intervene or respond to individual deviants or the social determinants of crime.

Similarly, **situational crime control** redesigns spaces where crimes or deviance could occur to minimize the risk of crimes occurring there (Garland, 1996). Using

alarm systems, CCTV surveillance cameras, adding or improving lighting, broadcasting irritating sounds, or making street furniture uncomfortable are all ways of working on the cost/benefit analysis of potential deviants or criminals before they act rather than acting directly on the deviants or criminals themselves.

11.2 Theoretical Perspectives and Non-normativity

Figure 11.7. Functionalists believe that deviance plays an important role in society and can be used to challenge people's views. Protesters, such as these PETA members, often use this method to draw attention to their cause. Photo by David Shankbone CC BY 2.0

Why does deviance occur? How does it affect a society? Since the early days of sociology, scholars have developed theories attempting to explain what deviance and crime mean to society. These theories can be grouped according to the three major sociological paradigms: functionalism, interpretive theories, and critical theory.

11.2.1 Functionalism

Sociologists who follow the functionalist approach are concerned with how the different elements of a society

contribute to the whole. They view deviance as a key component of a functioning society. Social disorganization theory, strain theory, and **cultural deviance** theory represent three functionalist perspectives on deviance in society.

Émile Durkheim: The Essential Nature of Deviance

Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) believed that deviance is a necessary part of a successful society. One way deviance is functional, he argued, is that it challenges people's present views (1893). For instance, when African American students across the United States participated in "sit-in" protests during the civil rights movement, they challenged society's notions of segregation. Moreover, Durkheim noted, when deviance is punished, it reaffirms currently held social norms, which also contributes to society (1893). Seeing a student given a detention for skipping class reminds other high schoolers that playing hooky isn't allowed and that they, too, could get a detention.

Social Disorganization Theory

Developed by researchers at the University of Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s, **social disorganization theory** asserts that crime is most likely to occur in communities with weak social ties and the absence of social control. In a certain way, this is the opposite of Durkheim's thesis. Rather than deviance being a force that reinforces moral and social solidarity, it is the absence of moral and social solidarity that provides the conditions for social deviance to emerge.

Early Chicago School sociologists used an ecological

model to map the zones in Chicago where high levels of social problem were concentrated. During this period, Chicago was experiencing a long period of economic growth, urban expansion, and foreign immigration. They were particularly interested in the **zones of transition** between established working class neighbourhoods and the manufacturing district. The city's poorest residents tended to live in these transitional zones, where there was a mixture of races, immigrant ethnic groups, and non-English languages, and a high rate of influx as people moved in and out. They proposed that these zones were particularly prone to social disorder because the residents had not yet assimilated to the American way of life. When they did assimilate they moved out, making it difficult for a stable social ecology to become established there.

Figure 11.8. Proponents of social disorganization theory believe that individuals who grow up in impoverished areas are more likely to participate in deviant or criminal behaviours. Camden NJ Poverty by Apollo 1758 is in the Public Domain.

Social disorganization theory points to broad social factors as the cause of deviance. A person is not born

a criminal but becomes one over time, often based on factors in his or her social environment. This theme was taken up by Travis Hirschi's (b. 1935) **control theory**. According to Hirschi, social control is directly affected by the strength of social bonds (1969). Many people would be willing to break laws or act in deviant ways to reap the rewards of pleasure, excitement, and profit, etc. if they had the opportunity. Those who do have the opportunity are those who are only weakly controlled by social restrictions. Similar to Durkheim's theory of anomie, deviance is seen to result where feelings of disconnection from society predominate. Individuals who believe they are a part of society are less likely to commit crimes against it. Hirschi identified four types of social bonds that connect people to society (1969):

1. *Attachment* measures our connections to others. When we are closely attached to people, we worry about their opinions of us. People conform to society's norms in order to gain approval (and prevent disapproval) from family, friends, and romantic partners.

2. *Commitment* refers to the investments we make in conforming to conventional behaviour. A well-respected local businesswoman who volunteers at her synagogue and is a member of the neighbourhood block organization has more to lose from committing a crime than a woman who does not have a career or ties to the community. There is a cost/benefit calculation in the decision to commit a crime in which the costs of being caught are much higher for some than others.

3. Similarly, levels of *involvement*, or participation

in socially legitimate activities, lessen a person's likelihood of deviance. Children who are members of Little League baseball teams have fewer family crises.

4. The final bond, *belief*, is an agreement on common values in society. If a person views social values as beliefs, he or she will conform to them. An environmentalist is more likely to pick up trash in a park because a clean environment is a social value to that person.

An individual who grows up in a poor neighbourhood with high rates of drug use, violence, teenage delinquency, and deprived parenting is more likely to become a criminal than an individual from a wealthy neighbourhood with a good school system and families who are involved positively in the community. The mutual dependencies and complex relationships that form the basis of a healthy "ecosystem" or social control do not get established.

Research into social disorganization theory can greatly influence public policy. For instance, studies have found that children from disadvantaged communities who attend preschool programs that teach basic social skills are significantly less likely to engage in criminal activity. In the same way, the Chicago School sociologists focused their efforts on community programs designed to help assimilate new immigrants into North American culture. However, in proposing that social disorganization is essentially a moral problem — that it is shared moral values that hold communities together and prevent crime and social disorder — questions about economic inequality, racism, and power dynamics do not get asked.

Robert Merton: Strain Theory

Sociologist Robert Merton (1910-2003) agreed that deviance is, in a sense, a *normal* behaviour in a functioning society, but he expanded on Durkheim's ideas by developing **strain theory**, which notes that access to socially acceptable goals plays a part in determining whether a person conforms or deviates.

From birth, we are encouraged to achieve the goal of financial success. A woman who attends business school, receives her MBA, and goes on to make a million-dollar income as CEO of a company is said to be a success. However, not everyone in our society stands on equal footing. A person may have the socially acceptable goal of financial success but lack a socially acceptable way to reach that goal. According to Merton's theory, an entrepreneur who can not afford to launch his own company may be tempted to embezzle from his employer for start-up funds. The discrepancy between the reality of structural inequality and the high cultural value of economic success creates a strain that has to be resolved by some means. Merton defined five ways that people adapt to this gap between having a socially accepted goal but no socially accepted way to pursue it.

1. *Conformity*: The majority of people in society choose to conform and not to deviate. They pursue their society's valued goals to the extent that they can through socially accepted means.
2. *Innovation*: Those who innovate pursue goals they cannot reach through legitimate means by instead using criminal or deviant means.
3. *Ritualism*: People who ritualize lower their goals until they can reach them through socially acceptable ways. These "social ritualists" focus

on conformity to the accepted means of goal attainment while abandoning the distant, unobtainable dream of success.

4. *Retreatism*: Others retreat from the role strain and reject both society's goals and accepted means. Some beggars and street people have withdrawn from society's goal of financial success. They drop out.

5. *Rebellion*: A handful of people rebel, replacing a society's goals and means with their own. Rebels seek to create a greatly modified social structure in which provision would be made for closer correspondence between merit, effort, and reward.

Many youth from poor backgrounds are exposed to the high value placed on material success in capitalist society but face insurmountable odds to achieving it, so turning to illegal means to achieve success is a rational, if deviant, solution.

Critical Sociology

Critical sociology looks to social and economic factors as the causes of crime and deviance. Unlike functionalists, conflict theorists don't see these factors as necessary functions of society, but as evidence of inequality in the system. As a result of inequality, many crimes can be understood as **crimes of accommodation**, or ways in which individuals cope with conditions of oppression (Quinney, 1977). *Predatory crimes* like break and enter, robbery, and drug dealing are often simply economic survival strategies. *Personal crimes* like murder, assault, and sexual assault are products of the stresses

and strains of living under stressful conditions of scarcity and deprivation. *Defensive crimes* like economic sabotage, illegal strikes, civil disobedience, and eco-terrorism are direct challenges to social injustice. The analysis of critical sociologists is not meant to excuse or rationalize crime, but to locate its underlying sources at the appropriate level so they can be addressed effectively.

Critical sociologists do not see the normative order and the criminal justice system as simply neutral or "functional" with regard to the collective interests of society. Institutions of normalization and the criminal justice system have to be seen in context as mechanisms that actively maintain the power structure of the political-economic order. The rich, the powerful, and the privileged have unequal influence on who and what gets labelled deviant or criminal, particularly in instances when their privilege is being challenged. As capitalist society is based on the institution of private property, for example, it is not surprising that theft is a major category of crime. By the same token, when street people, addicts, or hippies drop out of society, they are labelled deviant and are subject to police harassment because they have refused to participate in productive labour.

On the other hand, the ruthless and sometimes sociopathic behaviour of many business people and politicians, otherwise regarded as deviant according to the normative codes of society, is often rewarded or regarded with respect. In his book *The Power Elite* (1956), sociologist C. Wright Mills (1916-1962) described the existence of what he dubbed the **power elite**, a small group of wealthy and influential people at the top of society who hold the power and resources. Wealthy executives, politicians, celebrities, and military leaders

often have access to national and international power, and in some cases, their decisions affect everyone in society. Because of this, the rules of society are stacked in favour of a privileged few who manipulate them to stay on top. It is these people who decide what is criminal and what is not, and the effects are often felt most by those who have little power. Mills's theories explain why celebrities such as Chris Brown and Paris Hilton, or once-powerful politicians such as Eliot Spitzer and Tom DeLay, can commit crimes with little or no legal retribution.

Crime and Social Class

While functionalist theories often emphasize crime and deviance associated with the underprivileged, there is in fact no clear evidence that crimes are committed disproportionately by the poor or lower classes. There is an established association between the underprivileged and serious **street crimes** like armed robbery or assault, but these do not constitute the majority of crimes in society, nor the most serious crimes in terms of their overall social, personal, and environmental effects. On the other hand, crimes committed by the wealthy and powerful remain an underpunished and costly problem within society. **White-collar** or **corporate crime** refers to crimes committed by corporate employees or owners in the pursuit of profit or other organization goals. They are more difficult to detect because the transactions take place in private and are more difficult to prosecute because the criminals can secure expert legal advice on how to bend the rules.

In the United States it has been estimated that the yearly value of all street crime is roughly 5 percent of the

value of corporate crime or "suite crime" (Snider, 1994). Comparable data is not compiled in Canada; however, the Canadian Department of Justice reported that the total value of property stolen or damaged due to property crime in 2008 was an estimated $5.8 billion (Zhang, 2008), which would put the cost of corporate crime at $116 billion (if the same ratio holds true in Canada). For example, Canadians for Tax Fairness estimates that wealthy Canadians have a combined total of $170 billion concealed in untaxed offshore tax havens (Tencer, 2013). "Tax haven use has robbed at least $7.8 billion in tax revenues from Canada" (Howlett, 2013).

Pricewaterhouse Coopers reports that 36 percent of Canadian companies were subject to white-collar crime in 2013 (theft, fraud, embezzlement, cybercrime). One in ten lost $5 million or more (McKenna, 2014). Recent high-profile Ponzi scheme and investment frauds run into tens of millions of dollars each, destroying investors' retirement savings. Vincent Lacroix was sentenced to 13 years in prison in 2009 for defrauding investors of $115 million; Earl Jones was sentenced to 11 years in prison in 2010 for defrauding investors of $50 million; Weizhen Tang was sentenced to 6 years in prison in 2013 for defrauding investors of $52 million. These were highly publicized cases in which jail time was demanded by the public (although as nonviolent offenders the perpetrators are eligible for parole after serving one-sixth of their sentence). However, in 2011–2012 prison sentences were nearly twice as likely for the typically lower-class perpetrators of break and enters (59 percent) as they were for typically middle- and upper-class perpetrators of fraud (35 percent) (Boyce, 2013).

This imbalance based on class power can also be put

into perspective with respect to homicide rates (Samuelson, 2000). In 2005, there were 658 homicides in Canada recorded by police, an average of 1.8 a day. This is an extremely serious crime, which merits the attention given to it by the criminal justice system. However, in 2005 there were also 1,097 workplace deaths that were, in principle, preventable. Canadians work on average 230 days a year, meaning that there were on average five workplace deaths a day for every working day in 2005 (Sharpe & Hardt, 2006). Estimates from the United States suggest that only one-third of on-the-job deaths and injuries can be attributed to worker carelessness (Samuelson, 2000).

In 2005, 51 percent of the workplace deaths in Canada were due to occupational diseases like cancers from exposure to asbestos (Sharpe & Hardt, 2006). The Ocean Ranger oil rig collapse that killed 84 workers off Newfoundland in 1982 and the Westray Mine explosion that killed 26 workers in Nova Scotia in 1992 were due to design flaws and unsafe working conditions that were known to the owners. However, whereas corporations are prosecuted for regulatory violations governing health and safety, it is rare for corporations or corporate officials to be prosecuted for the consequences of those violations. "For example, a company would be fined for not installing safety bolts in a construction crane, but not prosecuted for the death of several workers who were below the crane when it collapsed (as in a recent case in Western Canada)" (Samuelson, 2000).

Corporate crime is arguably a more serious type of crime than street crime, and yet white-collar criminals are treated relatively leniently. Fines, when they are imposed, are typically absorbed as a cost of doing

business and passed on to consumers, and many crimes, from investment fraud to insider trading and price fixing, are simply not prosecuted. From a critical sociology point of view, this is because white-collar crime is committed by elites who are able to use their power and financial resources to evade punishment. Here are some examples:

1. In the United States, not a single criminal charge was filed against a corporate executive after the financial mismanagement of the 2008 financial crisis. The American Security and Exchange Commission levied a total of $2.73 billion in fines and out-of-court settlements, but the total cost of the financial crisis was estimated to be between $6 and $14 trillion (Pyke, 2013).

2. In Canada, three Nortel executives were charged by the RCMP's Integrated Market Enforcement Team (IMET) with fraudulently altering accounting procedures in 2002–2003 to make it appear that Nortel was running a profit (thereby triggering salary bonuses for themselves totalling $12 million), but were acquitted in 2013. The accounting procedures were found to inflate the value of the company, but the intent to defraud could not be proven. The RCMP's IMET, implemented in 2003 to fight white-collar crime, managed only 11 convictions over the first nine years of its existence (McFarland & Blackwell, 2013).

3. Enbridge's 20,000-barrel spill of bitumen (tar sands) oil into the Kalamazoo River, Michigan in 2010 was allowed to continue for 17 hours

and involved the company twice re-pumping bitumen into the pipeline. The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board report noted that the spill was the result of "pervasive organizational failures," and documents revealed that the pipeline operators were more concerned about getting home for the weekend than solving the problem (Rusnell, 2012). No criminal charges were laid.

Figure 11.9. In the United States, from 1986 until 2010, the punishment for possessing crack, a "poor person's drug," was 100 times stricter than the punishment for cocaine use, a drug favoured by the wealthy.
CocaineHydrochloridePowder by An employee of the DEA is in the Public Domain.

Feminist Contributions

Women who are regarded as criminally deviant are often seen as being **doubly deviant**. They have broken the law but they have also broken gender norms about appropriate female behaviour, whereas men's criminal behaviour is seen as consistent with their aggressive, self-assertive character. This double standard also explains the tendency to medicalize women's deviance, to see it as the product of physiological or psychiatric pathology.

For example, in the late 19th century, kleptomania was a diagnosis used in legal defences that linked an extreme desire for department store commodities with various forms of female physiological or psychiatric illness. The fact that "good" middle- and upper-class women, who were at that time coincidentally beginning to experience the benefits of independence from men, would turn to stealing in department stores to obtain the new feminine consumer items on display there, could not be explained without resorting to diagnosing the activity as an illness of the "weaker sex" (Kramar, 2011).

Feminist analysis focuses on the way gender inequality influences the opportunities to commit crime and the definition, detection, and prosecution of crime. In part the gender difference revolves around patriarchal attitudes toward women and the disregard for matters considered to be of a private or domestic nature. For example, until 1969 abortion was illegal in Canada, meaning that hundreds of women died or were injured each year when they received illegal abortions (McLaren & McLaren, 1997). It was not until the Supreme Court ruling in 1988 that struck down the law that it was acknowledged that women are capable of making their own choice, in consultation with a doctor, about the procedure. Similarly, until the 1970s two major types of criminal deviance were largely ignored or were difficult to prosecute as crimes: sexual assault and spousal assault.

Through the 1970s, women worked to change the criminal justice system and establish rape crisis centres and battered women's shelters, bringing attention to domestic violence. In 1983 the Criminal Code was amended to replace the crimes of rape and indecent assault with a three-tier structure of sexual assault

(ranging from unwanted sexual touching that violates the integrity of the victim to sexual assault with a weapon or threats or causing bodily harm to aggravated sexual assault that results in wounding, maiming, disfiguring, or endangering the life of the victim) (Kong et al., 2003). Holly Johnson reported that in the mid-1990s, when violence against women began to be surveyed systematically in Canada, 51 percent of Canadian women had been the subject of at least one sexual or physical assault since the age of 16 (1996).

The goal of the amendments was to emphasize that sexual assault is an act of violence, not a sexual act. Previously, rape had been defined as an act that involved penetration and was perpetrated against a woman who was not the wife of the accused. This had excluded spousal sexual assault as a crime and had also exposed women to **secondary victimization** by the criminal justice system when they tried to bring charges. Secondary victimization occurs when the women's own sexual history and her willingness to consent are questioned in the process of laying charges and reaching a conviction, which as feminists pointed out, increased victims' reluctance to lay charges.

In particular, feminists challenged the **twin myths of rape** that were often the subtext of criminal justice proceedings presided over largely by men (Kramar, 2011). The first myth is that women are untrustworthy and tend to lie about assault out of malice toward men, as a way of getting back at them for personal grievances. The second myth, is that women will say no to sexual relations when they really mean yes. Typical of these types of issues was the judge's comment in a Manitoba Court of Appeal case in which a man pleaded guilty to

sexually assaulting his twelve- or thirteen-year-old babysitter:

> The girl, of course, could not consent in the legal sense, but nonetheless was a willing participant. She was apparently more sophisticated than many her age and was performing many household tasks including babysitting the accused's children. The accused and his wife were somewhat estranged (as cited in Kramar, 2011).

Because the girl was willing to perform household chores in place of the man's estranged wife, the judge assumed she was also willing to engage in sexual relations. In order to address these types of issue, feminists successfully pressed the Supreme Court to deliver rulings that restricted a defence attorney's access to a victim's medical and counselling records and rules of evidence were changed to prevent a woman's past sexual history being used against her. Consent to sexual discourse was redefined as what a woman actually says or does, not what the man believes to be consent. Feminists also argued that spousal assault was a key component of patriarchal power. Typically it was hidden in the household and largely regarded as a private, domestic matter in which police were reluctant to get involved.

Interestingly women and men report similar rates of spousal violence — in 2009, 6 percent had experienced spousal violence in the previous five years — but women are more likely to experience more severe forms of violence including multiple victimizations and violence leading to physical injury (Sinha, 2013). In order to empower women, feminists pressed lawmakers to develop zero-tolerance policies that would support aggressive policing and prosecution of offenders. These

policies oblige police to lay charges in cases of domestic violence when a complaint is made, whether or not the victim wished to proceed with charges (Kramar, 2011).

In 2009, 84 percent of violent spousal incidents reported by women to police resulted in charges being laid. However, according to victimization surveys only 30 percent of actual incidents were reported to police. The majority of women who did not report incidents to the police stated that they dealt with them in another way, felt they were a private matter, or did not think the incidents were important enough to report. A significant proportion, however, did not want anyone to find out (44 percent), did not want their spouse to be arrested (40 percent), or were too afraid of their spouse (19 percent) (Sinha, 2013).

11.3.2 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is an interpretive theoretical approach that can be used to explain how societies and/ or social groups come to view behaviours as deviant or conventional. The key component of this approach is to emphasize the social processes through which deviant activities and identities are socially defined and then "lived" as deviant. Social groups and authorities create deviance by first making the rules and then applying them to people who are thereby labelled as outsiders (Becker, 1963). Deviance is not an intrinsic quality of individuals but is created through the social interactions of individuals and various authorities. Deviance is something that, in essence, is learned.

Deviance as Learned Behaviour

In the early 1900s, sociologist Edwin Sutherland (1883-1950) sought to understand how deviant behaviour developed among people. Since criminology was a young field, he drew on other aspects of sociology including social interactions and group learning (Laub, 2006). His conclusions established **differential association theory**, stating that individuals learn deviant behaviour from those close to them who provide models of and opportunities for deviance. According to Sutherland, deviance is less a personal choice and more a result of differential socialization processes. A tween whose friends are sexually active is more likely to view sexual activity as acceptable.

A classic study of differential association is Howard Becker's (b. 1928) study of marijuana users in the jazz club scene of Chicago in the 1950s (1953). Becker paid his way through graduate studies by performing as a jazz pianist and took the opportunity to study his fellow musicians. He conducted 50 interviews and noted that becoming a marijuana user involved a social process of initiation into a deviant role that could not be accounted for by either the physiological properties of marijuana or the psychological needs (for escape, fantasy, etc.) of the individual. Rather the "career" of the marijuana user involved a sequence of changes in attitude and experience learned through social interactions with experienced users before marijuana could be regularly smoked for pleasure.

Regular marijuana use was a social achievement that required the individual to pass through three distinct stages. Failure to do so meant that the individual would not assume the deviant role as a regular user of

marijuana. Firstly, individuals had to learn to smoke marijuana in a way that would produce real effects. Many first-time users do not feel the effects. If they are not shown how to inhale the smoke or how much to smoke, they might not feel the drug had any effect on them. Their "career" might end there if they are not encouraged by others to persist. Secondly, they had to learn to recognize the effects of "being high" and connect them with drug use.

Although people might display different symptoms of intoxication — feeling hungry, elated, rubbery, etc. — they might not recognize them as qualities associated with the marijuana or even recognize them as different at all. Through listening to experienced users talk about their experiences, novices are able to locate the same type of sensations in their own experience and notice something qualitatively different going on. Thirdly, they had to learn how to enjoy the sensations: They had to learn how to define the situation of getting high as pleasurable. Smoking marijuana is not necessarily pleasurable and often involves uncomfortable experiences like loss of control, impaired judgement, distorted perception, and paranoia. Unless the experiences can be redefined as pleasurable, the individual will not become a regular user. Often experienced users are able to coach novices through difficulties and encourage them by telling them they will learn to like it. It is through differential association with a specific set of individuals that a person learns and assumes a deviant role. The role needs to be learned and its value recognized before it can become routine or normal for the individual.

Labelling Theory

Although all of us violate norms from time to time, few people would consider themselves deviant. Often, those who do, however, have gradually come to believe they are deviant because they been labelled "deviant" by society. **Labelling theory** examines the ascribing of a deviant behaviour to another person by members of society. Thus, what is considered deviant is determined not so much by the behaviours themselves or the people who commit them, but by the reactions of others to these behaviours. As a result, what is considered deviant changes over time and can vary significantly across cultures. As Becker put it, "deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to the offender. The deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour people so label" (1963).

It is important to note that labelling theory does not address the initial motives or reasons for the rule-breaking behaviour, which might be unknowable, but the importance of its social consequences. It does not attempt to answer the questions of why people break the rules or why they are deviant so much as why particular acts or particular individuals are labelled deviant while others are not. How do certain acts get labelled deviant and what are the consequences?

Sociologist Edwin Lemert expanded on the concepts of labelling theory, identifying two types of deviance that affect identity formation. **Primary deviance** is a violation of norms that does not result in any long-term effects on the individual's self-image or interactions with others. Speeding is a deviant act, but receiving a speeding

ticket generally does not make others view you as a bad person, nor does it alter your own self-concept. Individuals who engage in primary deviance still maintain a feeling of belonging in society and are likely to continue to conform to norms in the future.

Sometimes, in more extreme cases, primary deviance can morph into secondary deviance. **Secondary deviance** occurs when a person's self-concept and behaviour begin to change after his or her actions are labelled as deviant by members of society. The person may begin to take on and fulfill the role of a "deviant" as an act of rebellion against the society that has labelled that individual as such. For example, consider a high school student who often cuts class and gets into fights. The student is reprimanded frequently by teachers and school staff, and soon enough, develops a reputation as a "troublemaker." As a result, the student starts acting out even more and breaking more rules, adopting the troublemaker label and embracing this deviant identity.

Secondary deviance can be so strong that it bestows a **master status** on an individual. A master status is a label that describes the chief characteristic of an individual. Some people see themselves primarily as doctors, artists, or grandfathers. Others see themselves as beggars, convicts, or addicts. The criminal justice system is ironically one of the primary agencies of socialization into the criminal "career path." The labels "juvenile delinquent" or "criminal" are not automatically applied to individuals who break the law. A teenager who is picked up by the police for a minor misdemeanour might be labelled as a "good kid" who made a mistake and who then is released after a stern talking to, or he or she might be labelled a juvenile delinquent and processed

as a young offender. In the first case, the incident may not make any impression on the teenager's personality or on the way others react to him or her. In the second case, being labelled a juvenile delinquent sets up a set of responses to the teenager by police and authorities that lead to criminal charges, more severe penalties, and a process of socialization into the criminal identity.

In detention in particular, individuals learn how to assume the identity of serious offenders as they interact with hardened, long-term inmates within the prison culture (Wheeler, 1961). The act of imprisonment itself modifies behaviour, to make individuals more criminal. Aaron Cicourel's (b. 1928) research in the 1960s showed how police used their discretionary powers to label rule-breaking teenagers who came from homes where the parents were divorced as juvenile delinquents and to arrest them more frequently than teenagers from "intact homes" (1968). Judges were also found to be more likely to impose harsher penalties on teenagers from divorced families.

Unsurprisingly, Cicourel noted that subsequent research conducted on the social characteristics of teenagers who were charged and processed as juvenile delinquents found that children from divorced families were more likely to be charged and processed. Divorced families were seen as a cause of youth crime. This set up a vicious circle in which the research confirmed the prejudices of police and judges who continued to label, arrest, and convict the children of divorced families disproportionately. The labelling process acted as a self-fulfilling prophecy in which police found what they expected to see.

11.3 Crime and the Law
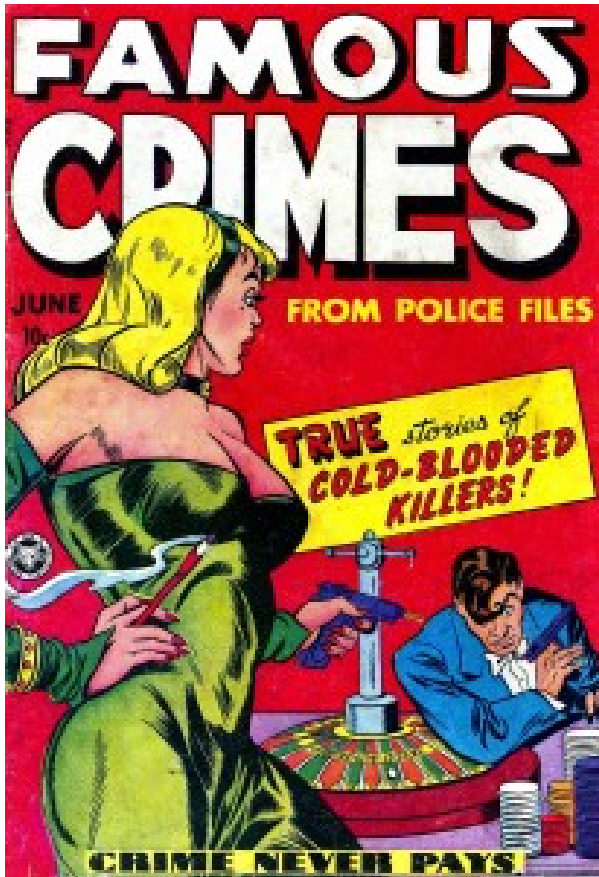
Figure 11.10. How is a crime different from other types of deviance? Cover scan of a Famous Crimes by Fox Features Syndicate is in the public domain

The sociological study of crime, deviance, and social control is especially important with respect to public policy debates. In 2012 the Conservative government passed the Safe Streets and Communities Act, a controversial piece of legislation because it introduced mandatory minimum sentences for certain drug or sex

related offences, restricted the use of conditional sentencing (i.e., non-prison punishments), imposed harsher sentences on certain categories of young offender, reduced the ability for Canadians with a criminal record to receive a pardon, and made it more difficult for Canadians imprisoned abroad to transfer back to a Canadian prison to be near family and support networks. The legislation imposes a mandatory six-month sentence for cultivating six marijuana plants, for example. This followed the Tackling Violent Crime Act passed in 2008, which among other provisions, imposed a mandatory three-year sentence for first-time gun-related offences. Interestingly, with the change of government in Canada in 2016 and subsequent changes to legislation it is now legal to cultivate four marijuana plans for personal use.

This government policy represented a shift toward a punitive approach to crime control and away from preventive strategies such as drug rehabilitation, prison diversion, and social reintegration programs. Despite the evidence that rates of serious and violent crime have been falling in Canada, and while even some of the most conservative politicians in the United States have begun to reject the punitive approach as an expensive failure, the government pushed the legislation through Parliament. In response to evidence that puts into question the need for more punitive measures of crime control, then Justice Minister Rob Nicholson said, "Unlike the Opposition, we do not use statistics as an excuse not to get tough on criminals. As far as our Government is concerned, one victim of crime is still one too many" (Galloway, 2011). What accounts for the appeal of "get tough on criminals" policies at a time when

rates of crime, and violent crime in particular, are falling and are currently at their lowest level since 1972 (Perreault, 2013)? One reason is that violent crime is a form of deviance that lends itself to spectacular media coverage that distorts its actual threat to the public.

Television news broadcasts frequently begin with "chaos news" — crime, accidents, natural disasters — that present an image of society as a dangerous and unpredictable place. However, the image of crime presented in the headlines does not accurately represent the types of crime that actually occur. Whereas the news typically reports on the worst sorts of violent crime, violent crime made up only 21 percent of all police-reported crime in 2012 (down 17 percent from 2002), and homicides made up only one-tenth of 1 percent of all violent crimes in 2012 (down 16 percent from 2002). In 2012, the homicide rate fell to its lowest level since 1966 (Perreault, 2013). Moreover, an analysis of television news reporting on murders in 2000 showed that while 44 percent of CBC news coverage and 48 percent of CTV news coverage focused on murders committed by strangers, only 12 percent of murders in Canada are committed by strangers. Similarly, while 24 percent of the CBC reports and 22 percent of the CTV reports referred to murders in which a gun had been used, only 3.3 percent of all violent crime involved the use of a gun in 1999. In 1999, 71 percent of violent crimes in Canada did not involve any weapon (Miljan, 2001).

This distortion creates the conditions for **moral panics** around crime. As we noted earlier, a moral panic occurs when a relatively minor or atypical situation of deviance arises that is amplified and distorted by the media, police, or members of the public. It thereby comes

to be defined as a general threat to the civility or moral fibre of society (Cohen, 1972). As public attention is brought to the situation, more instances are discovered, the deviants are rebranded as "folk devils," and authorities react by taking social control measures disproportionate to the original acts of deviance that began the cycle.

For example, the implementation of mandatory minimum sentences for the cultivation of marijuana is framed in the Safe Streets and Communities legislation as a response to the infiltration of organized crime into Canada. For years newspapers have uncritically published police messaging on grow-ops and the marijuana trade that characterizes the activities as widespread, gang-related, and linked to the cross-border trade in guns and more serious drugs like heroin and cocaine. Television news coverage often shows police in white, disposable hazardous-waste outfits removing marijuana plants from suburban houses, and presents exaggerated estimates of the street value of the drugs. However a Justice Department study in 2011 revealed that out of a random sample of 500 grow-ops, only 5 percent had connections to organized crime. Moreover, an RCMP-funded study from 2005 noted that "firearms or other hazards" were found in only 6 percent of grow-op cases examined (Boyd & Carter, 2014). While 76 percent of Canadians believe that marijuana should be legally available (Stockwell et al., 2006), and several jurisdictions (Washington and Colorado states, and Uruguay) have legalized marijuana, the Safe Streets and Communities Act appeared to be an attempt to reinvigorate the punitive messaging of the "war on drugs"

based on disinformation and moral panic around marijuana use and cultivation.

11.3.1 What Is Crime?

Although deviance is a violation of social norms, it is not always punishable, and it is not necessarily bad. Crime, on the other hand, is a behaviour that violates official law and is punishable through formal sanctions. Walking to class backwards is a deviant behaviour. Driving with a blood alcohol percentage over the province's limit is a crime. Like other forms of deviance, however, ambiguity exists concerning what constitutes a crime and whether all crimes are, in fact, "bad" and deserve punishment. For example, in 1946 Viola Desmond refused to sit in the balcony designated for blacks at a cinema in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, where she was unable to see the screen. She was dragged from the cinema by two men who injured her knee, and she was then arrested, obliged to stay overnight in the male cell block, tried without counsel, and fined.

The courts ignored the issue of racial segregation in Canada. Instead her crime was determined to be tax evasion because she had not paid the 1 cent difference in tax between a balcony ticket and a main floor ticket. She took her case to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia where she lost. In hindsight, and long after her death, she was posthumously pardoned, because the application of the law was clearly in violation of norms of social equality. As you learned previously, all societies have informal and formal ways of maintaining social control. Within these systems of norms, societies have **legal codes** that maintain formal social control through laws, which are

rules adopted and enforced by a political authority. Those who violate these rules incur negative formal sanctions. Normally, punishments are relative to the degree of the crime and the importance to society of the value underlying the law. As we will see, however, there are other factors that influence criminal sentencing.

11.3.2 Types of Crimes

Not all crimes are given equal weight. Society generally socializes its members to view certain crimes as more severe than others. For example, most people would consider murdering someone to be far worse than stealing a wallet and would expect a murderer to be punished more severely than a thief. In modern North American society, crimes are classified as one of two types based on their severity. **Violent crimes** (also known as "crimes against a person") are based on the use of force or the threat of force. Rape, murder, and armed robbery fall under this category. **Nonviolent crimes** involve the destruction or theft of property, but do not use force or the threat of force. Because of this, they are also sometimes called "property crimes." Larceny, car theft, and vandalism are all types of nonviolent crimes. If you use a crowbar to break into a car, you are committing a nonviolent crime; if you mug someone with the crowbar, you are committing a violent crime.

As we noted earlier in the section on critical sociological approaches, when we think of crime, we often picture **street crime**, or offences committed by ordinary people against other people or organizations, usually in public spaces. An often overlooked category is **corporate crime** (also called "suite crime"), or crime

committed by white-collar workers in a business environment. Embezzlement, insider trading, and identity theft are all types of corporate crime. Although these types of offences rarely receive the same amount of media coverage as street crimes, they can be far more damaging. The 2008 world economic recession was the ultimate result of a financial collapse triggered by corporate crime. An often-debated third type of crime is **victimless crime**. These are called victimless because the perpetrator is not explicitly harming another person. As opposed to battery or theft, which clearly have a victim, a crime like drinking a beer at age 17 or selling a sexual act do not result in injury to anyone other than the individual who engages in them, although they are illegal. While some claim acts like these are victimless, others argue that they actually do harm society. Prostitution may foster abuse toward women by clients or pimps. Drug use may increase the likelihood of employee absences. Such debates highlight how the deviant and criminal nature of actions develops through ongoing public discussion.

11.3.3 Crime Statistics

What crimes are people in Canada most likely to commit, and who is most likely to commit them? To understand criminal statistics, you must first understand how these statistics are collected. Since 1962, Statistics Canada has been collecting and publishing an archive of crime statistics known as the *Uniform Crime Reports Survey* (UCR). These annual publications contain data from all the police agencies in Canada. Although the UCR contains comprehensive data on police reports, it fails

to take into account the fact that many crimes go unreported due to the victims' unwillingness to report them, largely based on fear, shame, or distrust of the police. The accuracy of the data collected by the UCR also varies greatly. Because police and other authorities decide which criminal acts they are going to focus on, the data reflects the priorities of the police rather than actual levels of crime *per se*. For example, if police decide to focus on gun-related crimes, chances are that more gun-related crimes will be discovered and counted.

Similarly, changes in legislation that introduce new crimes or change the categories under which crimes are recorded will also alter the statistics. To address some of these problems, in 1985, Statistics Canada began to publish a separate report known as the *General Social Survey on Victimization* (GSS). The GSS is a self-report study. A **self-report study** is a collection of data acquired using voluntary response methods, based on telephone interviews. In 2014, for example, survey data were gathered from 79,770 households across Canada on the frequency and type of crime they experience in their daily lives. The surveys are thorough, providing a wider scope of information than was previously available. This allows researchers to examine crime from more detailed perspectives and to analyze the data based on factors such as the relationship between victims and offenders, the consequences of the crimes, and substance abuse involved in the crimes. Demographics are also analyzed, such as age, ethnicity, gender, location, and income level.

The GSS reports a higher rate of crime than the UCR, especially for less serious crimes. In the 2009 *GSS on Victimization*, only 31 percent of criminal incidents experienced by respondents were reported to police

(Perreault & Brennan, 2010). Though the GSS is a critical source of statistical information, disadvantages exist. "Non-response," or a victim's failure to participate in the survey or a particular question, is among them. Inability to contact important demographics, such as those who do not have access to phones or who frequently relocate, also skews the data. For those who participate, memory issues can be problematic for the data sets. Some victims' recollection of the crimes can be inaccurate or simply forgotten over time.

11.3.4 The Declining Crime Rate in Canada

While neither of these publications can take into account all of the crimes committed in the country, some general trends may be noted. Crime rates were on the rise after 1960, but following an all-time high in the 1980s and 1990s, rates of violent and nonviolent crimes started to decline. In 2012 they reached their lowest level since 1972 (Perreault, 2013).

Police-reported crime rates, Canada, 1962 to 2012

rate per 100,000
population
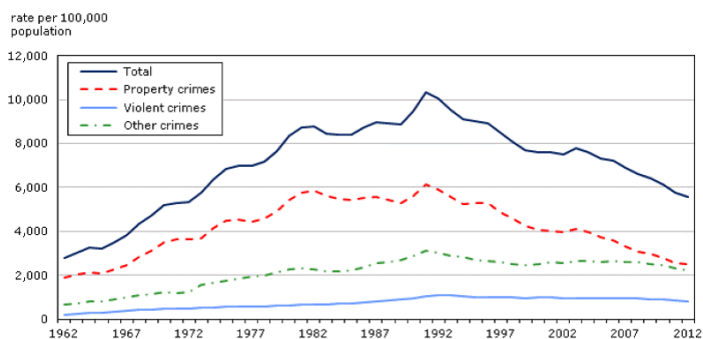
Note: Information presented in this chart represents data from the UCR Aggregate (UCR1) Survey, and permits historical comparisons back to 1962. New definitions of crime categories were introduced in 2009 and are only available in the new format back to 1998. As a result, numbers in this chart will not match data released in the new UCR2 format. Specifically, the definition of violent crime has been expanded. In addition, UCR1 includes some different offences in the 'Other' crimes category.

Figure 11.11. The crime rates for all types of crime in Canada, including violent crime, have been declining since 1992. Why? (Source: Perreault, 2013).

In 2012, approximately 2 million crimes occurred in Canada. Of those, 415,000 were classified as violent crimes, the majority being assault and robbery. The rate of violent crime reached its lowest level since 1987, led by decreases in sexual assault, common assault, and robbery. The homicide rate fell to its lowest level since 1966. An estimated 1.58 million nonviolent crimes also took place; the most common being theft under $5,000 and mischief. The major contribution to the declining crime rate has been decreases in nonviolent crime, especially decreases in mischief, break-ins, disturbing the peace, theft of a motor vehicle, and possession of stolen property. As noted above, however, only 31 percent of violent and nonviolent crimes were reported to the police.

What accounts for the decreases in the crime rate? Opinion polls continue to show that a majority of Canadians believe that crime rates, especially violent crime rates, are rising (Edmiston, 2012), even though the statistics show a steady decline since 1991. Where is the

disconnect? There are three primary reasons for the decline in the crime rate. Firstly, it reflects the demographic changes to the Canadian population. Most crime is committed by people aged 15 to 24. This age cohort has declined in size since 1991. Secondly, male unemployment is highly correlated with the crime rate. Following the recession of 1990–1991, better economic conditions improved male unemployment. Thirdly, police methods have arguably improved since 1991, including having a more targeted approach to particular sites and types of crime. Whereas reporting on spectacular crime has not diminished, the underlying social and policing conditions have. It is very difficult to get a feel for statistical realities when you are sitting in front of a TV screen that shows a daily litany of violent and frightening crime.

DOMINION PENITENTIARY, KINGSTON, ONT., CANADA

Figure 11.12. Kingston Penitentiary was opened in 1835 and officially closed in 2013. Kingston ON – Dominion Penitentiary by R Orville Lyttle CC BY SA 2.0

11.3.5 Corrections

The **corrections system**, more commonly known as the prison system, is tasked with supervising individuals who have been arrested, convicted, and sentenced for a criminal offence. At the end of 2011, approximately 38,000 adults were in prison in Canada, while another 125,000 were under community supervision or probation (Dauvergne, 2012). By way of contrast, seven million Americans were behind bars in 2010 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011). Canada's rate of adult incarceration in 2011 was 140 per 100,000 population. In the United States in 2008, the incarceration rate was approximately 1,000 per 100,000 population. More than 1 in 100 U.S. adults were in jail or prison, the highest benchmark in U.S. history. While Americans account for 5 percent of the global population, they have 25 percent of the world's inmates, the largest number of prisoners in the world (Liptak, 2008). While Canada's rate of incarceration is far lower than that of the United States, there are nevertheless some disturbing features of the Canadian corrections system.

From 2010 to 2011, Indigenous Canadians were 10 times more likely to be incarcerated than the non-Indigenous population. While Indigenous people accounted for about 4 percent of the Canadian population, in 2013, they made up 23.2 percent of the federal penitentiary population. Indigenous women made up 33.6 percent of incarcerated women in Canada. This problem of **overrepresentation** of Indigenous people in the corrections system — the difference between the proportion of Indigenous people incarcerated in Canadian correctional facilities and their

proportion in the general population — continues to grow appreciably despite a Supreme Court ruling in 1999 (R. vs. Gladue) that the social history of Indigenous offenders should be considered in sentencing. Section 718.2 of the Criminal Code states, "all available sanctions other than imprisonment that are reasonable in the circumstances should be considered for all offenders, with particular attention to the circumstances of Indigenous offenders." Prison is supposed to be used only as a last resort. Nevertheless, between 2003 and 2013, the Indigenous population in prison grew by 44 percent (Correctional Investigator Canada, 2013).

Hartnagel summarised the literature on why Indigenous people are overrepresented in the criminal justice system (2004). Firstly, Indigenous people are disproportionately poor and poverty is associated with higher arrest and incarceration rates. Unemployment in particular is correlated with higher crime rates. Secondly, Indigenous lawbreakers tend to commit more detectable street crimes than the less detectable white collar or suite crimes of other segments of the population. Thirdly, the criminal justice system disproportionately profiles and discriminates against Indigenous people. It is more likely for Indigenous people to be apprehended, processed, prosecuted, and sentenced than non-Indigenous people. Fourthly, the legacy of colonization has disrupted and weakened traditional sources of social control in Indigenous communities. The informal social controls that effectively control criminal and deviant behaviour in intact communities have been compromised in Indigenous communities due to the effects of forced assimilation, the residential school system, and migration to poor inner city neighbourhoods.

Although black Canadians are a smaller minority of the Canadian population than Indigenous people, they experience a similar problem of overrepresentation in the prison system. Blacks represent approximately 2.9 percent of the Canadian population, but accounted for 9.5 percent of the total prison population in 2013, up from 6.3 percent in 2003–2004 (Correctional Investigator Canada, 2013). A survey revealed that blacks in Toronto are subject to racial profiling by the police, which might partially explain their higher incarceration rate (Wortley, 2003). **Racial profiling** occurs when police single out a particular racial group for extra policing, including a disproportionate use of stop-and-search practices (i.e. "carding"), undercover sting operations, police patrols in racial minority neighbourhoods, and extra attention at border crossings and airports. Survey respondents revealed that blacks in Toronto were much more likely to be stopped and searched by police than were whites or Asians. Moreover, in a reverse of the situation for whites, older and more affluent black males were more likely to be stopped and searched than younger, lower-income blacks. As one survey respondent put it: "If you are black and drive a nice car, the police think you are a drug dealer or that you stole the car. They always pull you over to check you out" (Wortley, 2003).

11.3.6 Prisons and their Alternatives

Recent public debates in Canada on being "tough on crime" often revolve around the idea that imprisonment and mandatory minimum sentences are effective crime control practices. It seems intuitive that harsher penalties will deter offenders from committing more crimes after

their release from prison. However research shows that serving prison time does not reduce the propensity to re-offend after the sentence has been completed. In general the effect of imprisonment on **recidivism** — the likelihood for people to be arrested again after an initial arrest — was either non-existent or actually *increased* the likelihood of re-offence in comparison to non-prison sentences (Nagin, Cullen, & Jonson, 2009). In particular, first time offenders who are sent to prison have higher rates of recidivism than similar offenders sentenced to community service (Nieuwbeerta, Nagin, & Blockland, 2009).

Moreover, the collateral effects of the imprisonment of one family member include negative impacts on the other family members and communities, including increased aggressiveness of young sons (Wildeman, 2010) and increased likelihood that the children of incarcerated fathers will commit offences as adults (van de Rakt & Nieuwbeerta, 2012). Some researchers have spoken about a **penal-welfare complex** to describe the creation of inter-generational criminalized populations who are excluded from participating in society or holding regular jobs on a semi-permanent basis (Garland, 1985). The painful irony for these groups is that the petty crimes like theft, public consumption of alcohol, drug use, etc. that enable them to get by in the absence of regular sources of security and income are increasingly targeted by zero tolerance and minimum sentencing policies of crime control.

There are a number of alternatives to prison sentences used as criminal sanctions in Canada including fines, electronic monitoring, probation, and community service. These alternatives divert offenders from forms

of penal social control, largely on the basis of principles drawn from labelling theory. They emphasize to varying degrees compensatory social control, which obliges an offender to pay a victim to compensate for a harm committed; therapeutic social control, which involves the use of therapy to return individuals to a normal state; and conciliatory social control, which reconciles the parties of a dispute to mutually restore harmony to a social relationship that has been damaged.

Many non-custodial sentences involve **community-based sentencing**, in which offenders serve a conditional sentence in the community, usually by performing some sort of community service. The argument for these types of programs is that rehabilitation is more effective if the offender is in the community rather than prison. A version of community-based sentencing is **restorative justice conferencing**, which focuses on establishing a direct, face-to-face connection between the offender and the victim. The offender is obliged to make restitution to the victim, thus "restoring" a situation of justice. Part of the process of restorative justice is to bring the offender to a position in which he or she can fully acknowledge responsibility for the offence, express remorse, and make a meaningful apology to the victim (Department of Justice, 2013).

In special cases where the parties agree, **Indigenous sentencing circles** involve victims, the Indigenous community, and Indigenous elders in a process of deliberation with Indigenous offenders to determine the best way to find healing for the harm done to victims and communities. The emphasis is on forms of **traditional Indigenous justice**, which centre on healing and building community rather than retribution. These might involve

specialized counselling or treatment programs, community service under the supervision of elders, or the use of an Indigenous nation's traditional penalties (Aboriginal Justice Directorate, 2005).

It is difficult to find data in Canada on the effectiveness of these types of programs. However, a large meta-analysis study that examined ten studies from Europe, North America, and Australia was able to determine that restorative justice conferencing was effective in reducing rates of recidivism and in reducing costs to the criminal justice system (Strang et al., 2013). The authors suggest that recidivism was reduced between 7 and 45 percent from traditional penal sentences by using restorative justice conferencing.

Rehabilitation and recidivism are of course not the only goals of the corrections systems. Many people are skeptical about the capacity of offenders to be rehabilitated and see criminal sanctions more importantly as a means of (a) deterrence to prevent crimes, (b) retribution or revenge to address harms to victims and communities, or (c) incapacitation to remove dangerous individuals from society.

11.4 Conclusions

The sociological study of crime, deviance, and social control is especially important with respect to public policy debates. The political controversies that surround the question of how best to respond to crime are difficult to resolve at the level of political rhetoric. Often, in the news and public discourse, the issue is framed in moral terms; therefore, for example, the policy alternatives get narrowed to the option of either being "tough" on crime

or "soft" on crime. Tough and soft are moral categories that reflect a moral characterization of the issue. A question framed by these types of moral categories cannot be resolved by using evidence-based procedures.

Posing the debate in these terms narrows the range of options available and undermines the ability to raise questions about which responses to crime actually work. In fact policy debates over crime seem especially susceptible to the various forms of specious reasoning described in Module 3, "Science vs. Non-Science". The story of the isolated individual whose specific crime becomes the basis for the belief that the criminal justice system as a whole has failed illustrates several qualities of unscientific thinking: knowledge based on casual observation, knowledge based on overgeneralization, and knowledge based on selective evidence. Moral categories of judgement pose the problem in terms that are unfalsifiable and non-scientific.

The sociological approach is essentially different. It focuses on the effectiveness of different social control strategies for addressing different types of criminal behaviour and the different types of risk to public safety. Thus, from a sociological point of view, it is crucial to think systematically about who commits crimes and why. Also, it is crucial to look at the big picture to see why certain acts are considered normal and others deviant, or why certain acts are criminal and others are not. In a society characterized by large inequalities of power and wealth, as well as large inequalities in arrest and incarceration, an important social justice question needs to be examined regarding who gets to define whom as criminal.

Module 11 has illustrated the sociological imagination

at work by examining the "individual troubles" of criminal behaviour and victimization within the social structures that sustain them. In this regard, sociology is able to advocate policy options that are neither hard nor soft, but evidence-based and systematic.

Key Terms

Indigenous sentencing circles: The involvement of Aboriginal communities in the sentencing of Aboriginal offenders.

community-based sentencing: Offenders serve a conditional sentence in the community, usually by performing some sort of community service.

compensatory social control: A means of social control that obliges an offender to pay a victim to compensate for a harm committed.

conciliatory social control: A means of social control that reconciles the parties of a dispute and mutually restores harmony to a social relationship that has been damaged.

consensus crimes: Serious acts of deviance about which there is near-unanimous public agreement.

conflict crimes: Acts of deviance that may be illegal but about which there is considerable public disagreement concerning their seriousness.

control theory: A theory that states social control is directly affected by the strength of social bonds and that deviance results from a feeling of disconnection from society.

corporate crime: Crime committed by white-collar workers in a business environment.

corrections system: The system tasked with supervising individuals who have been arrested, convicted, or sentenced for criminal offences.

court: A system that has the authority to make decisions based on law.

crime: A behaviour that violates official law and is punishable through formal sanctions.

crimes of accommodation: Crimes committed as ways in which individuals cope with conditions of oppression and inequality.

criminal justice system: An organization that exists to enforce a legal code.

critical sociology: Looks to social and economic factors as the causes of crime and deviance.

cultural deviance: Theory that suggests conformity to the prevailing cultural norms of lower-class society causes crime.

deviance: A violation of contextual, cultural, or social norms.

differential association theory: A theory that states individuals learn deviant behaviour from those close to them, who provide models of and opportunities for deviance.

disciplinary social control: Detailed continuous training, control, and observation of individuals to improve their capabilities.

doubly deviant: Women (or other categories of individual) who break both laws and gender (or other) norms.

examination: The use of tests by authorities to assess, document, and know individuals.

folkways: Norms based on everyday cultural customs like etiquette.

formal sanctions: Sanctions that are officially recognized and enforced.

government: Practices by which individuals or organizations seek to govern the behaviour of others or themselves.

hate crimes: Attacks based on a person's race, religion, or other characteristics.

informal sanctions: Sanctions that occur in face-to-face interactions.

labelling theory: The ascribing of a deviant behaviour to another person by members of society.

law: Norms that are specified in explicit codes and enforced by government bodies.

legal codes: Codes that maintain formal social control through laws.

master status: A label that describes the chief characteristic of an individual.

moral entrepreneur: An individual or group who, in the service of its own interests, publicizes and problematizes "wrongdoing" and has the power to create and enforce rules to penalize wrongdoing.

moral panic: An expanding cycle of deviance, media-generated public fears, and police repression.

mores: Serious moral injunctions or taboos that are broadly recognized in a society.

negative sanctions: Punishments for violating norms.

new penology: Strategies of social control that identify, classify, and manage groupings of offenders by the degree of risk they represent to the general public.

nonviolent crimes: Crimes that involve the destruction or theft of property, but do not use force or the threat of force.

normalization: The process by which norms are used to differentiate, rank, and correct individual behaviour.

normalizing society: A society that uses continual observation, discipline, and correction of its subjects to exercise social control.

overrepresentation: The difference between the proportion of an identifiable group in a particular institution (like the correctional system) and their proportion in the general population.

panopticon: Jeremy Bentham's "seeing machine" that became the model for the ideal prison.

penal social control: A means of social control that prohibits certain social behaviours and responds to violations with punishment.

penal-welfare complex: The network of institutions that create and exclude inter-generational, criminalized populations on a semi-permanent basis.

police: A civil force in charge of regulating laws and public order at a federal, state, or community level.

positive sanctions: Rewards given for conforming to norms.

power elite: A small group of wealthy and influential people at the top of society who hold the power and resources.

primary deviance: A violation of norms that does not result in any long-term effects on the individual's self-image or interactions with others.

psychopathy: A personality disorder characterized by anti-social behaviour, diminished empathy, and lack of inhibitions.

racial profiling: The singling out of a particular racial group for extra policing.

recidivism: The likelihood for people to be arrested again after an initial arrest.

restorative justice conferencing: Focuses on establishing a direct, face-to-face connection between the offender and the victim.

sanctions: The means of enforcing rules.

secondary deviance: A change in a person's self-concept and behaviour after his or her actions are labelled as deviant by members of society.

secondary victimization: After an initial victimization, secondary victimization is incurred through criminal justice processes.

self-report study: Collection of data acquired using voluntary response methods, such as questionnaires or telephone interviews.

situational crime control: Strategies of social control that redesign spaces where crimes or deviance could occur to minimize the risk of crimes occurring there.

social control: The regulation and enforcement of norms.

social deviations: Deviant acts that are not illegal but are widely regarded as harmful.

social disorganization theory: Theory that asserts crime occurs in communities with weak social ties and the absence of social control.

social diversions: Acts that violate social norms but are generally regarded as harmless.

social order: An arrangement of practices and behaviours on which society's members base their daily lives.

sociopathy: A personality disorder characterized by anti-social behaviour, diminished empathy, and lack of inhibitions.

strain theory: A theory that addresses the relationship between having socially acceptable goals and having socially acceptable means to reach those goals.

street crime: Crime committed by average people against other people or organizations, usually in public spaces.

surveillance: Various means used to make the lives and activities of individuals visible to authorities.

therapeutic social control: A means of social control that uses therapy to return individuals to a normal state.

traditional Aboriginal justice: Centred on healing and building community rather than retribution.

twin myths of rape: The notion that women lie about sexual assault out of malice toward men and women will say "no" to sexual relations when they really mean "yes".

victimless crime: Activities against the law that do not result in injury to any individual other than the person who engages in them.

violent crimes (also known as "crimes against a person"): Based on the use of force or the threat of force.

white-collar crime: Crimes committed by high status or privileged members of society.

zones of transition: Areas within the city characterized by high levels of migration, social diversity, and social change.

11.5 Further Research

Although we rarely think of it in this way, deviance can have a positive effect on society. Check out the [Positive Deviance Initiative](#), a program initiated by Tufts

University to promote social movements around the world that strive to improve people's lives: http://www.positivedeviance.org/.

The Vancouver safe injection site is a controversial strategy to address the public health concerns associated with intravenous drug use. Read about the perspectives that promote and critique the safe injection site model at the following websites. Can you determine how the positions expressed by the different sides of the issue fit within the different sociological perspectives on deviance? What is the best way to deal with the problems of addiction?

- City of Vancouver's "Four Pillars Drug Strategy": http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/four-pillars-drug-strategy.aspx
- Health Officers Council of British Columbia, "A Public Health Approach to Drug Control in Canada" [PDF]: http://www.cfdp.ca/bchoc.pdf
- Drug Prevention Network of Canada: http://www.dpnoc.ca/
- Centre for Addictions Research of B.C. (CARBC): http://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/carbc/

How is crime data collected in Canada? Read about the victimization survey used by Statistics Canada and take the survey yourself: http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=4504.

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Long Descriptions

Figure 7.12 Long Description: Police Reported Hate Crimes, by type of motivation, in Canada, 2011

Type of Hate Crime	Number reported to Police
Race or Ethnicity	690
Religion	315
Sexual Orientation	235
Other	80
Unknown	10

12

MODULE 12: COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Figure 12.1. When people join together, such as these 2011 Egyptian protestors, they are engaging in collective behaviour. Alhurra reporter interviews Egyptian protesters, Tahrir Square, February 7, 2011 by Deirdre Kline is in the Public Domain.

Learning Objectives

- Describe different forms of collective behaviour.
- Differentiate between types of crowds.
- Discuss emergent norm, value-added, and assembling perspective analyses of collective behaviour.
- Describe social movements on a state, national, and global level.
- Distinguish between different types of social movements.
- Identify stages of social movements.
- Discuss theoretical perspectives on social movements, like resource mobilization, framing, and new social movement theory.
- Explain how technology, social institutions, population, and the environment can bring about social change.
- Discuss the importance of modernization in relation to social change.

12.0 Introduction to Social Movements and

Social Change

In January 2011, Egypt erupted in protests against the stifling rule of longtime President Hosni Mubarak. The protests were sparked in part by the revolution in Tunisia, and, in turn, they inspired demonstrations throughout the Middle East in Libya, Syria, and beyond. This wave of protest movements travelled across national borders and seemed to spread like wildfire. There have been countless causes and factors in play in these protests and revolutions, but many have noted the internet-savvy youth of these countries. Some believe that the adoption of social technology — from Facebook pages to cell phone cameras — that helped to organize and document the movement contributed directly to the wave of protests called Arab Spring. The combination of deep unrest and disruptive technologies meant these social movements were ready to rise up and seek change.

What do Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the anti-globalization movement, and the Tea Party have in common? Not much, you might think. But although they may be left-wing or right-wing, radical or conservative, highly organized or very diffused, they are all examples of social movements.

Social movements are purposeful, organized groups striving to work toward a common goal. These groups might be attempting to create change (Occupy Wall Street, Arab Spring), to resist change (anti-globalization movement), or to provide a political voice to those otherwise disenfranchised (civil rights movements). Social movements create social change.

Consider the effect of the 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf

of Mexico. This disaster exemplifies how a change in the environment, coupled with the use of technology to fix that change, combined with anti-oil sentiment in social movements and social institutions, led to changes in offshore oil drilling policies. Subsequently, in an effort to support the Gulf Coast's rebuilding efforts, changes occurred. From grassroots marketing campaigns that promote consumption of local seafood to municipal governments needing to coordinate with federal cleanups, organizations develop and shift to meet the changing needs of the society. Just as we saw with the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, social movements have, throughout history, influenced societal shifts. Sociology looks at these movments through the lenses of three major perspectives.

The functionalist perspective 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. A functionalist might focus on why social movements develop, why they continue to exist, and what social purposes they serve. On one hand, social movements emerge when there is a dysfunction in the relationship between systems. The union movement developed in the 19th century when the economy no longer functioned to distribute wealth and resources in a manner that provided adequate sustenance for workers and their families. On the other hand, when studying social movements themselves, functionalists observe that movements must change their goals as initial aims are met or they risk dissolution. Several organizations associated with the anti-polio industry folded after the creation of an effective vaccine that made the disease virtually disappear. Can you think of another social

movement whose goals were met? What about one whose goals have changed over time?

The critical perspective focuses on the creation and reproduction of inequality. Someone applying the conflict perspective would likely be interested in how social movements are generated through systematic inequality, and how social change is constant, speedy, and unavoidable. In fact, the conflict that this perspective sees as inherent in social relations drives social change. For example, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in the United States in 1908. Partly created in response to the horrific lynchings occurring in the southern United States, the organization fought to secure the constitutional rights guaranteed in the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, which established an end to slavery, equal protection under the law, and universal male suffrage (NAACP, 2011). While those goals have been achieved, the organization remains active today, continuing to fight against inequalities in civil rights and to remedy discriminatory practices.

The symbolic interaction perspective studies the day-to-day interaction of social movements, the meanings individuals attach to involvement in such movements, and the individual experience of social change. An interactionist studying social movements might address social movement norms and tactics as well as individual motivations. For example, social movements might be generated through a feeling of deprivation or discontent, but people might actually join social movements for a variety of reasons that have nothing to do with the cause. They might want to feel important, or they know someone in the movement they want to support, or they

just want to be a part of something. Have you ever been motivated to show up for a rally or sign a petition because your friends invited you? Would you have been as likely to get involved otherwise?

12.1 Collective Behaviour

12.1.1 Flash Mobs

Figure 12.2. Is this a good time had by all? Some flash mobs may function as political protests, while others are for fun. This flash mob pillow fight's purpose was to entertain. Flash Mob Pillow Fight by Mattw1s0n CC BY 2.0

People sitting in a café in a touristy corner of Rome might expect the usual sights and sounds of a busy city. They might be more surprised when, as they sip their espressos, hundreds of young people start streaming into the picturesque square clutching pillows, and when someone gives a signal, they start pummelling each other in a massive free-for-all pillow fight. Spectators might

lean forward, coffee forgotten, as feathers fly and more and more people join in. All around the square, others hang out of their windows or stop on the street, transfixed, to watch. After several minutes, the spectacle is over. With cheers and the occasional high-five, the crowd disperses, leaving only destroyed pillows and clouds of fluff in its wake.

This is a **flash mob**, a large group of people who gather together in a spontaneous activity that lasts a limited amount of time before returning to their regular routines. Technology plays a big role in the creation of a flash mob: select people are texted or emailed, and the message spreads virally until a crowd has grown. But while technology might explain the "how" of flash mobs, it does not explain the "why." Flash mobs often are captured on video and shared on the internet; frequently they go viral and become well known. So what leads people to want to flock somewhere for a massive pillow fight? Or for a choreographed dance? Or to freeze in place? Why is this appealing? In large part, it is as simple as the reason humans have bonded together around fires for storytelling, or danced together, or joined a community holiday celebration. Humans seek connections and shared experiences. And a flash mob, pillows included, provides a way to make that happen.

12.1.2 Forms of Collective Behaviour

Flash mobs are examples of **collective behaviour**, non-institutionalized activity in which several people voluntarily engage. Other examples of collective behaviour can include anything from a group of commuters travelling home from work to the trend

toward adopting the Justin Bieber hair flip. In short, it can be any group behaviour that is not mandated or regulated by an institution. There are four primary forms of collective behaviour: the crowd, the mass, the public, and social movements.

It takes a fairly large number of people in close proximity to form a **crowd** (Lofland, 1993). Examples include a group of people attending a Neil Young concert, attending Canada Day festivities, or joining a worship service. Turner and Killian (1993) identified four types of crowds. **Casual crowds** consist of people who are in the same place at the same time, but who are not really interacting, such as people standing in line at the post office. **Conventional crowds** are those who come together for a scheduled event, like a religious service or rock concert. **Expressive crowds** are people who join together to express emotion, often at funerals, weddings, or the like. The final type, **acting crowds,** focus on a specific goal or action, such as a protest movement or riot.

In addition to the different types of crowds, collective groups can also be identified in two other ways (Lofland, 1993). A **mass** is a relatively large and dispersed number of people with a common interest, whose members are largely unknown to one another and who are incapable of acting together in a concerted way to achieve objectives. In this sense, the audience of the television show *Game of Thrones* or of any mass medium (TV, radio, film, books) is a mass. A **public**, on the other hand, is an unorganized, relatively diffused group of people who share ideas on an issue, such as social conservatives. While these two types of crowds are similar, they are not the same. To distinguish between them, remember that

members of a mass share interests whereas members of a public share ideas.

12.1.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Collective Behaviour

Early collective behaviour theories (Blumer, 1969; Le Bon, 1895) focused on the irrationality of crowds. Le Bon saw the tendency for crowds to break into riots or anti-Semitic pogroms as a product of the properties of crowds themselves: anonymity, contagion, and suggestibility. On their own, each individual would not be capable of acting in this manner, but as anonymous members of a crowd they were easily swept up in dynamics that carried them away. Eventually, those theorists who viewed crowds as uncontrolled groups of irrational people were supplanted by theorists who viewed the behaviour of some crowds as the rational behaviour of logical beings.

Emergent-Norm Perspective

Figure 12.3. According to the emergent-norm perspective, people have their own reasons for joining a parade. Parade Pink Poodles Parasol by Infrogmation of New Orleans CC BY 2.0

Sociologists Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian (1993) built on earlier sociological ideas and developed what is known as emergent norm theory. They believe that the norms experienced by people in a crowd may be disparate and fluctuating. They emphasize the importance of these norms in shaping crowd behaviour, especially those norms that shift quickly in response to changing external factors. **Emergent norm theory** asserts that, in this circumstance, people perceive and respond to the crowd situation with their particular (individual) set of norms, which may change as the crowd experience evolves. This focus on the individual component of interaction reflects a symbolic interactionist perspective.

For Turner and Killian, the process begins when individuals suddenly find themselves in a new situation,

or when an existing situation suddenly becomes strange or unfamiliar. For example, think about human behaviour during Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans was decimated and people were trapped without supplies or a way to evacuate. In these extraordinary circumstances, what outsiders saw as "looting" was defined by those involved as seeking needed supplies for survival. Normally, individuals would not wade into a corner gas station and take canned goods without paying, but given that they were suddenly in a greatly changed situation, they established a norm that they felt was reasonable.

Once individuals find themselves in a situation ungoverned by previously established norms, they interact in small groups to develop new guidelines on how to behave. According to the emergent-norm perspective, crowds are not viewed as irrational, impulsive, uncontrolled groups. Instead, norms develop and are accepted as they fit the situation. While this theory offers insight into why norms develop, it leaves undefined the nature of norms, how they come to be accepted by the crowd, and how they spread through the crowd.

Value-Added Theory

Neil Smelser's (1962) meticulous categorization of crowd behaviour, called **value-added theory**, is a perspective within the functionalist tradition based on the idea that several conditions must be in place for collective behaviour to occur. Each condition adds to the likelihood that collective behaviour will occur.

The first condition is *structural conduciveness*, which describes when people are aware of the problem and have the opportunity to gather, ideally in an open area.

Structural strain, the second condition, refers to people's expectations about the situation at hand being unmet, causing tension and strain. The next condition is the *growth and spread of a generalized belief*, wherein a problem is clearly identified and attributed to a person or group.

Fourth, *precipitating factors* spur collective behaviour; this is the emergence of a dramatic event. The fifth condition is *mobilization for action*, when leaders emerge to direct a crowd to action. The final condition relates to action by the agents of social control. Called *social control*, it is the only way to end the collective behaviour episode (Smelser, 1962).

Let us consider a hypothetical example of these conditions. In structure conduciveness (awareness and opportunity), a group of students gathers on the campus quad. Structural strain emerges when they feel stress concerning their high tuition costs. If the crowd decides that the latest tuition hike is the fault of the chancellor, and that he or she will lower tuition if they protest, then growth and spread of a generalized belief has occurred. A precipitation factor arises when campus security appears to disperse the crowd, using pepper spray to do so. When the student body president sits down and passively resists attempts to stop the protest, this represents mobilization of action. Finally, when local police arrive and direct students back to their dorms, we have seen agents of social control in action.

While value-added theory addresses the complexity of collective behaviour, it also assumes that such behaviour is inherently negative or disruptive. In contrast, collective behaviour can be non-disruptive, such as when people flood to a place where a leader or public figure has died to express condolences or leave tokens of

remembrance. People also forge momentary alliances with strangers in response to natural disasters.

Figure 12.4. Agents of social control bring collective behaviour to an end. London riot police, November 2010 by hozinja CC BY 2.0

Assembling Perspective

Interactionist sociologist Clark McPhail (1991) developed the **assembling perspective**, another system for understanding collective behaviour that credited

individuals in crowds as rational beings. Unlike previous theories, this theory refocuses attention from collective behaviour to collective action. Remember that collective behaviour is a non-institutionalized gathering, whereas collective action is based on a shared interest. McPhail's theory focused primarily on the processes associated with crowd behaviour, plus the life cycle of gatherings. He identified several instances of convergent or collective behaviour, as shown on the chart below.

Table 12.1. Clark McPhail identified various circumstances of convergent and collective behaviour (McPhail 1991).

[Skip Table]		
Type of crowd	**Description**	**Example**
Convergence clusters	Family and friends who travel together	Carpooling parents take several children to the movies
Convergent orientation	Group all facing the same direction	A semi-circle around a stage
Collective vocalization	Sounds or noises made collectively	Screams on a roller coaster
Collective verbalization	Collective and simultaneous participation in a speech or song	Singing "O Canada" at a hockey game
Collective gesticulation	Body parts forming symbols	The YMCA dance
Collective manipulation	Objects collectively moved around	Holding signs at a protest rally
Collective locomotion	The direction and rate of movement to the event	Children running to an ice cream truck

As useful as this is for understanding the components of how crowds come together, many sociologists criticize its lack of attention on the large cultural context of the described behaviours, instead focusing on individual actions.

12.2 Social Movements

Social movements are purposeful, organized groups striving to work toward a common social goal. While most of us learned about social movements in history classes, we tend to take for granted the fundamental changes they caused — and we may be completely unfamiliar with the trend toward global social movement. But from the anti-tobacco movement that has worked to outlaw smoking in public buildings and raise the cost of cigarettes, to uprisings throughout the Arab world, contemporary movements create social change on a global scale.

12.2.1 Levels of Social Movements

Movements happen in our towns, in our nation, and around the world. The following examples of social movements range from local to global. No doubt you can think of others on all of these levels, especially since modern technology has allowed us a near-constant stream of information about the quest for social change around the world.

Local

Winnipeg's inner city is well known for its poor indigenous population, low levels of income and

education, and concerns about drugs, gangs, and violence. Not surprisingly, it has been home to a number of social movements and grassroots community organizations over time (Silver, 2008). Currently, the Winnipeg Boldness Project is a social movement focused on providing investment in early childhood care in the Point Douglas community to try to break endemic cycles of poverty. Statistics show that 40% of Point Douglas children are not ready for school by age five and one in six are apprehended by child protection agencies. Through programs that support families and invest in early childhood development, children could be prepared for school and not be forced into the position of having to catch up to their peers (Roussin, Gill, and Young, 2014). The organization seeks to "create new conditions to dramatically transform the well-being of young children in Point Douglas" (Winnipeg Boldness Project, 2014).

Regional
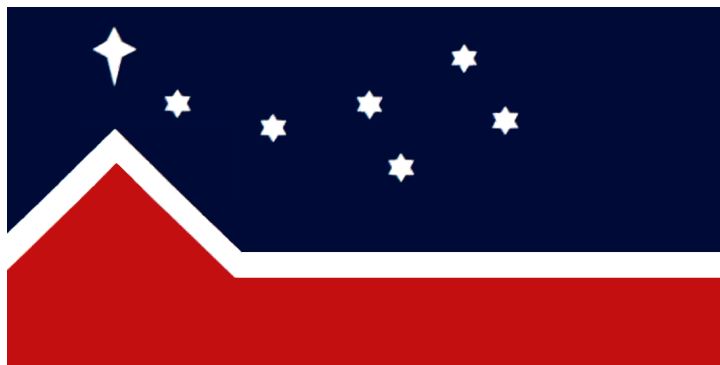
Figure12.5. The flag of the Western Independence Party, one of several regional social movements that advocated separation from Canada, represents Western Canada. Flag of western Canada by Harley King CC BY SA 3.0

At the other end of the political spectrum from the

Winnipeg Boldness Project is the legacy of the numerous conservative and extreme right social movements of the 1980s and 1990s that advocated the independence of western Canada from the rest of the country. The Western Canada Concept, Western Independence Party, Confederation of Regions Party, and Western Block were all registered political parties representing social movements of western alienation. The National Energy Program of 1980 was one of the key catalysts for this movement because it was seen as a way of securing cheap oil and gas resources for central Canada at the expense of Alberta. However, the seeds of western alienation developed much earlier with the sense that Canadian federal politics was dominated by the interests of Quebec and Ontario. One of the more infamous leaders of the Western Canada Concept was Doug Christie who made a name for himself as the lawyer who defended the Holocaust-deniers Jim Keegstra and Ernst Zundel in well-publicized trials. Part of the program of the Western Canada Concept, aside from western independence, was to end non-European immigration to Canada and preserve Christian and European culture. In addition to these extreme-right concerns, however, were many elements of democratic reform and fiscal conservativism, such as mandatory balanced-budget legislation and provisions for referenda and recall (Western Canada Concept, N.d.), which later became central to the Reform Party. The Reform Party was western based but did not seek western independence. Rather it sought to transform itself into a national political party eventually forming the Canadian Alliance Party with other conservative factions. The Canadian Alliance merged

with the Progressive Conservative Party to form the Conservative Party of Canada.

National

A prominent national social movement in recent years is Idle No More. A group of indigenous women organized an event in Saskatchewan in November 2012 to protest the Conservative government's C-45 omnibus bill. The contentious features of the bill that concerned indigenous people were the government's lack of consultation with them in provisions that changed the Indian Act, the Navigation Protection Act, and the Environmental Assessment Act. A month later Idle No More held a national day of action and Chief Theresa Spence of the Attawapiskat First Nation began a 43-day hunger strike on an island in the Ottawa River near Parliament Hill. The hunger strike galvanized national public attention on indigenous issues, and numerous protest events such as flash mobs and temporary blockades were organized around the country. One of Chief Spence's demands was that a meeting be set up with the prime minister and the Governor General to discuss indigenous issues. The inclusion of the Governor General — the Queen's representative in Canada — proved to be the sticking point in arranging this meeting, but was central to Idle No More's claims that indigenous sovereignty and treaty negotiations were matters whose origins preceded the establishment of the Canadian state. Chief Spence ended her hunger strike with the signing of a 13-point declaration that demanded commitments from the government to review Bills C-45 and C-38, ensure indigenous consultation on government legislation, initiate an enquiry into missing indigenous

women, and improve treaty negotiations, indigenous housing, and education, among other commitments (CBC, 2013a; 2013b).

Comparisons between Idle No More and the recent Occupy Movement emphasized the diffuse, grassroots natures of the movements and their non-hierarchical structures. Idle No More emerged outside, and in some respects in opposition to, the Assembly of First Nations. It was more focused than the Occupy Movement in the sense that it developed in response to particular legislation (Bill C-45), but as it grew it became both broader in its concerns and more radical in its demands for indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. It was also seen to have the same organizational problems as the Occupy movement in that the goals of the movement were left more or less open, the leadership remained decentralized, and no formal decision-making structures were established. Some members of the Idle No More movement were satisfied with the 13-point declaration, while others sought more radical solutions of self-determination outside the traditional pattern of negotiating with the federal government. It is not clear that Idle No More, as a social movement, will move toward a more conventional social-movement structure or whether it will dissipate and be replaced by other indigenous movements (CBC, 2013c; Gollom, 2013). Taiaiake Alfred's post-mortem of the movement was that "the limits to Idle No More are clear, and many people are beginning to realize that the kind of movement we have been conducting under the banner of Idle No More is not sufficient in itself to decolonize this country or even to make meaningful change in the lives of people" (2013).

Figure 12.6. The Idle No More movement. #IdleNoMore by AK Rockefeller CC BY SA 2.0

Global

Despite their successes in bringing forth change on controversial topics, social movements are not always about volatile politicized issues. For example, the global movement called Slow Food focuses on how we eat as means of addressing contemporary quality-of-life issues. Slow Food, with the slogan "Good, Clean, Fair Food," is a global grassroots movement claiming supporters in 150 countries. The movement links community and environmental issues back to the question of what is on our plates and where it came from. Founded in 1989 in response to the increasing existence of fast food in communities that used to treasure their culinary traditions, Slow Food works to raise awareness of food choices (Slow Food, 2011). With more than 100,000 members in 1,300 local chapters, Slow Food is a movement that crosses political, age, and regional lines.

12.2.2 Types of Social Movements

We know that social movements can occur on the local, national, or even global stage. Are there other patterns or classifications that can help us understand them? Sociologist David Aberle (1966) addresses this question, developing categories that distinguish among social movements based on what they want to change and how much change they want. **Reform movements** seek to change something specific about the social structure. Examples include anti-nuclear groups, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC). **Revolutionary movements** seek to completely change every aspect of society. These would include Cuban 26th of July Movement (under Fidel Castro), the 1960s counterculture movement, as well as anarchist collectives. **Redemptive movements** are "meaning seeking," and their goal is to provoke inner change or spiritual growth in individuals. Organizations pushing these movements might include Alcoholics Anynymous, New Age, or Christian fundamentalist groups. **Alternative movements** are focused on self-improvement and limited, specific changes to individual beliefs and behaviour. These include groups like the Slow Food movement, Planned Parenthood, and barefoot jogging advocates. **Resistance movements** seek to prevent or undo change to the social structure. The Ku Klux Klan and pro-life movements fall into this category.

12.2.3 Stages of Social Movements

Later sociologists studied the life cycle of social movements — how they emerge, grow, and in some cases,

die out. Blumer (1969) and Tilly (1978) outline a four-stage process. In the *preliminary stage*, people become aware of an issue and leaders emerge. This is followed by the *coalescence stage* when people join together and organize in order to publicize the issue and raise awareness. In the *institutionalization stage*, the movement no longer requires grassroots volunteerism: it is an established organization, typically peopled with a paid staff. When people fall away, adopt a new movement, the movement successfully brings about the change it sought, or people no longer take the issue seriously, the movement falls into the *decline stage*. Each social movement discussed earlier belongs in one of these four stages. Where would you put them on the list?

12.2.4 Social Media and Social Change: A Match Made in Heaven

Figure 12.7. In 2008, Obama's campaign used social media to tweet, like, and friend its way to victory. lost? no problem. use the computer! by bradleyolin CC BY 2.0

Chances are you have been asked to tweet, friend, like, or donate online for a cause. Maybe you were one of the many people who, in 2010, helped raise over $3 million in relief efforts for Haiti through cell phone text donations. Or maybe you follow political candidates on Twitter and retweet their messages to your followers. Perhaps you have "liked" a local nonprofit on Facebook, prompted by one of your neighbours or friends liking it too. Nowadays, woven throughout our social media activities, are social movements. After all, social movements start by activating people.

Referring to the ideal type stages discussed above, you can see that social media has the potential to dramatically transform how people get involved. Look at the first stage, the *preliminary stage*: people become aware of an issue and leaders emerge. Imagine how social media speeds up this step. Suddenly, a shrewd user of Twitter can alert thousands of followers about an emerging cause or an issue on his or her mind. Issue awareness can spread at the speed of a click, with thousands of people across the globe becoming informed at the same time. In a similar vein, those who are savvy and engaged with social media emerge as leaders. Suddenly, you do not need to be a powerful public speaker. You do not even need to leave your house. You can build an audience through social media without ever meeting the people you are inspiring.

At the next stage, the *coalescence stage*, social media also is transformative. Coalescence is the point when people join together to publicize the issue and get organized. U.S. President Obama's 2008 campaign became a case study in organizing through social media. Using Twitter and other online tools, the campaign engaged volunteers

who had typically not bothered with politics, and empowered those who were more active to generate still more activity. It is no coincidence that Obama's earlier work experience included grassroots community organizing. What is the difference between this type of campaign and the work that political activists did in neighbourhoods in earlier decades? The ability to organize without regard to geographical boundaries becomes possible using social media. In 2009, when student protests erupted in Tehran, social media was considered so important to the organizing effort that the U.S. State Department actually asked Twitter to suspend scheduled maintenance so that a vital tool would not be disabled during the demonstrations.

So what is the real impact of this technology on the world? Did Twitter bring down Mubarak in Egypt? Author Malcolm Gladwell (2010) does not think so. In an article in *New Yorker* magazine, Gladwell tackles what he considers the myth that social media gets people more engaged. He points out that most of the tweets relating to the Iran protests were in English and sent from Western accounts (instead of people on the ground). Rather than increasing engagement, he contends that social media only increases participation; after all, the cost of participation is so much lower than the cost of engagement. Instead of risking being arrested, shot with rubber bullets, or sprayed with fire hoses, social media activists can click "like" or retweet a message from the comfort and safety of their desk (Gladwell, 2010).

Sociologists have identified high-risk activism, such as the civil rights movement, as a "strong-tie" phenomenon, meaning that people are far more likely to stay engaged and not run home to safety if they have close friends who

are also engaged. The people who dropped out of the movement — who went home after the danger got too great — did not display any less ideological commitment. They lacked the strong-tie connection to other people who were staying. Social media, by its very makeup, is "weak-tie" (McAdam and Paulsen, 1993). People follow or friend people they have never met. While these online acquaintances are a source of information and inspiration, the lack of engaged personal contact limits the level of risk we will take on their behalf.

Figure 12.8. After a devastating earthquake in 2010, Twitter and the Red Cross raised millions for Haiti relief efforts through phone donations alone. Red Cross Haiti Cambodia4KidsOrg CC BY 2.0

12.2.5 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Movements

Most theories of social movements are called collective action theories, indicating the purposeful nature of this form of collective behaviour. The following three theories are but a few of the many classic and modern theories developed by social scientists. Resource mobilization theory focuses on the purposive,

organizational strategies that social movements need to engage in to successfully mobilize support, compete with other social movements and opponents, and present political claims and grievances to the state. Framing theory focuses on the way social movements make appeals to potential supporters by framing or presenting their issues in a way that aligns with commonly held values, beliefs, and commonsense attitudes. New social movement theory focuses on the unique qualities that define the "newness" of postmaterialist social movements like the Green, feminist, and peace movements.

Resource Mobilization

Social movements will always be a part of society as long as there are aggrieved populations whose needs and interests are not being satisfied. However, grievances do not become social movements unless social movement actors are able to create viable organizations, mobilize resources, and attract large-scale followings. As people will always weigh their options and make rational choices about which movements to follow, social movements necessarily form under finite competitive conditions: competition for attention, financing, commitment, organizational skills, etc. Not only will social movements compete for our attention with many other concerns — from the basic (our jobs or our need to feed ourselves) to the broad (video games, sports, or television), but they also compete with each other. For any individual, it may be a simple matter to decide you want to spend your time and money on animal shelters and Conservative Party politics versus homeless shelters and the New Democratic Party. The question is, however, which animal shelter or which Conservative candidate? To be

successful, social movements must develop the organizational capacity to mobilize resources (money, people, and skills) and compete with other organizations to reach their goals.

McCarthy and Zald (1977) conceptualize **resource mobilization theory** as a way to explain a movement's success in terms of its ability to acquire resources and mobilize individuals to achieve goals and take advantage of political opportunities. For example, PETA, a social movement organization, is in competition with Greenpeace and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), two other social movement organizations. Taken together, along with all other social movement organizations working on animals rights issues, these similar organizations constitute a **social movement industry**. Multiple social movement industries in a society, though they may have widely different constituencies and goals, constitute a society's **social movement sector**. Every **social movement organization** (a single social movement group) within the social movement sector is competing for your attention, your time, and your resources. The chart in Figure 21.9 shows the relationship between these components.
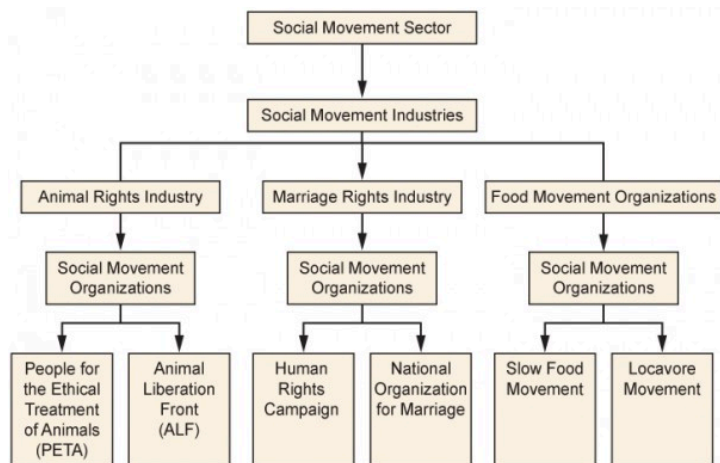
Figure 12.9. Multiple social movement organizations concerned about the same issue form a social movement industry. A society's many social movement industries comprise its social movement sector. With so many options, who will you give your time or money to?

Framing/Frame Analysis

The sudden emergence of social movements that have not had time to mobilize resources, or vice versa, the failure of well-funded groups to achieve effective collective action, calls into question the emphasis on resource mobilization as an adequate explanation for the formation of social movements. Over the past several decades, sociologists have developed the concept of frames to explain how individuals identify and understand social events and which norms they should follow in any given situation (Benford and Snow, 2000; Goffman, 1974; Snow et al., 1986). A **frame** is a way in which experience is organized conceptually. Imagine entering a restaurant. Your "frame" immediately provides you with a behaviour template. It probably does not occur to you to wear pajamas to a fine dining establishment, throw food at other patrons, or spit your

drink onto the table. However, eating food at a sleepover pizza party provides you with an entirely different behaviour template. It might be perfectly acceptable to eat in your pajamas, and maybe even throw popcorn at others or guzzle drinks from cans. Similarly, social movements must actively engage in realigning collective social frames so that the movements' interests, ideas, values, and goals become congruent with those of potential members. The movements' goals have to make sense to people to draw new recruits into their organizations.

Successful social movements use three kinds of frames (Snow and Benford, 1988) to further their goals. The first type, **diagnostic framing**, states the social movement problem in a clear, easily understood way. When applying diagnostic frames, there are no shades of grey: instead, there is the belief that what "they" do is wrong and this is how "we" will fix it. The anti-gay marriage movement is an example of diagnostic framing with its uncompromising insistence that marriage is only between a man and a woman. Any other concept of marriage is framed as sinful or immoral. **Prognostic framing**, the second type, offers a solution and states how it will be implemented. When looking at the issue of pollution as framed by the environmental movement, for example, prognostic frames would include direct legal sanctions and the enforcement of strict government regulations or the imposition of carbon taxes or cap-and-trade mechanisms to make environmental damage more costly. As you can see, there may be many competing prognostic frames even within social movements adhering to similar diagnostic frames. Finally, **motivational framing** is the call to action: what should

you do once you agree with the diagnostic frame and believe in the prognostic frame? These frames are action-oriented. In the indigenous justice movement, a call to action might encourage you to join a blockade on contested indigenous treaty land or contact your local MP to express your viewpoint that indigenous treaty rights be honoured.

With so many similar diagnostic frames, some groups find it best to join together to maximize their impact. When social movements link their goals to the goals of other social movements and merge into a single group, a **frame alignment process** (Snow et al., 1986) occurs — an ongoing and intentional means of recruiting a diversity of participants to the movement. For example, Carroll and Ratner (1996) argue that using a *social justice* frame makes it possible for a diverse group of social movements — union movements, environmental movements, indigenous justice movements, gay rights movements, anti-poverty movements, etc. — to form effective coalitions even if their specific goals do not typically align.

This frame alignment process involves four aspects: bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation. *Bridging* describes a "bridge" that connects uninvolved individuals and unorganized or ineffective groups with social movements that, though structurally unconnected, nonetheless share similar interests or goals. These organizations join together creating a new, stronger social movement organization. Can you think of examples of different organizations with a similar goal that have banded together?

In the *amplification* model, organizations seek to expand their core ideas to gain a wider, more universal

appeal. By expanding their ideas to include a broader range, they can mobilize more people for their cause. For example, the Slow Food movement extends its arguments in support of local food to encompass reduced energy consumption and reduced pollution, plus reduced obesity from eating more healthfully, and other benefits.

In *extension*, social movements agree to mutually promote each other, even when the two social movement organization's goals do not necessarily relate to each other's immediate goals. This often occurs when organizations are sympathetic to each others' causes, even if they are not directly aligned, such as women's equal rights and the civil rights movement.

(a)   (b)

Figure 12.10. Extension occurs when social movements have sympathetic causes. Women's rights and racial equality are united as human rights issues. Photos (a) Annie Kenney and Christabel Pankhurst is in public domain and (b) Leading the march by GPA Photo Archive CC BY-NC 2.0

Transformation involves a complete revision of goals. Once a movement has succeeded, it risks losing relevance. If it wants to remain active, the movement has to change with the transformation or risk becoming obsolete. For instance, when the women's suffrage

movement gained women the right to vote, they turned their attention to equal rights and campaigning to elect women. In short, it is an evolution to the existing diagnostic or prognostic frames generally involving a total conversion of movement.

New Social Movement Theory

New social movement theory emerged in the 1970s to explain the proliferation of postindustrial, quality-of-life movements that are difficult to analyze using traditional social movement theories (Melucci, 1989). Rather than being based on the grievances of particular groups striving to influence political outcomes or redistribute material resources, new social movements (NSMs) like the peace and disarmament, environmental, and feminist movements focus on goals of autonomy, identity, self-realization, and quality-of-life issues. As the German Green Party slogan of the 1980s suggests — "We are neither right nor left, but ahead" — the appeal of the new social movements also tends to cut across traditional class, party politics, and socioeconomic affiliations to politicize aspects of everyday life traditionally seen as outside politics. Moreover, the movements themselves are more flexible, diverse, shifting, and informal in participation and membership than the older social movements, often preferring to adopt nonhierarchical modes of organization and unconventional means of political engagement (such as direct action).

Melucci (1994) argues that the commonality that designates these diverse social movements as "new" is the way in which they respond to systematic encroachments on the **lifeworld**, the shared inter-subjective meanings and common understandings that form the backdrop of

our daily existence and communication. The dimensions of existence that were formally considered *private* (e.g., the body, sexuality, interpersonal affective relations), *subjective* (e.g., desire, motivation, and cognitive or emotional processes), or *common* (e.g., nature, urban spaces, language, information, and communicational resources) are increasingly subject to social control, manipulation, commodification, and administration. However, as Melucci (1994) argues,

> These are precisely the areas where individuals and groups lay claim to their autonomy, where they conduct their search for identity…and construct the meaning of what they are and what they do (pp. 101-102).

12.3 Social Change

Collective behaviour and social movements are just two of the forces driving **social change**, which is the change in society created through social movements as well as external factors like environmental shifts or technological innovations. Essentially, any disruptive shift in the status quo, be it intentional or random, human-caused or natural, can lead to social change. Below are some of the likely causes.

12.3.1 Causes of Social Change

Changes to technology, social institutions, population, and the environment, alone or in some combination, create change. Below, we will discuss how these act as agents of social change and we'll examine real-world examples. We will focus on four agents of change

recognized by social scientists: technology, social institutions, population, and the environment.

Technology

Some would say that improving technology has made our lives easier. Imagine what your day would be like without the internet, the automobile, or electricity. In *The World Is Flat*, Thomas Friedman (2005) argues that technology is a driving force behind globalization, while the other forces of social change (social institutions, population, environment) play comparatively minor roles. He suggests that we can view globalization as occurring in three distinct periods. First, globalization was driven by military expansion, powered by horsepower and windpower. The countries best able to take advantage of these power sources expanded the most, exerting control over the politics of the globe from the late 15th century to around the year 1800. The second shorter period, from approximately 1800 CE to 2000 CE, consisted of a globalizing economy. Steam and rail power were the guiding forces of social change and globalization in this period. Finally, Friedman brings us to the post-millennial era. In this period of globalization, change is driven by technology, particularly the internet (Friedman, 2005).

But also consider that technology can create change in the other three forces social scientists link to social change. Advances in medical technology allow otherwise infertile women to bear children, indirectly leading to an increase in population. Advances in agricultural technology have allowed us to genetically alter and patent food products, changing our environment in innumerable ways. From the way we educate children

in the classroom to the way we grow the food we eat, technology has impacted all aspects of modern life.

Of course there are drawbacks. The increasing gap between the technological haves and have-nots — sometimes called the **digital divide** — occurs both locally and globally. Further, there are added security risks: the loss of privacy, the risk of total system failure (like the Y2K panic at the turn of the millennium), and the added vulnerability created by technological dependence. Think about the technology that goes into keeping nuclear power plants running safely and securely. What happens if an earthquake or other disaster, as in the case of Japan's Fukushima plant, causes the technology to malfunction, not to mention the possibility of a systematic attack to our nation's relatively vulnerable technological infrastructure?

Social Institutions

Each change in a single social institution leads to changes in all social institutions. For example, the industrialization of society meant that there was no longer a need for large families to produce enough manual labour to run a farm. Further, new job opportunities were in close proximity to urban centres where living space was at a premium. The result is that the average family size shrunk significantly.

This same shift toward industrial corporate entities also changed the way we view government involvement in the private sector, created the global economy, provided new political platforms, and even spurred new religions and new forms of religious worship like Scientology. It has also informed the way we educate our children: originally schools were set up to accommodate

an agricultural calendar so children could be home to work the fields in the summer, and even today, teaching models are largely based on preparing students for industrial jobs, despite that being an outdated need. As this example illustrates, a shift in one area, such as industrialization, means an interconnected impact across social institutions.

Population

Population composition is changing at every level of society. Births increase in one nation and decrease in another. Some families delay childbirth while others start bringing children into their fold early. Population changes can be due to random external forces, like an epidemic, or shifts in other social institutions, as described above. But regardless of why and how it happens, population trends have a tremendous interrelated impact on all other aspects of society.

In Canada, we are experiencing an increase in our senior population as baby boomers begin to retire, which will in turn change the way many of our social institutions are organized. For example, there is an increased demand for housing in warmer climates, a massive shift in the need for elder care and assisted-living facilities, and growing awareness of elder abuse. There is concern about labour shortages as boomers retire, not to mention the knowledge gap as the most senior and accomplished leaders in different sectors start to leave. Further, as this large generation leaves the workforce, the loss of tax income and pressure on pension and retirement plans means that the financial stability of the country is threatened.

Globally, often the countries with the highest fertility

rates are least able to absorb and attend to the needs of a growing population. Family planning is a large step in ensuring that families are not burdened with more children than they can care for. On a macro level, the increased population, particularly in the poorest parts of the globe, also leads to increased stress on the planet's resources.

The Environment

Turning to human ecology, we know that individuals and the environment affect each other. As human populations move into more vulnerable areas, we see an increase in the number of people affected by natural disasters, and we see that human interaction with the environment increases the impact of those disasters. Part of this is simply the numbers: the more people there are on the planet, the more likely it is that people will be impacted by a natural disaster.

But it goes beyond that. We face a combination of too many people and the increased demands these numbers make on the Earth. As a population, we have brought water tables to dangerously low levels, built up fragile shorelines to increase development, and irrigated massive crop fields with water brought in from far away. How can we be surprised when homes along coastlines are battered and droughts threaten whole towns? The year 2011 holds the unwelcome distinction of being a record year for billion-dollar weather disasters, with about a dozen falling into that category. From twisters and floods to snowstorms and droughts, the planet is making our problems abundantly clear (CBS News, 2011). These events have birthed social movements and

are bringing about social change as the public becomes educated about these issues.

12.3.2 Our Dystopian Future: From *A Brave New World* to *The Hunger Games*

Figure 12.11. Is the glass half empty or half full when it comes to social change? Fiction writers explore both sides of the issue through fantasy futuristic novels like *The Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins. *The Hunger Games* by Carissa Rogers CC BY 2.0 license

Humans have long been interested in science fiction and space travel, and many of us are eager to see the invention of jet packs and flying cars. But part of this futuristic fiction trend is much darker and less optimistic. In 1932, when Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* was published, there was a cultural trend toward seeing the future as golden and full of opportunity. In his novel set in 2540, there is a more frightening future. Since then, there has been an ongoing stream of dystopian novels, or books set in the future after some kind of apocalypse has occurred and when a totalitarian and restrictive government has taken over. These books have been gaining in popularity recently, especially among young adult readers. And while the adult versions of these books often have a grim

or dismal ending, the youth-geared versions usually end with some promise of hope.

So what is it about our modern times that makes looking forward so fearsome? Take the example of author Suzanne Collins's hugely popular *Hunger Games* trilogy for young adults. The futuristic setting isn't given a date, and the locale is Panem, a transformed version of North America with 12 districts ruled by a cruel and dictatorial capitol. The capitol punishes the districts for their long-ago attempt at rebellion by forcing an annual Hunger Game, where two children from each district are thrown into a created world where they must fight to the death. Connotations of gladiator games and video games come together in this world, where the government can kill people for their amusement, and the technological wonders never cease. From meals that appear at the touch of a button to mutated government-built creatures that track and kill, the future world of *Hunger Games* is a mix of modernization fantasy and nightmare.

When thinking about modernization theory and how it is viewed today by both functionalists and conflict theorists, it is interesting to look at this world of fiction that is so popular. When you think of the future, do you view it as a wonderful place, full of opportunity? Or as a horrifying dictatorship sublimating the individual to the good of the state? Do you view modernization as something to look forward to or something to avoid? And which media has influenced your view?

12.3.3 Modernization

Modernization describes the processes that increase the amount of specialization and differentiation of structure

in societies resulting in the move from an undeveloped society to developed, technologically driven society (Irwin, 1975). By this definition, the level of modernity within a society is judged by the sophistication of its technology, particularly as it relates to infrastructure, industry, and the like. However, it is important to note the inherent ethnocentric bias of such assessment. Why do we assume that those living in semi-peripheral and peripheral nations would find it so wonderful to become more like the core nations? Is modernization always positive?

One contradiction of all kinds of technology is that they often promise time-saving benefits, but somehow fail to deliver. How many times have you ground your teeth in frustration at an internet site that refused to load or at a dropped call on your cell phone? Despite time-saving devices such as dishwashers, washing machines, and, now, remote control vacuum cleaners, the average amount of time spent on housework is the same today as it was 50 years ago. And the dubious benefits of 24/7 email and immediate information have simply increased the amount of time employees are expected to be responsive and available. While once businesses had to travel at the speed of the Canadian postal system, sending something off and waiting until it was received before the next stage, today the immediacy of information transfer means there are no such breaks.

Further, the internet bought us information, but at a cost. The morass of information means that there is as much poor information available as trustworthy sources. There is a delicate line to walk when core nations seek to bring the assumed benefits of modernization to more traditional cultures. For one, there are obvious pro-

capitalist biases that go into such attempts, and it is short-sighted for Western governments and social scientists to assume all other countries aspire to follow in their footsteps. Additionally, there can be a kind of neo-liberal defence of rural cultures, ignoring the often crushing poverty and diseases that exist in peripheral nations and focusing only on a nostalgic mythology of the happy peasant. It takes a very careful hand to understand both the need for cultural identity and preservation as well as the hopes for future growth.

Key Terms

acting crowds: Crowds of people who are focused on a specific action or goal.

alternative movements: Social movements that limit themselves to self-improvement changes in individuals.

assembling perspective: A theory that credits individuals in crowds as behaving as rational thinkers and views crowds as engaging in purposeful behaviour and collective action.

casual crowds: People who share close proximity without really interacting.

collective behaviour: A non-institutionalized activity in which several people voluntarily engage.

conventional crowds: People who come together for a regularly scheduled event.

crowd: A fairly large number of people sharing close proximity.

diagnostic framing: When the social problem is stated in a clear, easily understood manner.

digital divide: The increasing gap between the technological haves and have-nots.

emergent norm theory: A perspective that emphasizes the importance of social norms in crowd behaviour.

expressive crowds: Crowds that share opportunities to express emotions.

flash mob: A large group of people who gather together in a spontaneous activity that lasts a limited amount of time.

frame: A way in which experience is organized conceptually.

frame alignment process: Using bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation as an ongoing and intentional means of recruiting participants to a movement.

lifeworld: The shared inter-subjective meanings and common understandings that form the backdrop of our daily existence and communication.

mass: A relatively large group with a common interest, even if the group members may not be in close proximity.

modernization: The process that increases the amount of specialization and differentiation of structure in societies.

motivational framing: A call to action.

new social movement theory: Theory that attempts to explain the proliferation of postindustrial and postmodern movements that are difficult to understand using traditional social movement theories.

prognostic framing: When social movements state a clear solution and a means of implementation.

public: An unorganized, relatively diffuse group of people who share ideas.

redemptive movements: Movements that work to promote inner change or spiritual growth in individuals.

reform movements: Movements that seek to change something specific about the social structure.

resistance movements: movements that seek to prevent or undo change to the social structure.

resource mobilization theory: Theory that explains social movements' success in terms of their ability to acquire resources and mobilize individuals.

revolutionary movements: Movements that seek to completely change every aspect of society.

social change: The change in a society created through social movements as well as through external factors like environmental shifts or technological innovations.

social movement: A purposeful, organized group hoping to work toward a common social goal.

social movement industry: The collection of the social movement organizations that are striving toward similar goal.

social movement organization: A single social movement group.

> **social movement sector:** The multiple social movement industries in a society, even if they have a wide variety of constituents and goals.
>
> **value-added theory:** A functionalist perspective theory that posits that several preconditions must be in place for collective behaviour to occur.

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Version	Date	Change	Details
1.0	April 30, 2020	Book added to the USASK OpenPress Catalogue.	